TOO MANY AMERICAN ICONS: CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES OF WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT IN THE AMERICAN WEST

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Curtis James Sullivan

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By

Curtis James Sullivan

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Robert Mejia
Chair

Dr. Mark Meister

Dr. Zoltan Majdik

Dr. Christina Weber

Dr. Sam Senda-Cook

Approved:

7/10/2019 Dr. Stephenson J. Beck
Date Department Chair

ABSTRACT

Wild free-roaming horses in the American West continue to exist in tension with the land they inhabit, the government that "manages" them, and the people that are impacted by them. The problem, argued here, is the result of the ideological construction of mustangs in American culture, and it calls forth questions about human-nature relationships as well as contemporary understandings of Environmentalism. This research follows in the theoretical foundations of Raymond Geuss and Tommie Shelby to unpack the epistemic properties (empirical evidence of the contexts from which ideologies are formed), functional properties (consequences of suffering and benefits as a result of ideologies), and genetic histories (historical contexts the construct the ideologies in a culture) of ideologies relating to wild horses in the West; by doing so it also provides insight into *nature identification*, the borders and barriers of human creations, and the limitations of access for performing environmentalism. This text focuses primarily on the life and experiences of Velma Bronn Johnston as an exemplar of environmental change in unexpected ways. Her narrative culminates in the passing of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 that created material changes for the lives of mustangs in the West as well as long-term consequences for citizens of the United States of America. Consequentially, mustangs of the West face a population "problem" that costs the United States more than $80 million annually with almost no signs of decreasing.

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DEDICATION

This text is dedicated to the memory of Velma Bronn Johnston. She resisted; she persisted; she overcame. Our world is better because of people like her who stand up to the status quo and fight to make a difference in the world we inhabit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AML..Appropriate Management Level

BLM..Bureau of Land Management

HMA ....Herd Management Area

WFRHBA ....Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971

ISPMB ....International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Horses: A Communication Problem

My first close friend to get his driver's license during the Fall semester of my sophomore year of high school purchased a previously owned cherry-red Ford Mustang convertible with a pair of thick white racing stipes down the middle and soft removable cloth top. I was only 15 years old at the time, and I had no understanding that a "mustang" meant a wild horse, but popular culture and movies informed me that mustangs *were* cars and they were cool as hell. I remember the moment when I first saw my friend showing off his new mustang outside my parents' house: in that moment I saw freedom and independence from the controlling hegemony of our parents, and I saw a boundless future in which we set our own rules. Almost 20 years after I first rode in that car, I reflect on the genius of the men and women who created, named, and unveiled the first Ford Mustang in April of 1964 (Meier, 2013); by choosing that name for the vehicle, they imbued the car with meaning tied to freedom and the indominable spirit of independence that wild horses embody. Even in the naiveté of my youth, I connected "mustang" with an ideology emblematic of the individualism closely tied to the national identity of the West. I did not know a lot about the world, but I certainly knew that "mustangs" meant "freedom."

Today, however, I am aware that for some the term "mustang" might evoke feelings of frustration, distrust of the government, financial mismanagement, and even animal cruelty. A problem is currently growing in the American Southwest: wild horses, or "mustangs," occupy federally managed land under the control of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and they are multiplying at an unsustainable rate for what the land can support or the government can manage via current methods (Pardew, 2017). The mustang population on the 177 Herd

Management Areas (HMAs) in the American West under the control of the BLM represent a problem that spans a wide range of the academic landscapes; for the purposes of this project it will be viewed through a lens of the ways horses have been constructed ideologically in the hearts and minds of white Americans which produces social and environmental impacts. As mustangs are part of the other-than-human world, and their presence in the wild places of the American West are degrading the ecology at unsustainable rates, the problem is one that can and should be the focus of environmental communication scholars. Cox and Pezzullo (2018) inform their audience of new Environmental Communication scholars that communicating about our environment is our ethical duty and each of us plays a pivotal role in addressing environmental matters (p 4); this text will explore the current impact of the horses on the environment of the American West as well as the sociopolitical origins of *how* mustangs became emblematic of the American West and the social consequences connected to that status. The wild horses roaming public lands illuminate a developing ecological crisis for the spaces the horses inhabit, while also serving as a communication problem stemming from the ways white Americans have collectively identified these specific animals and imbued them with social meaning beyond that of other animals and even other horses.

Throughout our shared history, humans have cultivated ways to make sense of the world around us by categorizing, organizing, and naming all that we can point at; we often engage in a very human action observed by Milstein (2011) as "pointing an naming" the elements of the other-than-human world around us to separate "these" from "those," as well as "us" from "them." We humans have pointed to geographic locations and called them "wild" places and "wilderness" (Callicott & Nelson, 1998), and the horses born there are "wild horses" more than they are simply horses. With the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971

(WFRHBA), people of the United States pointed at horses born in public spaces without individual human ownership to collectively name them as wild, free-roaming horses, or "mustangs." White Americans rallied behind a charismatic and hard-working woman from Reno, NV to produce legislation that imbued the horses with cultural meaning and subsequently force the animals into a role in which they constitute the embodiment of the American values of freedom and independence. Human understanding of the environment and our planetary cohabitants are largely a product of how we symbol-using humans have come to communicate about our world, which makes animals and their roles to humans a social creation (Cantrill & Oravec, 2015). Thus, the ways in which we communicate *about* horses, as well other animals that inhabit our planet, becomes the very thing that threatens the animals most: horses are symbols, companions, servants, heroes, victims, nuisances, and even threats. While the horse population continues to grow, perhaps at the heart of the developing crisis is something more complex and perhaps more sinister in the ways that we humans have communicated about, pointed at, and labeled horses as something *more than* different parts of the other-than-human world.

Horses in western culture represent a manifestation of Rogers' (1998) exploration of the ways we humans view "nature" and the other-than-human world through a lens of language: as we categorize and label parts of the other-than-human world with names and relationships to one another as well as to humans, we subject the other-than-human world to human meaning as how "they" relate to "us." When we label horses as mustangs, we imbue them with complex layers of meaning about where they can live, how they can reproduce, who can interact with them, and what they mean to us. Language, then, serves as a mechanism for intervening on the other-than-

human world; rather than cohabitating with horses we exert dominance over them and subject them to our human values.

Of course, horses are not unique in the ways in which we humans use language to impact perceptions of animals; Cassidy and Mills' (2012), for example, investigated the negative impacts for local foxes when found within the borders of a suburban community and then labeled as menacing "urban foxes" to separate them from other "wild" foxes. The addition of the word "urban" changed the construction of the animal in the human view and subjected them to consideration that they were outside of where they should be (the wild places of the world) and trespassing on the subdued domestic "urban" places which humans inhabit. Like the urban foxes, we too have named "wild horses" as something that belongs in a specific wild place that is separated from the domesticated human world; this also simultaneously reduces "domestic horses" as the inverses of mustangs that "embody the wild spirit of the west" (Jackson, 1971). Indeed, focusing on the life of Velma Johnston, the development and passing of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, and subsequent implications of their interventions, enables us to better understand how environmental rhetoric carries with it significant, and often uneven, material consequences across the human and other-than-human world.

Indeed, just as during Johnston's life in the mid-1900s, the mustangs of the American West and their current population have created what Bitzer (1968/1992) would term a rhetorical situation, as it *both* illustrates the problem with how humans communicate about the other-than-human world *and* demands intervention due to the uneven ecological consequences of horse overpopulation. At the core of Bitzer's concept of the rhetorical situation is *exigence*, or an "imperfection marked by urgency," which serves as a defective thing that is in a way "other than it should be." Bitzer cautions, however, that exigencies are rhetorical when discourse is capable

of modifying the situation and when modifications impact discourse. The wild horses and burros of the American West represent a rhetorical situation through the complex network of people, animals, places, events, and laws that modify the discourse and practices surrounding them. The mustangs of the West represent the consequences of freedom and independence that are emblematic of the ideals that formed the United States, and when their own population becomes a threat to their own wellbeing as well as humans that physically reside in proximity to horse-populated areas, the situation demands a response from the people impacted: a response in the form of new or better policies, stronger rhetoric on behalf of the animals, the environment, and humans affected, or (at the very least) a broader dissemination of information about the growing crisis in the West.

The historically uneven presentation of the mustang in the media adds to both the complexity of the population problem as well as the very communicative nature that created the problem. People's beliefs about animals, the American West, history, and others through the decades cultivated an image of what wild horses mean to the American public, which has called forth humans pointing to the wild free-roaming horses of the West and named them as living symbols of European-American expansion across the western part of the (now) United States that communicate our own values back to us. The ways in which we have communicated about the animals helped forge a path for legislation that bound our collective hands when the horse population began to surpass the limitations of the land. While the ways we previously communicated about the animals may have provided the basis for the current population concerns in the West, our human communication about, with, and for the mustangs has not curved their plight, and the environmental issues relating to the animals continues to negatively impact them, the land they inhabit, and the people in the United States. Ultimately, the mustang

crisis of the West is a rhetorical situation that calls demands intervention: from scholars, environmental practitioners, and advocates for change from the status quo of how we humans interact with our environment in detrimental ways.

Ideologies and Environmental Communication

Stuart Hall (1986) offers a point-of-entry to begin understanding the concept of ideology as mental frameworks: he describes these to be “the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (p. 29). Ideologies are “deployed” by the hierarchies in social groups to make sense of the world they inhabit and maintain social order; they are closely tied to culture and the spreading of ideas through communities. Understanding ideologies and their place in the world might benefit from first briefly exploring *culture:* Edward Tylor (1871) provided an early definition of *culture* as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p. 1), which laid the foundation for contemporary understandings of the term (Tharp, 2009). Though Tylor’s description serves as a functional way to understand the term, many other iterations of its definition arose to create a broad and complex community of definitions for “culture.” Hall (2016) updates this definition by describing *culture* as simply “experience lived, experience interpreted, experience defined,” which illustrates the very unfixed nature of how we understand culture as a large, and sometimes nebulous, term.

Horses become part of that understanding of culture as they are an important part of human history that provide lived experiences for humans to interpret as part of our spectrum of individual cultures. The experiences lived, interpreted, and defined that surround horses, as well

as their growing population in the American West, are equally disparate from one community to the next: the lived experience by one in proximity to a Herd Management Area (HMA) might interpret their experiences with the animals in a way akin to an intrusion on their rights and they might define mustangs as problematic (Eckhoff, 2014); another lived experience with horses might define them as spiritual healers and people within that culture might interpret the animals as vessels for equine assisted psychotherapy or horse therapy (White Plume, 2016); yet another might experience gender inequality in sports and interpret horses as their vehicle to break the glass ceiling in male-dominated racing (Brown & Yang, 2015). From the lived experiences of people, both past and present, come the language we use to communicate about the animals and rhetorically construct them in the minds of those that have a wider proximity to the animals.

Language is important for communicating for, with, and about the other-than human world, as the ways in which we communicate about things shape our understandings of them. While specific words and their placement in proximity to the word "horse" may suggest that *this* horse is wild (and belongs "there"), other uses of the word "horse" identified with different adjectives (or even no adjectives at all) might suggest a different ownership of the animals and/or different points of origin. Beyond the words we choose, the order and placement of words is important in identifying how animals relate to humans. Harré, Brockmeier, and Mühlhäusler (1999) present that Western languages, such as English, position human-nature relations as both causal and binary; humans serve as agent while nature as object, which erases non-human nature's subjectivity and agency. Following the thoughts of Swidler (2013) about the ways people pull meaning from culture to create stable "strategies of action," Milstein (2011) argues that "nature identification" exemplifies a strategy of action by transforming the Western language syntax, and their cultural meanings, into a way humans strategically speak for a nature

to strip it of its own voice. Milstein's work illustrates the importance of *nature identification* and the human act of "pointing and naming" as a symbolic act that cultivates material change. Free-roaming horses on federal land have been collectively pointed at and named as a mass; by calling them “wild mustangs,” people separate the animals from their domesticated peers to further extend human-nature binaries. The horses occupying BLM HMAs have been pointed at and named by people producing both legal and material changes for the animals that can protect them (from some forms of human intervention), but simultaneously endanger them (from their own population growth and the subsequent destruction of the local ecology). When some horses stand as representatives of all horses as well as the rest of the other-than-human world through their “wildness,” they do so by way of symbolic meaning. *We* apply meaning to *them*, which forces different identities including evolutionary partner, beast of burden, commodity, companion, entertainer, money-maker, mustang, and countless others to identify the animals by their relationship to human beings. When a person looks upon wild free-roaming horses, one might see a symbol of freedom and individualism constituent of the American spirit, while another might see an intruder consuming resources to which humans have the right to exploit, yet a different person might see a victim of human intervention that is ill-prepared to exist in a human world. Ideological analysis, then, offers scholars an opportunity to explore the relationships between language, power, physical condition, and the fundamental attitudes, values, and beliefs of a culture (Burgchardt, 1995) as well how those impact the conditions for people as well as the animals about which the ideologies are formed.

The horse population in the American West is a growing problem rife for exploration through an ideological lens: clashing attitudes, values, and beliefs intersect when horse populations threaten the animals' own quality of life, other species’ ability to occupy the same

space, land owners' rights to use public spaces, and private interest groups' agendas to protect or use the animals. When Shelby (2003) contends that ideological analysis is an indispensable opportunity for both understanding and resisting forms of oppression in contemporary society, environmental communication scholars can then investigate systems of oppression that continue to marginalize animals and the places they live as subjects of exploitation by humans. Shelby uses "beliefs" as the unit of analysis for ideological analysis, which are described as having four characteristics: 1) they are widely shared and generally known by people within a group, 2) form or are derived from early impressions, 3) form/shape general outlooks on life for members in a group, and 4) have significant impact on social action and social institutions. To explore ideologies surrounding horses and their populations in the American west, this dissertation will investigate the different beliefs about horses, the history of those beliefs, and the social impacts of beliefs as a tool for oppression.

Ideological Analysis, Horses, & Culture

Horses occupy a unique role in the American consciousness located somewhere between icon worthy of celebration for most and nuisance requiring government intervention for others (Philipps, 2017). When the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA) (Jackson, 1971) identifies mustangs as "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West," the American government creates ideological value for wild free-roaming horses, which represents one of the many ways in which horses have been constructed as *more-than* other animals. The wild free-roaming horse ascended to a place of symbolic representation of the nation comparable to the other national symbol: the American Bald Eagle, which is also the only other animal that congress passed specific legislation to protect from harm ("The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act," 1940). Currently, wild mustangs are an environmental problem as they roam

public lands freely consuming resources at an unsustainable rate resulting in the destruction of ecologies in the western part of the United States. The population of mustangs in the West exists in a complex intersection of multiple elements: limited predators, finite government "managed" space, decreasing shared resources, conflicting interests of impacted groups, inconsistent perceptions about the role horses play in the US, and more have converged to create a multipart ideological issue constitutive of the problematic ways in which humans construct images of the other-than-human world and use those to extend power and maintain hegemony.

To further introduce the wild free-roaming horse population problem, this introductory chapter will discuss the phenomenon by first introducing a brief history of horses in North America, their role in our anthropocentric western world, and the results of government intervention with the western United States. It will then show how the growing population of minimally managed horses has become a communication problem about the ways we view and understand horses, as well as from where those views developed. Finally, a brief discussion of ideological analysis will be provided, and its application to horse culture.

A Brief History of North American Horses

Nearly 13,000 years ago, the Pleistocene came to an end; during that time most of the native vertebrate species in North America went extinct (Donlan, 2005). The North American horse (*Equus simplicidens*) went extinct close to 10,000 years ago (K. Klein, 2014), and contemporary horses are not a native species to this landmass (Simberloff, Schmitz, & Brown, 1997). Most of the horses with which the people living in the US today interact are Spanish horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*Equus Asinus*) that were reintroduced during the late fifteenth century by way of colonial expansion (Resources, Wild, Horses, & Burros, 1980). The most commonly used name for the horses, "Mustang" expresses the very non-native nature of the

animal as it comes from the Spanish word *mesteno* or "horses that escaped from a range controlled by a mesta"; *mesta* refers to "a group of stock raisers or herders" D. L. Wilson (1979, p. 153). Modern mustangs in America descended primarily from Spanish Andalusians and Barbs (*Equus ferus caballus*) that accompanied Columbus' second transatlantic journey in 1493 (De Steiguer, 2011). De Steiguer noted that early Europeans arriving in the New World gave no reports of having seen native North American horses, nor did the indigenous populations have a word for "horse," which adds additional support to scientific agreement and fossil records.

American settlers and agricultural needs in the mid-19th century intentionally and aggressively expanded the horse population of the country through the 1890s, when technological advances such as the introduction of the electric street car and battery-powered automobile reduced the need for horses (Forrest, 2017). The first half of the 20th century saw a dramatic decrease in horse populations as wild horses were rounded up and exported to Europe to support war efforts in WWI. According to Visser (2016), the "indiscriminate capturing and killing" of horses reduced their population to a dangerously low number of 10,000 in the 1960s, and the inhumane treatment the animals received created a scenario in which people needed to act. With grim circumstances for the mustangs of the West in the early 20th century, a rhetorical situation was called forth "as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem" (Bitzer, 1992, p. 5): the capitalistic advancement of the dog food companies diminished the horse populations in the West during a time in which the early roots of environmentalism began to establish themselves during a politically dynamic post-war time for the United States.

The treatment of the horses became a rhetorical problem that called forth discourse, and the answer arrived in a potentially surprising way. Inspired by a grotesque scene of blood

dripping from a horse trailer, Velma Bronn “Wild Horse Annie” Johnston became an unlikely hero and activist for wild horse rights (Kania, 2012); her efforts not only brought human awareness to the mustangs’ plight, but were also instrumental in pushing legislation forward to protect the horses (Leigh, 2014). Johnston was a woman born and raised near the western desert town of Reno, NV; her father was a professional mustanger throughout her life, which granted her a unique access to the wild places and animals that the West offered. Witnessing the cruel conditions endured by the mustangs sparked action from Velma Bronn Johnston that would reroute the remainder of her life toward political activism on behalf of the animals. Her particular configuration of ideologies (discussed later in this text) positioned her to engage the public, unify voices, and represent horse advocates, the West, women, and more to intervene on the American government and ultimately pass legislation that (in 1971) that still impacts the United States and the mustangs of the West today.

From the time Velma Bronn Johnston began her political career in 1950 through today, horse populations in the West have ebbed and flowed, but generally grown in size since that time. There were more than 70,000 wild free-roaming horses in the American west in 2018 according to the BLM ("Program Data," 2019) representing an unsustainable population (Horseman, 2017) of animals that jeopardize the local ecology of the area (Bell, 2016). Beyond the free-roaming horses, there are currently more than 45,000 additional horses that have been essentially locked away in government “storage”; each horse in storage is estimated to cost US taxpayers nearly $50,000 over the course of the its lifetime (Masters, 2017a). Between the costs of maintaining the ranges, rounding-up the horses, caring for those in storage, chemically sterilizing the animals, and more, wild horses are now a billion-dollar problem for the US taxpayers (Stallings, 2016) that has been growing in the West and impacts all Americans through

different means. While the physical population represents an ecological crisis, the problem for Americans is perhaps vastly more complex than a species “over”populating an area.

Horses: A Problem of Population and Ideology

The domestication of the free-roaming horse stands as one of the most significant achievements in human history; it afforded people better opportunities for improved travel, communication, and even combat (Greenfieldboyce, 2018), yet it also represents one of our greatest struggles with a world inhabited by other-than-human animals (Frey & Thacker, 2018). The proximity of horses to humans has enhanced the lens in which horses are viewed differently from other animals: horses are often seen less as evolutionary partner and more as a symbol of strength and as an icon of freedom for the historic American West (Beever, 2003). The US government’s management of horse populations is a turbulent issue that calls forth emotional, judicial, and legislative responses from the public (Glover, 2000) as the free-ranging mustang are “not protected as wild animals but rather managed and controlled for their perceived cultural significance” (Notzke, 2016).

Perceptions surrounding horses culminated problematically in 1971 with congress passing Public Law 92-195, the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA), in which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was charged with keeping and maintaining the rough and rugged land that is now home to an estimated population of more than 72,000 wild horses. These horses live in what *New York Times* writer and bestselling author, David Philipps (2017) refers to as “Wild Horse Country,” an area ranging from the Mexico-US border into Canada that includes Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming ("Program Data," 2019). Wild horses in the United States inhabit a unique place within the geography of the nation as well as the hearts and minds of the people. While humans

have evolved with animals as cohabitants on our planet, horses occupy a very distinct role as evolutionary partner with homo sapiens and have perhaps been imbued with greater human-meaning because of this close partnership throughout our shared history.

The tension surrounding mustangs has been ineffective at best and detrimental at worst since 1971's legislation via cultural back-and-forth between private ranchers, the Bureau of Land Management, horse advocacy groups, environmental groups, the horses themselves, and the American public at large; the relationship between people and horses also created an ecological crisis that is nearing a tipping point in the southwest region of the United States. Throughout Wild Horse Country, the BLM (which has been charged with managing the animal population for half of a century) has identified that their managed ranges can support 26,715 horses and burros while the population of free-roaming horses and burros is estimated to be much higher than the land's limitations. The US Forest service reports an estimated 8,000 additional wild horses on the lands they manage ("Wild Horse and Burro Territories," 2018), while 40,000 wild horses roam the lands of the Navajo Nation (Baca, 2017); between the BLM, Forest Service, and tribal management efforts, it is possible that more than 120,000 horses are roaming freely across the western United States. The problem is exacerbated by the horses' population growth of 15-20% each year (Bell, 2016), the minimal impact of natural predators (Turner Jr, Wolfe, & Kirkpatrick, 1992), and their unique foraging patterns from other comparable hooved mammals, or ungulates (Scasta, Beck, & Angwin, 2016). Horse movements across the primarily unfenced matrices of public and private land ownership further complicate the issue (Calef, 1952).

Managing the growing wild horse population is becoming critical; federal lands are mandated to be managed for multiple purposes such as providing habitats for other native wildlife species as well as livestock grazing (Bastian, Jacobs, Held, & Smith, 1991). The US

wild, free-roaming horses advance the ecological problem by grazing heavily on native vegetation, which allows alien invasive annuals to displace native perennials (Rosentreter, 1994). Wild burros inhabiting "Wild Horse Country" in the northwestern United States also diminish the primary food sources of native bighorn sheep and seed-eating birds, which reduces the resources and abundance of these and other native animals (Kurdila, 1988). An estimated $5 million per year is accrued in forage losses due to free-ranging horses (Pimentel, Lach, Zuniga, & Morrison, 2002). Like other ungulates, horses affect ecosystems such as arid and semi-arid ecosystems found in the southwest US, and they can modify plant community composition and structure (Augustine & McNaughton, 1998). Davies, Collins, and Boyd (2014) concluded that feral horse grazing can affect the ecology of semi-arid rangelands which may degrade the value of the habitats for the other wildlife of the area through elevated risk of soil erosion, increased soil penetration resistance, and decreasing soil aggregate stability. Free-ranging horse populations are not unique to the United States; rather, these populations occur in different habitats across the globe and present different perceptions from place to place about the phenomenon. Australia, for example, views free-ranging horses as "exotic" pests (Robinson, Smyth, & Whitehead, 2005), while New Zealand strictly controls their populations (Fleury, 2006).

Wild horses have become culturally imbued with US ideologies, and the ways in which humans communicate about horses as anthropomorphized animals that share a kinship with humanity serve as symbols constituting the very spirit of freedom and independence with which Americans identify. The mustangs of the West find themselves in peril today, as populations continue to grow in finite spaces managed by the US government (Masters, 2017b). Visser (2016) identifies several wild horse advocacy groups and their goals to raise awareness about the

issue in contemporary society, while the US government via the BLM, has been charged with managing these populations with a dwindling budget (Livini, 2017). Private ranchers and residents in the affected area are also faced with difficult choices and (sometimes) legal action (Bell, 2016). The overpopulation is, indeed, a crisis; one that would benefit from a wider spread of coverage from the media as well as stronger action from the BLM. The crisis also represents a greater environmental problem centered on the ways in which we have failed to effectively communicate the impacts of imbuing parts of the other-than-human world with human politics

Ultimately, the efforts of the BLM and the current state of wild horses represent failure. Should the horses be left to their own devices, the problem will continue to expand, the land and resources will continue to be degraded, countless horses and other animals will suffer from starvation and dehydration, and the American taxpayer will idly sit by and watch as billions of dollars are funneled in to a failing program. Should humans take a more aggressive role in maintaining horse population in the American southwest, then the problem will continue to spiral out of control as the BLM faces off against private landowners, horse advocacy groups, and the American public that is slowly receiving more information about the looming crisis. Should we, as a people, come to terms with the human-made problem of horse overpopulation and take some new sort of action, how then will that impact the human-nature divide and extend to other animals in comparable predicaments such as the North American Bison (Feir, Gillezeau, & Jones, 2017)? Perhaps it is true that *we* have failed horses, but perhaps more importantly, we have failed ourselves by failing to communicate more openly and honestly about how we view and construct animals in the hearts and minds of the American people.

Organization of the Dissertation

To undertake the task of exploring the complexities of the horse overpopulation and the cultural implications of the environmental problem of conflicting ideologies, I will use the response by Tommie Shelby (2003) to the work of Raymond Geuss (1981) as a framework for discussing competing conceptions of ideology through *epistemic, functional,* and *genetic* approaches. Using this approach of ideological analysis, this research will explore the life of Velma Bronn Johnston, her role in impacting the trajectory of the wild horses of the American West, and her legacy in the half-century that followed her climactic success in constructing the WFRHBA. She will serve as a convergence-point for Environmental Communication and Shelby's approach to ideological analysis, as she calls forth provocative questions about how we understand environmentalism today and how we have ideologically constructed the mustang as an extension of human ideologies. The horse population "problem" today extends beyond simple numbers of "too many" having access to "too little"; if it were that simple, humans would likely cull the population like they have done with other species (Langwig et al., 2015). The issue is vastly more nuanced through the ways we understand horses, environmentalism, and our own ideologies. Humans have constructed horses, as *more than* other animals, which stagnates our ability to positively impact the steadily growing population of mustangs in the West.

Chapter two provides an overview of the necessary Environmental Communication literature that lends itself to understanding the ways in which we communicate about the other-than-human world, and how those means impact the construction of horses in the hearts of Americans. It will also more thoroughly explore the mechanism of ideological analysis as provided by Tommie Shelby's interpretation of Raymond Geuss's work. In the wake of the Anthropocene, an era marked by human influence on the planet, an ecological crisis is brewing,

and Environmental Communication offers means for curving the wide spectrum of issues facing our planet and its inhabitants. The mustangs of the American West offer a peculiar iteration of the ways in which humans have extended their dominance over the other-than-human world due to the horses' relationship to humans as tool, companion, symbol, and beyond. This chapter situates the case of the American Mustang within Environmental Communication as it pertains to three emergent themes within the literature: pointing and naming, borders and barriers, and the performance of environmentalism. Each of the three themes are discussed to show their unique configuration within one of Pezzulo's (2017) seven approaches to Environmental Communication: environmental rhetoric and cultural studies. Ideological analysis, as modeled by Tommie Shelby (2003), considers the forms of social consciousness that create ideologies including (1) beliefs widely held by a group of people, (2) the network of beliefs necessary to support an ideology, (3) beliefs used to create self-identity for a group, and (4) beliefs shape social practices. As beliefs about horses as well as beliefs about environmentalism meet these criteria, they offer an opportunity for ideological analysis through considerations of their epistemic properties (their empirical evidence of existing), a functional critique (of the consequences of the beliefs), and a genetic history (of the contexts from which the beliefs are formed).

Chapter three provides a closer look at the genetic histories that contextually situated Velma Bronn Johnston as the right woman at the right time to enact change for the animals. Relying on two biographies about Velma Bronn Johnston, her personal letters, and public documents about her life will be used to explore and understand the historical contexts that shaped the 1971 legislation that she was instrumental in creating. Beginning with her Western American heritage and close proximity to mustangs as a child, her circumstances enabled a

constellation of experiences that enabled her specific voice to be one that brought forth change later in her life. She came across a grim scene on a morning in 1950 of a bloody horse trailer making its way to deliver horses, both dead and alive, for rendering; the scene sparked action and began a crusade that would bring a shy woman from the West all the way to Washington DC to speak to the United States senate on behalf of the mustangs. Her advocacy for the horses forged her into an international celebrity and created moniker, "Wild Horse Annie," that would stay with her all her life and be a means with which beliefs spread to enact change across the nation. From the caricature of her public persona came a tension for her personal life in which the boundaries of each were not always clear. She lived in a time in which contemporary understandings of environmentalism were just beginning to take root and the conditions for wild horses in the West were brutal. The particular constellation of place, time, circumstances, and character converge to create a reflective lens as to the ways ideologies are created and maintained.

Chapter four analyzes the lived experiences of Velma Bronn Johnston in order to provide an epistemological analysis of culture and context of the rhetorical situation between 1950 and 1971 during Johnston's political activity and culminating in the WFRHBA; to do this, many of the same key texts about Johnston's life (including the two biographies by Kania, and Cruise & Griffith) as well letters she wrote, and more will be used for analysis. The biographies as well as cognate social events in the world present the context in which Johnston was operating during this dynamic time and serve as a platform to unpack the ways in which she became and impactful member of her community. Her experiences during the peak of her political activity serve as an opening for understanding the false consciousness of ideologies (the ways in which agents hold their beliefs) at the time relating to horses and the American West. To consider the

ways in which these beliefs manifested in the American consciousness at the time, the three emergent themes of environmental rhetoric and cultural studies will be deployed as an entry-point to contextualize the circumstances of the horses and the West in which they dwelled. Where some animals are pointed-to and named to increase people's ability to identify with them and connect, the mustangs of the West experience(d) the inverse: they were stripped of their individuality and labeled in mass. Borders and barriers consider the physical and metaphorical limits to where *we* are and where *they* belong; this chapter considers conceptions of the West and their implications for both wild horse and people. Performing environmental behaviors during the middle of the twentieth century had different contexts and understandings than current conceptions, thus this chapter concludes with discussing the sociopolitical climate for women, environmentalists, and westerners that impacted Velma Bronn Johnston's agency.

Chapter five explores the functional effects and legacy of Velma Bronn Johnston's success. This chapter reflects not only on her primary success with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, but considers the suffering and benefits advanced by the passing of that legislation. Texts analyzed in this chapter include the WFRHBA, The "Wild Horse Annie" Act of 1959, the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, pertinent judiciary committee reports from 1959 and 1971, letters written by Velma Bronn Johnston, Contemporary data from the BLM, and more. Ideologies produce material consequences through their wide-spread acceptance that include the acceptance of uneven power distributions. This chapter situates ideologies within those very power distributions to consider the outcomes for environmentalism and horse advocacy that resulted from the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971. To do this, the three themes are revisited though in a more contemporary lens. Following the legislation horses have been categorized in many ways: among them are *invasive species, nuisance,* and *victim*, though none

adequately or reasonably describe the mustang. The BLM currently operates 177 HMAs in the American West, and many of them are in the desolate places in which few humans want to live; the consequences for the borders and barriers of the West are discussed as the national sacrifice zones upon which many of them exist. Lastly, Velma Bronn Johnston provides a reflective view as to who can perform environmentalism as well as what that "looks like" by contemporary standards.

To conclude this research, chapter six offers a summation of this text's key takeaways. The implications of this research are discussed to contextualize this dissertation within the Environmental Communication network and the theoretical applications for environmentalism and mustang advocacy. Then, limitations and directions for future research will be identified.

CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION AND IDEOLOGY

"Their crafts and traditions may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience; and, if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties. Our only criterion of judgement should not be whether or not a man's actions are justified in the light of subsequent evolution. After all, we are not at the end of social evolution ourselves. In some of the lost causes of the people of the Industrial Revolution we may discover insights into social evils we have yet to cure."

– E. P. Thompson (2016, p. 3)

We are cultivating an ecological crisis through our constant interference on the planet that we occupy. The global loss of biodiversity is paramount, and it represents just one element of the complex network of consequences related to human intervention on the other-than-human world. While the effects of declining biodiversity might not be abundantly apparent to individual people, humans indirectly experience the damage we inflict on the complex and necessary ecosystems through steady deforestation and defaunation of the rich variety of our earthly companions (Ceballos et al., 2015). At the heart of the problem, I argue, are the ways we humans extend our dominance over the places that we claim as our own and the lives that make these very places spectacular. Human dominance over nature is closely tied to our rapid expansion as a species: domesticating plants and animals is among the most important developments in 13,000 years of human history allowing humans to spread across the globe (Diamond, 2002). The wild mustangs of the American West represent a unique contemporary case to provide a lens with

which one can view the ideological construction of animals and the corresponding consequences of human intervention on the natural order of things. Domesticating horses for nearly 5,500 years (Outram et al., 2009) created utilitarian values for the animals ranging from warfare to transportation and communication (Ludwig et al., 2009); from the value domesticated horses provide to humans, we have constructed shared beliefs about what horses mean to us as both wild animals and tamed companions. What, then, are the consequences of these shared beliefs when some animals are made to be *more than* other animals? What does it mean when we imbue horses with human meaning that elevates them in the hierarchies of our affections?

In order to explore the construction of ideologies in America about horses as well as the consequences of those ideologies in the following chapters, this text must first contextualize the problem as it sits within the arena of Environmental Communication and describe the theoretical foundations that will be used. This chapter provides a short narrative of the author's unconventional entry to the field of Environmental Communication to illustrate the personal and political gravity of the horse population problem in the American West. Next, a description of the Anthropocene will provide information about the urgency of the global crisis of our current age and the unique position that Environmental Communication scholars offer to curb some of the contemporary environmental problems. Environmental Communication literature will be used to provide clarity for subject of this dissertation: Velma Bronn "Wild Horse Annie" Johnston and her impact on American history, the West, and the lives of wild horses for the past half-century. Finally, this chapter will describe the theoretical fundamentals of ideologies outlined by Tommie Shelby (2003) that serve as the foundation for this dissertation. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates the ways in which environmental communication is uniquely positioned to intervene upon the ideological systems that have established and sustained the Anthropocene.

Horses: A Trail to Environmental Communication

For as long as I can remember, "the great outdoors" were never quite "great" from my perspective as a child and young man; rather, I spent most of my early life finding the other-than-human world to be a tedious thing that must be occasionally endured to appease my parents. Outside was full of stagnant old things, fluctuating temperatures, and an endless amount of walking in quiet observation. It was a horrible place that seemed more of a punishment than a reprieve. Technology and media were the things I craved throughout my young life. I cared very little for the green spaces of the world, while I happily maintained ignorance about the complex systems in place to exploit the natural world and permit my interests to be easily available at a moment's notice. I did not know it then, but I alienated myself from my surroundings and I unknowingly represented what Richard Louv (2008) would later suggest as *Nature Deficit Disorder*, which he describes as "the human cost of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness" (p. 36). As a young person in America, I was much more likely to play a snowboarding video game rather than bundle up and hit the slopes, watch a popular film or television show about the Earth rather than engage with the beauty available growing up in Colorado, or read comic books about heroes saving the planet rather than enjoy the very things for which the those heroes often fought to protect. Louv uses Nature Deficit Disorder as a metaphor to suggest a disconnectedness between children and nature and to discuss the heavy price we pay for separating ourselves from our environment (Dickinson, 2013).

Growing up in suburban Colorado with affluent parents provided me with plenty of opportunities to access the myths and ideologies of the West. My parents would drag my siblings and me to Rocky Mountain National Park or Steamboat Springs for weekend trips in the

summers where we would ride horses, hike, boat, "camp" (in our oversized recreational vehicle), and generally be engulfed in cowboy imagery that often required a pastiche of the Marlboro Man with a noble horse-companion. We paid money to ride horses along trails with what I perceived to be real living and breathing cowboys who embodied the image of the West with Wrangler jeans, dusty Stetson hats, weather-worn leather gloves, tobacco-stained teeth, and stubble on their chins that could light a match; in the hindsight of my adult years, I realize that these "cowboys" were usually just young local men dressing the part for their summer jobs to impress tourists. The trails were always thoroughly worn and clearly marked dirt paths through trimmed trees that provided us affluent suburbanites both the illusion of feeling like we lived on the American frontier as well as the opportunity to sit idly on horses while the animals that bore us walked single file at painfully slow speeds. Part of growing up in the West seemed closely connected ideas of men on horseback "taming" the wildness of an unruly landscape with six-shooters, and my family seemed to drink-in the fiction for entertainment and leisure.

Perhaps my parents felt that engaging with Western activities might connect us all to the spirit of those European immigrants who came before. Movies that featured Hollywood superstars in the West such as *Tombstone, Dances with Wolves, Back to the Future Part III,* and *Legends of the Fall* as well as other popular media models added to our misunderstanding of the West, yet they were among my parents' favorites and were watched them regularly in our household. I liked consuming media, and I preferred family movie nights watching movies about the West over the trail rides that (at least) positioned me within a façade of the actual West we inhabited. From our family outings to the media we consumed together, I had always believed that the relationship between humans and wild horses seemed concretely positive with mutual

respect between man and beast; it was emblematic of wilder times in American history to which my family yearned to connect.

My consummate enjoyment of media as boy yielded two important elements that would later impact my connection to Environmental Communication. First, hours of watching television and playing video games allowed my weight to quickly spiral out of control leaving me obese before finishing primary school. My size made outdoor activities and exercise uncomfortable resulting in a conflicted alien feel to the outside world: I felt safer and happier when surrounded by human-made things than I did when separated from technology. Second, media in the 1990s (and early 2000s) were shifting with identity politics and diverse representation front-and-center in the entertainment industry (N. Klein, 2009), which created the opportunity and access for young people like myself to develop an awareness of social inequalities and environmental issues. While I constantly consumed media and the screens that delivered the media regularly consumed my attention, the steady flow of data from computers and televisions would periodically remind me of the vast breadth of injustices enacted on people around the world. Environmentalism and problems of human impact on our planet were also present in the media, but the scope of the fight to save our planet was simply not within my purview. As my loves of media and resource consumption as well as my awareness of social issues in the world developed at a somewhat young age, these three aspects of my character stayed with me through my early adulthood and impacted how I developed as a scholar.

I entered academia with interests toward media effects, social representation in films and on television, and the unequal distribution of resources and wealth, yet most of my studies failed to pique my interests with any sort of zeal or gusto. I dabbled in research channeling Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* (2010), Zillmann's exemplification theory (1999), and cultivation theory

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986), but the ways they had been used seemed to fall short of interesting me. The world was just too big with too many problems and media seemed to both produce the issues as well as (in many cases) be the cure. The things that once brought me joy and intrigue began to fail me: media began to fail me, and I started to find all my previous interests becoming simply monotonous. Thus, the stage was set for a dynamic change to occur: without knowing it, my path to Environmental Communication began with the very media I regularly consumed. *Unbranded* (Baribeau, 2015) was released to Netflix in 2016; the film is about four friends voyaging from the Mexican-American border to the Canadian-American border on the backs of mustangs. As the narrative unfolds, it shifts from friends taking a shared journey to an exposé on the growing wild horse population in the American West. Central to the narrative of the film is Ben Masters, a recent high school graduate who grew up close to mustangs in the West and believed them to be excellent horses capable of more than what other people credited them. Masters' success would later provide him an opportunity to serve as Wildlife Management Chair for the volunteer Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board (Masters, 2017a). The young men featured in the documentary used their journey to illuminate several pieces of information about the plight of wild mustangs in the American West. I wanted to know more, but information was scarce. Exploring the complexities of America's history with wild horses pointed toward the Bureau of Land Management and Velma Bronn Johnston, a woman who diligently and tirelessly worked a half century ago to protect wild horses in the West.

Unpacking the plight of the wild horses revealed a clear history of human dominance over nature and the other-than-human world. I was unknowingly taking my first steps toward Environmental Communication to explore the ways in which humans communicate about the

world that we inhabit, and the human-nature divide seemed to be an unsurmountable chasm between *us* and *them*. Exploring the wild horses of the West called forth two questions that ultimately served as my portal to this field of study: what does “wild” mean and what makes something “wild?” The word mustang has been appropriated to describe the wild and free roaming horses of the United States (Philipps, 2017). As the mustangs revealed a history of human intervention on something “wild,” I was left wondering how something can be both “wild” and dominated or influenced by people. The very way that I had constructed the outside world to be *alien* as a boy seemed not to be limited to just the ignorance of a child, but rather a trend among humans to make that which is not human different, and even subservient, to the human condition. “Wildness” seemed to exist in “nature” but that yielded more questions about what is “nature,” or “natural.” According to Louv (2008) nature is “the outdoors,” and anything that is not human-made in the physical environment; the scholar furthers their definition as “natural wilderness, biodiversity, abundance – related loose parts in a backyard or a rugged mountains ridge. Most of all, nature, is reflected in our capacity for wonder” (p. 8-9). With curiosity piqued, I entered the scholarly landscape of Environmental Communication and learned quickly about the impact of human presence on the land we inhabit as well as the animals and plants with which we interact and intervene. Literature about the Anthropocene painted a grim picture and called forth urgency with which we all need to act, yet even the darkest descriptions of human dominance over nature seemed embedded with seeds of hope and the possibility of change.

The Anthropocene and Environmental Communication

The conditions on our planet suggest a troubling turn for humans, horses, and the other flora and fauna of the Earth. We are now living in a time when the global environment is shaped

by humankind, which stands in stark contrast to the inverse: when humankind was shaped by the environment (Edwards, 2015). As the population of the mustangs of the West is closely tied to human intervention on the other-than-human world, unpacking the contexts of this rhetorical situation through the lens of Environmental Communication literature will provide an entry-point to discover and discuss some of the problems of human intervention in this dynamic era of Earth's history. Human activity is a relatively recent phenomenon on Earth in the grand depth of geologic time, yet the impact of the *Homo Sapiens* is profound (Lewis & Maslin, 2015). As Crutzen and Stoermer (2000) originally suggested, the Holocene has ended and the *Anthropocene* has begun: an era marked by human activity as the dominant cause of environmental change. Cruzen (2002) suggests that the Anthropocene could have started in the final quarter of the eighteenth-century, coinciding with the design of James Watt's steam engine in 1784; analysis of air frozen in the polar ice caps showed evidence of growing concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane.

The spread of humans across the planet produces consequences for our planetary cohabitants in which they have little-to-no agency to positively impact the destructive changes produced by human intervention. The past half-millennium of human activity points toward the barrage of species' extinctions and the decline in local flora and fauna across the globe are consistent with the rate and magnitude of the five previous mass extinctions in our planet's history (Barnosky et al., 2011). As human activity on the planet increases, the quality of life for other flora and fauna as well as the biodiversity on the planet decreases. The breadth of species on the planet right now is estimated conservatively between 5 million to 9 million animal species, of which we are likely losing nearly 11,000 to 58,000 species annually (Mora, Rollo, & Tittensor, 2013; Scheffers, Joppa, Pimm, & Laurance, 2012). The remaining flora and fauna on

Earth face new challenges as our environment continues to change. Global average temperatures rose by roughly 0.85°C between 1880 and 2012, and current predictions indicate temperatures are likely to rise by an additional 1- 4°C before the end of the current century (Wiens, 2016). Air quality is degrading across the globe (Foley et al., 2005), habitats are diminishing (Young, McCauley, Galetti, & Dirzo, 2016), and the population of humans continues to rise (Crist, Mora, & Engelman, 2017). As our species continues its dominance over our inherited planet, we do so at the expense of the complex ecosystems necessary to support us. As the planet's climate continues to change, the future looks bleak. The rising temperatures and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere suggest elevated ocean temperatures which can result in higher rates of released methane from the arctic seafloor, increased ocean acidification, and an even faster increase of the mean air temperature across the globe (Biastoch et al., 2011). Even the places that humans have set-aside to be "natural" spaces are scarred by humans as demonstrated by the 87,834 miles of hiking trails in the United States alone as identified by the American Hiking Society ("Hiking Trails in America: Pathways to Prosperity," 2015). These complex interactions of humans, plants, animals, places, and time produce a rhetorical situation, both physically and socially, of a changing climate that calls forth "needs and invites discourse capable of participating with situation and thereby altering its reality" (Bitzer, 1992, p. 6), which is where Environmental Communication becomes part of the answer to a question and solution to a problem; Environmental Communication represents a unique way in which communicating about and with the other-than-human world is made more clear.

While we change the environment in which we dwell, so too do we change our perceptions of our planetary cohabitants. Mainstream media serves as a tool to communicate messages to the public about animals themselves, risks affiliated with animals, and human-

animal interactions. California's dairy industry used cows, for example, in their *Happy Cow* campaign to suggest to the public that California cows were content, safe, and even an anthropomorphized sense of "happy," rather than the reality of the often brutal conditions the animals endure to produce enough milk to support California's population (Riley, 2015). In exploring the ways in which animals are constructed as "other" in media representations of social issues involving animals, Gerber, Burton-Jeangros, and Dubied (2011) suggest that "media clearly convey the idea that the (negative) impact of human action on the natural world is prominent," and while many animals can be considered "useful and malleable support for identity and alterity construction," dogs can be sensationalized as dangerous. The price humans pay for our intervention on the natural world is not always abundantly clear; most of the trail-scarred natural spaces are separated from the densely populated urban areas, the conditions of "happy" cows used for California's dairy campaign are not central to the act of consuming dairy products, and animal representations in the media produce conditions for the animals in which they have little agency to change their representation.

Communicating with and about the environment is of the utmost importance in the dynamic contemporary landscape of the Anthropocene. While scholarship about the environment, animals, and humanity's interaction with and intervention on them comes in a spectrum of academic pursuits, Environmental Communication is uniquely positioned as an intersection of these crucial forms of scholarship and the ways in which information is communicated to the public. The field of Environmental Communication, to me, is about the ways in which people communicate with and about the other-than-human-world that we inhabit. Robert Cox (2007) notes that many Environmental Communication scholars credit Christine L. Oravec's (1981) essay *John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response* as the origin for the

relatively young field within communication discipline. Environmental Communication continues to grow since the 1980s; it is now associated with disciplines ranging from communication, journalism, media studies, and beyond to discuss the ways in which we engage with and about our environment as well as its inhabitants from our anthropocentric views and understandings. Environmental Communication provides an opportunity for scholars and laypeople alike to begin to understand the impact of the Anthropocene through the ways in which people communicate about, with and for the flora and fauna of planet Earth.

The wild free-roaming horses of the United States show a clear example of the ways in which humans and our activity have produced material consequences for the other-than-human planetary cohabitants. As the North American horse went extinct between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago (K. Klein, 2014), and contemporary horses are not a native species to this landmass (Simberloff et al., 1997), no horse presence was recorded in "the New World" by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The second journey across the Atlantic by Columbus included 15 stallions and five mares, and soon after arriving he wrote to Queen Isabella that subsequent voyages should include brood mares (Philipps, 2017, p. 38); thus horses returned to what would become North America. Where no animals like them resided, humans brought increasing quantities with the intent to reproduce the animals. Here, one can see the direct meddling of humans on their environment, which, over time, produced problematic consequences. Much like humans intervene on their environment producing climate change, the European invasion of the "New World" produced a change in the complex ecosystem that was already in place. As horses and European ideologies spread across the West, so too did dramatic changes for the land, plants, animals, and humans that also existed in those places, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Humans are just one species to inhabit the vastly complex systems that make-up our environment; we humans represent the dominant species on the planet and the way individual people come to understand the other-than-human world is through discourse, or the pattern of knowledge and power communicated through human expression through linguistic and nonlinguistic means (Foucault, 1970). As Fairclough (1992) suggests, discourse is a "practice of not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world constituting and constructing a world of meaning," thus *discourse* becomes a central element of Environmental Communication through the patterns of knowledge and power which construct meaning about our world. Discourse has a social component in its communication roots. For example, Whatmore and Thorne (1998) suggest that "nature" is socially created through understandings of civilization and humanity that depend on the drawing of boundaries between "us" and the rest of the world in which "we" are civilized and "they" are wild. Cassidy and Mills (2012) offer an illustration of Whatmore and Thorne's analysis through their discussion of the media sensationalism and "urban foxes," noting when these animals attacked children of a small English town in their sleep, patterns of knowledge and power were used to construct "urban" foxes as separate animals from their wilderness-dwelling counterparts.

Mills' (2010) work discusses the ways in which BBC nature documentarians invade animals' habitats to showcase the creatures and difficult-to-reach places of our planet. While popular environmental docuseries such as *Planet Earth* and *Blue Planet* (both also productions of the BBC) are produced in the spirit of showcasing animals and places so that people do not have to travel themselves, production comes with a problematic environmental footprint from the filmmakers. This text offers a scholarly look behind the curtain of how popular series are made and calls forth provocative questions about how we humans interact with and display animals

such as the arctic narwhal, which required three weeks of searching, specific technology to capture the sounds of the animals, and invasive techniques, with filmmakers following the family of animals by helicopter. The need to create content for the nature documentaries also calls forth environmental concerns including the necessity of vehicles to explore places previously isolated from human intervention as well the necessary technology to capture provocative audio and visual moments to entice audiences.

One side of the environmental ethics debate suggests that nature documentaries serve as a proxy to "raise the audience's awareness of the world around them and teach them about the environment" (BBC, 2007). While advanced technology allows documentarians to capture images from farther distances and reduce their intervention on animals, another ethical question is called forth in the appropriateness of filming animals at all and the animals' right to privacy when their actions suggest an elusive nature that potentially evades the human gaze intentionally. The issue of privacy is complex enough for humans when considered through lenses such as Michel Foucault's (2012) suggestion that citizens are aware at all times of the possibility of surveillance coupled with Erving Goffman's (1978) conceptualizations of "frontstaging" and "backstaging" in which people behave differently to fit in better with social expectations while being watched; the complexity of privacy rights compounds when considering how it extends to the other-than-human world and the difficult to find creatures of the world. The work offered by Mills (2010) along with other Environmental Communication research point toward palpable differences in the rights humans extend to animals compared to the rights extended to humans. Though the rights of animals and humans differ, DeGrazia (2002) offers a perspective that animals have a "moral status" constructed by humans, and the treatment of animals should exist within "moral codes" that consider the welfare of animals in evaluating human behavior which

might affect them. Environmental Communication literature covers a spectrum of issues through helpful approaches that channel scholars outside the field to make sense of the world and our places in it; the examples selected here highlight this engagement and offer the opportunity for questions about human intervention including animal rights, technology, material consequences of world travel, and the construction of animals through the media.

Environmental Communication deals with real issues that impact our world, requiring realistic and practical solutions rather than idealistic consideration; it is a necessary and pragmatic field that reflects a point of convergence for communication and environmental scholars alike. Cox and Pezzullo (2018) argue that it is impossible to divorce one's knowledge of environmental issues from the way one communicates about them, as previous experiences with the environment produces how they come to talk about their world (Cantrill & Oravec, 2015).

Cox and Pezzullo provide a functional definition of Environmental Communication as "the pragmatic and constitutive modes of expression – the naming, shaping orienting, and negotiating – of our ecological relationships in the world, including the nonhuman systems, elements, and species" (p. 13). Their definition channels the spirit of Burke's (1966) understanding of symbolic action as the ways in which our communication and symbolic acts do and say something. Environmental Communication indeed does and says several things. To offer a categorical organization of ways to study Environmental Communication, Pezzullo (2017) identified *seven* general approaches that are currently most utilized by active scholars in the field:

1. Environmental Communication research focused on environmental personal identity and interpersonal relationships
2. Environmental organizational communication studies

3. Environmental science, technology, and health communication
4. Public participation in environmental decision making
5. Environmental mass media studies
6. Green applied media and arts
7. Environmental rhetoric and cultural studies

Of Pezzullo's proposed approaches to Environmental Communication research, this project is predominantly focused on category seven: *Environmental rhetoric and cultural studies*. By channeling a cultural studies approach to Environmental Communication, this research should "explore the relationship among bodies, institutions, and power within specific situations or conjunctures" (Cox & Pezzullo, 2018, pp. 15-16). The breadth of literature within this category of the field allows several themes to emerge as a points of entry for environmental scholars to research the rhetorical situation of the mustangs of the West, their dynamic history, and the consequences of human intervention. Of the many ways in which scholars could consider the impact of Velma Bronn Johnston on American history and the ongoing population issue of the mustangs in the West, three themes lend themselves to this dissertation: (1) pointing and naming, (2) borders and barriers, and (3) and performing and accessing environmentalism. The three emerging themes will serve as an analytical foundation to unpack the ideological impact of Velma Johnston and her crusade to save the mustangs of the American West. While these themes are not exhaustive of the approaches for which environmental scholars could consider the issue, these three themes emerge as productive points of convergence with Shelby's theoretical framework and its application to this project.

Environmental Rhetoric and Cultural Studies Themes

Pointing and naming

Among the many ways in which Environmental Communication explores the human relationship with the other-than-human world is through *nature identification*, the strategic pointing to and naming elements of nature (Milstein, 2011). Pointing and naming is the way in which human beings order and make sense of the world they inhabit; it is a cornerstone of the material relationship we make with our surroundings as we identify how *that* makes sense in relation to *me*. When placing elements of the other-than-human world in relation to the individual, pointing and naming frontstages the specific representation (e.g., that whale, this seal, those eagles, etc.) and backstages nature and the ecologies in which the subjects would be found. The single animal, or visible group of animals, stands constituent for all those that look similar. The ways in which some animals stand for all animals is firmly rooted in the English lexicon, which suggests a tendency to identify animals as a mass rather than through specific plural nouns; in cases such as *moose, cattle, fish,* and *livestock,* a single animal can stand in for the larger homogenous category and thus "remove the individuality of the animals, with the ideological assumption that each animal is just a (replaceable) representative of a category" (Stibbe, 2001, p. 9). Harré et al. (1999) identify that Western syntax exacerbates the problem by placing humans as agent and nature as object, which minimizes subjectivity and agency for the other-than-human world: when *we* "watch whales," "plant flowers," and "divert rivers" *we* act on *them*. We strip nature of its own voice and agency through our Western lexicon and syntax, thus we speak for the other-than-human-world rather than communing with it. The ways in which we speak about nature produce conditions that extend the human-nature divide, reinforcing the

binary between humans and the environment rather than positioning humans as part of the environment.

Plumwood (2002) offers a robust ecofeminist exploration of the dualism of the discursively constructed separation between humans and nature – and the gendered consequences of this – through her description of the historic pejorative connections between femininity and a closeness to nature that is fundamentally predicated on dominance and control that often defines human understandings of their surroundings. She opens the discussion of reason/nature dualism from a perception in which rationality is masculine and stands in opposition to that which is irrational and feminine:

> Both rationality and nature have a confusing array of meanings; in most of these meanings reason contrasts systematically with nature in one of its many senses. Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast of reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or [sic] uncivilised, the nonhuman world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness. In other words, nature includes everything that reason excludes. (p. 19)

From Plato to Descartes and beyond, centuries of Western thinking describe nature as an oppositional force to the order and rationality of human domination which has created a binary between *us* and *them* and serves as a foundation for a contemporary culture-nature dualism. As "dualism" refers to the conceptualization of something in to two contrasting aspects, the culture-nature dualism identifies the rhetorically constructed tension between culture and nature. Haila (2000) offers that "specific subject-object relationships are generalized to a totalizing distinction between 'us' and 'the environment,'" which produces "nature" as a separate realm of reality

from “culture.” Perhaps we point, name, make meaning, and organize the world hoping to understand the centuries-old question asked by philosophers of days-passed: “how can mind have any connection with something utterly alien to itself, something essentially mechanical and non-mental, namely nature” (Collingwood, 1960, p. 7). Both Milstein (2011) and Sowards (2006) respond to Collingwood’s query with a turn to Burke’s (1984) discussion of *identification* to illuminate the ways in which humans are composed of their social relationships with Others: “The so-called ‘I’ is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting ‘corporate we’s.’ . . . Sometimes these various corporate identities work fairly well together. At other times they conflict” (p. 264)

Another part of the culture-nature dualism relates to how Capra (1995) describes the ways in which humans “otherize” nature as separate in an effort to control it. Sowards (2006) again utilizes Burke (1969) and the idea of consubstantiality, or shared substance, to discuss how individual’s identify others:

> A is not identical with his[/her] colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or [s]he may identify [her]himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if [s]he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. . . In being identified with B, A is “substantially one” with a person other than [her]himself. Yet at the same time [s]he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus [s]he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (p. 21)

If one considers the tensions between “nature” and “culture” as representative of the othering with which humans engage, both “nature” and “culture” are revealed to be both joined and separate. Humans, and by extension their many cultures, come from and exist on the same planet

that we have deemed to be “nature.” The other-than-human world is often marked by the absence of humans in places as well as the many non-human things that exist in and make-up those places. Researching the ways primatologists and environmentalists rhetorically construct and identify common ground between humans and orangutans, Sowards (2006) expands upon the ways humans use identification as a strategy of connection to the non-human world that destabilizes the “artificial” boundaries between culture and nature, which can extend a connection from an individual representative of a species to the ecosystems that support the species.

De Waal (2008) explores some of the artificial barriers through their suggestion that identification with apes rather than bats or star-nosed moles, for example, is easier for humans because apes “look” human and have comparable sensory systems to our own; when an orangutan shows comparable ability to perceive stimuli like a human while also maintaining human-like physical form, humans can identify more effectively with the animals which allows them to be more individualized rather than representative. De Waal reinforces this notion of artificial barriers through describing “animalcentric anthropomorphism” as a resource to create positive identification effects:

> Animalcentric anthropomorphism must be sharply distinguished from anthropocentric anthropomorphism. The first takes the animal's perspective, the second takes ours. It is a bit like people we all know, who buy us presents that they think *we* like versus people who buy is presents that *they* like. The latter have not yet reached a mature form of empathy, and perhaps never will. (p. 77)

Anthropomorphizing suggests the application of human characteristics to an animal, which can be problematic when we extend complex human emotions and experiences to animals. As people

only have our own researched abilities, experiences, and the emotions tied to those experiences to make sense of the world, we struggle to disassociate understanding things from a human perspective and can project our emotions onto animals as a point of identification. Animalcentric anthropomorphism is about overcoming projections to try to understand the experience of an animal from its own perspective: to wonder what it must be like to be a bat, or a star-nosed mole, an ape, or even a horse.

Environmental Communication offers scholars an opportunity to research the human-nature divide through our relationship to our planet. When Milstein (2011) uses *nature identification* to discuss the strategic pointing to and naming elements of nature, she is specifically calling forth Burke's notion of identification as a symbolic act that humans do to create a shared substance with nature, with which humans are consubstantial. Milstein uses human-orca shared substances of identifying markers on the orcas as a point of identification comparable to the individuality of human fingerprints and the diversity in human dialects as comparable to those of orcas; these identifications with nature did transformative work for environmental tourists and allowed people to recognize individuals in another species and constructed human-orca similarities. Among the many tools that Environmental Communication provides, *nature identification* is one that investigates the systematic way that humans point to a thing, label it, and place it in relation to humanity. Milstein's text explores the positive impacts of pointing-and-naming on tourists in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States; when they were pushed beyond naming something simple such as a "whale" or an "orca," and call the animals by their specific identifications and names, they were able to individualize the orcas and build connections. She found that informed tourists who spotted orcas and called them by (human applied) individual names such as "Faith" (L57) or the 99-year-old "Granny" (J2) were

more accepting to learning about the narrative of the individual animal and the human-impact on the orca habitat. Nature identification provides opportunities to create connections with animals, which can produce material consequences for them. According to Alexandra Morton (2004), nearly every wild orca in the Pacific Northwest had its own identity by the 1980s which helped call-to-task companies such as Sealand of the Pacific which mistreated orcas in the past: "A wondrous thing happens when an animal moves from population status to individual standing: It [Sealand] can no longer be treated with impunity" (p. 148). The individual connections people made helped to move the orcas from a mass of animals that were very different from humans to individualized, named animals; these connections helped advance fights against animal cruelty in the marine park industry. Unfortunately, the benefits of nature identification are not equally distributed across species. Rather, the "whales, and other global charismatic megafauna, claim a culturally cherished status, enjoying and enduring focused attention" (Milstein, 2011), which suggests that the salmon eaten by the whales do not receive individualized names and attention nor do they receive the same connection with humans.

Nature identification uses Burke's notions of identification and consubstantiality to understand the ways in which humans construct artificial barriers between themselves and the Others that comprise the natural and wild spaces of our world. While research of this kind in Environmental Communication looks at ways in which connections are made between people and the other-than-human world, it is still predicated on the existing divide between *us* and *them*: the differences that exist between the civilized human world and the natural world. The borders often exist in this approach as rhetorical and symbolic constructs embedded in the language we use to make sense of the places, things, and animals we see, but we also intentionally construct

physical barriers and metaphorical borders to separate and keep us safe from the outside wilderness that perpetually pushes back against the trammeling of human intervention.

Borders and barriers

Perceptions about "wilderness" and "nature" as something uncontrollable and separate from humans have been a part of American thinking since early settlers. Nash (2014) identifies that when William Bradford first stepped off the English vessel, the Mayflower, in 1620, the early Puritan claimed that he had stepped in to a "hideous and desolate wilderness" beginning a tradition of disgust and dismay about the wild places in the Western world. Callicott and Nelson (1998) discuss puritanical thinking about the wilderness as a "wild, unruly stronghold of Satan," which shifted somewhat with Jonathan Edwards' 1758 *The Images or Shadows of Devine Things*, in which the American wilderness is framed as more of an Eden being invaded by European-American immigrants described in *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* from 1741. Edwards' work in *Sinners* also positions Earth itself as a barrier between the corporeal world we inhabit and the misery of hell below: "Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell" (Callicott & Nelson, 1998, p. 26) he continues to expand that the Earth, nor the air, nor the animals "willingly" serve the sinful humans which positions the land, air, and other creatures as collaborative with one another while also being an Other from humans.

The language of these settlers provides a lens with which we can view early perceptions of the environment from European migrants inhabiting what is now North America. We continue to live with the tension of seeing nature as something wonderful to be experienced as well as something sinful that needs to be dominated. While *nature identification* points toward the consequences of pointing-at and naming the fauna that inhabits our world, it is about the ways in

which we organize and make sense of animals. Similar to the theme of creating categories and hierarchies of animals in their relationship to humans, so too do we extend the practice to the landscape upon which we dwell. While humans apply value to some animals as *more than* other animals through identification processes, we also create borders and barriers to label some places as “natural,” and/or “wild,” while we label other places as “wasteland” or “sacrifice zone.” Though we share our air, sea, and land with millions of other species, Environmental Communication provides literature to suggest the ways in which we claim the right to exercise control over the natural world through the construction of borders and barriers, indicating where one place begins and another ends.

Among the most influential texts that provided me a point of entry to Environmental Communication is Elizabeth Dickinson’s (2016) article that explores the human-nature divide as both a metaphorical and physical construct. Americans have a history of separating themselves from “the wilderness” by ways of identifying where civilization ends and the wild begins (Callicott & Nelson, 1998). Dickinson (2016) explores the human-nature divide as it physically manifests in the six public state forest sites that comprise the North Carolina Educational State Forest (NCESF) system in which human intervention has created both corporeal and metaphoric barriers to identify where people belong and where nature is allowed to remain. While her work focuses on a specific geographic location, the provocative text calls forth challenges for thinkers to critically assess what “nature” and “wilderness” mean, where do they get to exist, and how do we separate ourselves from them. Much like Milstein (2011) *nature identification*, Dickinson’s conceptual approach to Environmental Communication is about the separation between humans and Others through the recognition of differences between *us* and *them* as well as *human* and *nature*, but considered through a different lens. Dickinson argues that the current practices in the

NCESF produce anthropocentric frames for environmental issues that expand the human-nature binary (similar to the nature-culture dualism); the text also argues that the unnatural intervention of the rangers on the natural space presents a constructed sense of order that is disrupted by the visitors to the parks.

As humanity marched through our shared history on the planet, we used various means such as language to structure the world around us with order and hierarchies. In similar ways to how we point-to and name things, we also apply value through labels that suggest some things are *more than* others with more purpose and meaning for the objects' relationship to humans. Language, again, plays an important role in the ways we frame the environment and project human order and logic onto wild places of the world. One might follow Dickinson's example and turn to Cronon (1996) to begin unpacking the traditional ways in which humans of the West have historically constructed nature: "Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it [the wilderness] is quite profoundly a human creation - indeed, the creation of a very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history" (p. 69). The wilderness and other places we point-to and name as "wild" are not the pristine and untouched-by-man locations that we suggest, rather, they are products of humanity bound as locations that we have engendered with meaning. John Muir "unified the aesthetic, rationale, and ethical response to nature in an effort to lessen the degree of alienation between humanity and the natural world" (Oravec, 1981, p. 258). Muir's (2011) declaration about the Sierra Nevada mountains on June 18, 1869, that "no description of Heaven that I have ever heard or read seems half so fine," echoed the nation's perceptions about the pristine beauty of "wild" places (p. 77). The United States deeded Yosemite to the state of California in 1864 and it became the United States' first wildland park (Nash, 1970). Yosemite represents an example of Cronon's observation in which a

place that existed before humans, before white European migrants flooded across the western half of the North American continent, and before there was an America, was transformed from one entity to another for the purpose of human recreation. Yosemite, that once surpassed Muir's understanding of "Heaven" would not stay pristine: Darling and Eichhorn (1969) identify that Independence Day of 1966 brought in 54,000 visitors to Yosemite Valley that necessitated nine grocery stores, seven service stations, three swimming pools, a stock stable, a barbershop, a laundry service and hotels for 4,500 people.

Perhaps one moment in history stands out for American citizens as a catalyst for the construction and production of "wilderness" as the United States formalized their language and defined the "wildernesses" with the Wilderness Act of 1964:

> A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man finds himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation… (Zahniser, 1964)

Mark Woods (1998) explores the Wilderness act and discusses the specific words selected for the legislation; he offers that the term 'untrammeled' "denotes the opposite of human-dominated landscape: the nonhuman forces of nature are to be given free rein in wilderness" (Callicott & Nelson, 1998, p. 134) The "wilderness," then, is marked by specific absence of human presence and intervention; it is a place where people visit but do not dwell, and a place where humans do not add permanent "improvements" to what exists outside of our control. Many of the places in America that are identified as "the wilderness" no longer exist as exemplified by human

intervention on Yosemite Valley. A place once “untrammeled,” or unhampered by human meddling, where humans are the visitor, receives such human traffic that maintaining its natural state is nearly impossible.

While some places have been designated as *more than* other places and reserved (poorly) for maintaining their natural states, others have been bound and labeled as *less than* other places, open to receiving the harmful waste of human intervention. Yucca Mountain represents a national “sacrifice zone” as part of the American Southwest due to the region’s disproportionately high concentration of military bases, research labs, weapons testing locations, and chemical contamination (Kuletz, 1998). Endres (2012) discusses the conflict between the national need to use Yucca Mountain as a site for the storage of high-level nuclear waste and the ways that it advances environmental racism by marginalizing the claim of the Shoshone and Paiute peoples. Much like the way animals are used to advance messages mentioned previously, Yucca Mountain and other sacrifice zones are used to advance political agendas. The land within the borders and barriers of a country that needs to be sacrificed requires some level of disembodiment from a national entity that widens the gap between humans and nature, thus deterritoriality, "the loss of commitment by modern nation-states (and even the international community) to particular lands or regions" (Kuletz, 1998, p. 7), is used as a means to justify the capitalistic need for sacrificing land as a waste “zone.” Hedges and Sacco (2014) echo the use of sacrifice zones as places where “the marketplace rules without constraints, where human beings and the natural world are used and then discarded to maximize profit” (p. XI). Sacrifice zones represent tension with natural reserves and “the wilderness” in which the former represents places where humans should not dwell for safety, and the other represents places where humans can not dwell for legal reasons.

Through government intervention we have pointed to and named places to apply social human value and order on the natural world; we have then bound those places with artificial borders and barriers to say this is where "we" get to be in the civilized places of the world and there is where "you," the Other, get to be in the "wild" and dangerous locations. Where *nature identification* is about hierarchies of animals and labels, boundaries and barriers are comparable to how De Certeau (1984) describe the difference between place and space. A place is "the order of whatever kind in which elements are distributed in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence;" a place is thus "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability" (p. 117). A space is "composed of intersections of mobile elements" to facilitate motion through a place; it is the purposeful engendering of a place (p. 117). The ways people create borders and barriers are about the means and effects of engendering places with value as spaces. Sacrifice zones represent places we have identified and bordered as having a specific value as a sacrificial location in which the sacrifice of small group can benefit an entire nation (Endres, 2012). National and state parks, wildlife reserves, and the places set aside to preserve the "wildness" of the United States are spaces where humans allow constructed and produced images of nature to exist.

Performing and accessing environmentalism

While much of the literature for Environmental Communication considers and discusses the human relationship with the other-than-human world through themes such as pointing at and naming animals, as well as the ways in which we construct borders and barriers to make places become spaces, a third theme emerges about how we construct the image of people that want to positively impact the other-than-human world. While the first two emergent themes explore our relationship with animals and places, the third theme of *performing and accessing*

environmentalism considers our relationships with other (sometimes) like-minded people as well as the means and acceptability of performing environmental behaviors.

To be clear, all Environmental Communication scholarship, to some extent, offers discussions of the consequences of human intervention in the Anthropocene, and with that comes the underlying idea that we *can* impact the current trends to collectively make better choices. While not all people accept the call to positively change the course of human intervention, those that do have the opportunity to turn to Environmental Communication as an access-point for information about *how* one might enter these changing communities and *what* actions correspond to participation. For many, "performance" is the entry point of access. "Performance," as both noun and verb, offers two contrasting definitions. As a noun, *performance* can mean a staged presentation, concert, or other form of entertainment; on the other hand, it can mean the action of completing a task or function. As a verb, *to perform* suggests that one is acting and/or entertaining, while it can also suggest that one is optimally working with efficiency. Environmentalism can come with a sense of both versions of *performance* in which some people can "perform" environmentalism through the prescribed actions, costumes, and values of being pro-environment, while others "perform" environmentalism by seeking to complete tasks that will positively impact the environment and other inhabitants of our planet. Environmental Communication scholars explore and present the complex breadth of problems facing our planet as a result of human intervention; through various means of diffusing that information to the public, people are left with decisions about if and how they want to be involved in the solutions.

Central to the performance of and access to environmentalism is Gramsci's notion of hegemony in which the ruling social elites secure compliance of the masses through the acceptance of popularized worldviews that advance the elite's agenda (Gramsci, Hoare, &

Nowell-Smith, 1971). One of the leading environmental problems in our contemporary landscape is overconsumption of natural resources that is closely related to human consumerism (Oskamp, 2000). The increasing population requires more resources, which are often controlled by the corporate financial elites which entrench an acceptance of the ever-increasing industrialization of the world to fulfill the expansive need for human habitats via more and (often) larger buildings; this applies unsustainable pressure to the planet's resources (Subramanian, 2018). Hegemony births the *Dominant Social Paradigm,* a term coined by Pirages and Ehrlich (1974) that is often used to discuss socioeconomic conditions in the Western world through political, economic, and technological elements. Environmentalism appears to contrast with the worldview of Western societies such as commitment to and support for private property, economic individualism, and the capitalistic pursuit of unlimited opportunity to gain wealth. Kilbourne, Beckmann, and Thelen (2002) argue that social traditions rooted in the Dominant Social Paradigm play a dynamic part in constructing individual beliefs in environmental issues; they claim that "faith in the institutions of the DSP increase, concern for the environment appears to decreases" (p. 202). The approaching point of planetary overload, due to resource extraction and over exploitation (Pengra, 2012), means that becoming a good steward of environmental resources is increasingly more important. As globalization expands Western ideologies, the constant growth of capitalism requires the consumption of more resources, which is quite simply unsustainable; enter the New Ecological Paradigm (Cotgrove, 1982) as an inevitable response in which humans must learn to live in greater harmony within the ecological system of our planet, and greater restraints must be put on corporate growth and free enterprise (Shafer, 2006). Environmentalism and those "environmentalists" who enact it are part of the New Ecological

Paradigm, and they subsequently exist in tension with the Dominant Social Paradigm operating outside the hegemonic worldviews of the ruling elite.

A paradigm is a shared way that a group of people understand their world; when applied to environmentalism, the New Ecological Paradigm comes with expectations as to how people use those shared understandings of the world to enact change. Unfortunately, even among those connected through their understandings that ecological problems exist and are in agreement that we should do something about them, there exist hierarchies: what one person might consider the necessary steps to perform environmentalism, another might find inadequate. The term, "environmentalist" emerged during the 1960s to describe "people who were concerned about the physical environment, the pollution of our air and water" (Wiley, 1998, p. 28). Tesch and Kempton (2004) examined perceptions and definitions of "environmentalist" from within groups of environmentally progressive people; their research offers four types of "environmentalist": (1) "lay environmentalists" are those who say they care about the environment but take no public actions; (2) "conservationists" who preserve local habitats; (3) "activists" who engage civically and/or politically, and (4) "radicals" who participate in demonstrations and civil disobedience. Each of the proposed types of environmentalists have different costs of admittance for consideration with increasing expectations of performance; where the first type merely communicates intention to ask, the fourth, most extreme, type sacrifices time, energy, and resources to publicly identify themselves as an environmental actor in order to disrupt those agencies negatively impacting the planet. Echoing the hierarchies and values of pointing-and-naming as well as borders and barriers, the in-group hierarchy of sub-terms for environmentalists suggests a connection for the way people make sense of the places of the world, the animals that inhabit it, as well as the other people that share in similar beliefs. The performance of

environmentalism appears to be the entry-point for those who want to be environmentalists, but the terms themselves and the hierarchical labels applied to practitioners are closely tied to the specific configurations necessary for *who* is allowed to perform environmental behaviors.

As it would appear that not all environmentalists are created or understood equally, it is clear that awareness of a problem, intention to do something about it, and acting on one's intentions do not always align. Though not related to environmental behavior the theory of reasoned action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) provides a model to connect beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. The theory of reasoned action model has been used in different ways, but for the purposes of researching environmental behavior it provided the foundation for early Environmental Communication scholarship to consider the ways in which beliefs and attitudes about the environment and environmental issues might mobilize into action of individuals. Hines, Hungerford, and Tomera (1987) published their model of responsible environmental behavior based on the Ajzen and Fishbein model and developed from a meta-analysis of pro-environmental behavior research studies. The model of responsible environmental behavior suggests that knowledge of the issues, knowledge of action strategies, locus of control, attittudes, verbal commitment, and individual sense of responsibility contributed to pro-environmental behavior. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) add some illumination to the term *pro-environmental behavior* as "behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world (e.g. minimize resource and energy consumption, use of non-toxic substances, reduce waste production)" (p. 240). Behavior is about actions, and pro-environmental behavior requires actions for the betterment of the natural other-than-human world.

At the heart of considering pro-environmental behavior and the organic tension that comes from the definitions of *performance*, perhaps, is re-visitation of the previously mentioned conceptualizations of Erving Goffman's (1978) "frontstaging" and "backstaging." "Frontstage" behaviors are what people do when they know others are watching and the public-facing *performance* of environmentalism might then involve publicly looking-the-part of an environmentalist in ways such as using re-usable grocery bags (Spranz, Schlüter, & Vollan, 2018), switching to LED lightbulbs (Rosenthal & Barringer, 2009), recycling (Markle, 2014), and other performative behaviors. "Backstage" behaviors are free from the social norms that shape our public behavior: the behaviors done in the comfort of our own homes that include (but are not limited to) the rehearsing of "frontstage" behaviors; thus, even when we are "backstage" we are aware and considering the "frontstage" activities. The simplified understanding of "backstage" behavior suggests that it is the behavior done when no one is around, which indicates more of the actionable version of "performance"; environmentalism to make a long-term change at the sacrifice to one's self and comfort. Environmental Communication scholarship provides approaches for understanding the similarities, differences, and intersections of "performance" and its meanings through a lens harmonious to that of Goffman's offering. Atkinson and Kim (2015) offer an unintentional exemplar of this with their consideration of the conflicting ways in which people *act* environmentally through their "green" consumption habits. They found that participating consumers showed awareness of the problems associated with buying and consuming single-use plastic bottles, but rationalized their decision to buy problematic plastic water bottles through certain criteria such as convenience, a denial of responsibility due to outside circumstances, and a denial of injury in which the harm of a few plastic bottles was negligible. Atkinson and Kim follow in the spirit of Kalafatis, Pollard, East,

and Tsogas (1999) who suggest that, while many consumers are concerned about the environment and are willing to pay more for sustainable products and services, few of these consumers actually perform in environmentally progressive purchasing habits in the supermarkets. Acting pro-environmentally with one's purchasing habits can be challenging and consumers unfortunately face a battle with their corporate suppliers from tactics such as "greenwashing," defined by Kangun, Carlson, and Grove (1991) as the environmental advertising of a product without environmental substance. Be it through means of behaviors performed in front of people or behind closed doors, Environmental Communication scholarship urges people to act, to perform.

The increased urgency for more people to act in environmentally progressive ways comes at a cost to the individual, as acting in more conservational ways requires sacrificing one's own self-interest and acting for the interest of others by consuming less resources and allowing more for others, both at present and in the future. With more awareness of the planet's finite resources that must be shared by all Earthly inhabitants and a natural predilection to gather, consume, and keep resources, we potentially live in a contemporary version of what Hardin (1968) calls the "tragedy of the commons" in which individuals, who have access to shared resources, act in their own self-interest, and thus spoil or deplete the resource through collective action. Our shared resources are depleting as our human population increases, which encourages acting for the communal good rather than individual self-interest.

Despite the increased need for all of us to act more communally, there are still limitations as to who is allowed perform these behaviors. Power dynamics and social hierarchies impact the contemporary landscape of American environmentalism. D. E. Taylor (2002) illustrated an absence of diverse perspectives in Environmental Communication scholarship at the beginning

of the current century, discussing a historic tendency toward research on white, middle-class male environmental activism that limits our understanding of how class, race, and gender relations structured environmental experiences. More recently, Roberts and Chitewere (2011) highlight the racial discrimination, both implicit and direct, that impact the use of national parks on the West Coast by racial minorities. Hickcox (2018) found self-proclaimed environmentalists from Boulder, CO, a community known for its history of environmental planning and practices, also demonstrated environmental racism from the white community toward immigrant and Latino populations for not being participating in mainstream environmental practices. Sex and gender also impact environmental practices as studies show that women maintain smaller carbon footprints (Räty & Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010) and litter less (Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000) than men. Women also show lower levels of social dominance orientation, human supremacy beliefs and speciesism, as well as higher levels of empathy compared to men (Graça, Calheiros, Oliveira, & Milfont, 2018) which may suggest why women are less likely to support animal exploitation. When taken together, these examples suggest that performing environmentalism is not equally accessible to all people; rather, entry and participation might come at the cost of gender and skin color as perceptions of *who* gets to be an environmentalist. Being an environmentalist is a unique subject position contingent upon a particular configuration of race, class, and gender.

The Environmental Communication themes established here share a connective thread that runs through them and extends beyond. Each of these individually call-forth questions about individual beliefs regarding the other-than-human world, the shared beliefs of those within and outside of groups, and the beliefs intentionally fabricated for the masses by those with power about our planet. From the pointing-and-naming of the world's fauna to identify with it, to the

borders and barriers used to bind and engender places as “wild” or “natural,” to the ways in which we limit access to those who want to perform the behaviors of environmentalism, ideologies begin to emerge as a means for people to make sense of their surroundings. To show how ideologies about the mustangs of the West create important material consequences for the animals, the land, and the people of the United States, a conceptual understanding of ideologies and their uses is needed.

Environmental communication and ideology

Hall (1986) conceives ideology as the mental frameworks “which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out, and render intelligible the way society works” (p. 29). Shared mental frameworks such as languages, concepts, categories, thoughts, and systems of representation organize perceptions are used by Hall to describe the ways in which we create understandings for members of communities. Environmentalism in the United States is an example of an ideology through its shared language (e.g. “bioegalitarianism,” “invasive species,” “renewable energy,”), concepts (e.g. “greenwashing,” “climate change,” “biodiversity”), categories (e.g. “activist,” “lobbyist,” “green party” member), and more. It serves as a tool for individuals to make sense of the world they inhabit and our shared complex relationships to the other-than-human elements that exist with us. Shelby (2003) claims that ideologies “are capable of having an enormous impact on social relations and the prospects for progressive social change” (p. 155) which allows for the consideration of environmentalism as an ideology for its potential impact on social relations and change. Burgchardt (1995) suggests that ideological analysis offers scholars an opportunity to explore the relationships between language, power, physical condition, and the fundamental attitudes, values, and beliefs of a culture. While this dissertation seeks to unpack the ways in which ideologies shape perceptions

about animals and the material consequences of those ideologies, it requires an understanding of environmental ideologies as many of those mental frameworks intersect with our understandings of animals. The culture(s) of the United States created ideologies about wild horses and imbued them with social meanings in which the mustangs of the West serve as contemporary "living symbols" of past days in which (predominantly) white settlers expanded across what is now the western United States, bringing with them their values, beliefs, and understandings of human-nature relationships. When Hall (1986) claims that the problem of ideology "concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of masses, and thereby become a 'material force'" (p. 29), it illustrates the problematic way in which ideologies can attach to the minds of the masses to produce corporeal consequences; in essence, Hall identifies that the problems begin when ideologies move people to actions. From environmental ideologies to those surrounding the mustangs of the West, Americans have been moved to a range of action ranging from the mass-slaughter of the animals to providing them with legal protection comparable only to that of the nation's founding members' chosen national symbol, the American bald eagle.

The democratic process of electing officials would suggest that the elected lawmakers and the appointed staff members employed by the United States government represent the will and ideologies of the citizens that they represent, or at least the majority of those citizens. Thus, the current legislation and management efforts of the mustangs in the West is, or *should be*, representative of the American people. Democracy in the United States provides power to individuals to represent their constituents, implying that the ideologies of those imbued with power reflect the ideologies of the masses they represent, but Black (2003) disagrees; "An ideology, as a language of ideas, is controlled by the powerful and wealthy, and therefore cannot be ignored" (p. 314). Rather than reflecting the views of the people, ideologies can be used as

forms of oppression from the powerful elites to maintain order over populations. Shelby (2003) contends that "ideology-critique is indispensable for understanding and resisting the forms of oppression that are characteristic of the modern world" (p. 154), and in the landscape of this modern world, ideological analysis offers a useful approach to understanding the oppression of the mustangs themselves as well as how the mustangs are used as a mechanism for intervention on places in the West as well as the oppression of those places' human inhabitants. R. A. Rogers (1998) claims that "ideologies of domination and manipulation, in effect, silence nature by dismissing the value of interaction based on nonhierarchical arrangements" (p. 245); this is paramount when considering the historic and contemporary treatment of mustangs in the United States, which suggests an ideology of domination that silences nature.

Defining 'ideology'

"Ideology" has a comparably broad spectrum of definitions and understandings to the word "culture" (Griffin, 2006), which Williams (2014) describes as one of the "two or three most complicated words in the English language" due to its historical construction across languages and the polysemy of the word itself (p. 49). To offer a brief history of "ideology" as it sits within Western understandings: contemporary uses of "ideology" originate with Napoleon Bonaparte's attack on democracy and the principles of enlightenment as discussed by Williams:

> It is to the doctrine of the ideologues - to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on this foundation would erect the legislation of the peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and the of the lessons of history - to which one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen our beautiful France. (p. 109)

Napoleon's use of the term as a point of blame directed at the uncompromising followers of democracy and enlightenment provided a concrete foundation for "ideology" that would abstract to a broader and more pejorative German perspective popularized by Marx and Engels in which they suggest that ideologies are upside-down versions of reality: "If in all ideology of men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 47). For Marx and Engels (1970), ideologists, or the ruling class's thinkers, used ideologies as a system to control the masses through the "illusion of class" (p. 65); through the upside-down perception of reality enabled by ideologies and the illusion of class created by the ruling elites, ideologies represent an illusion, or "false consciousness." Shelby (2003) notes that Marx does not use the term "false consciousness" directly, but Engels does offer the connection in a letter to Franz Mehring:

> Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces. (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 648)

With a complex root-system in Western thinking related to the power of the ruling elites over the masses through illusions and upside-down thinking, "ideology" continued to broaden and grow through the twentieth century to a potentially unsustainable breadth of understandings. The work of Malcolm Hamilton (1987) attempted to reign-in these definitions and explored 85 academic sources with unique descriptions of the term to find 27 recurring components. While Hamilton provided a practical synthetic definition of "ideology," the ways in which it continued to be used have remained inconsistent.

Shelby (2003) will serve as the methodological lens and organizational mechanism for the following chapters of this dissertation through his approach to ideological analysis. To provide an understanding of that which is to come, Shelby's conceptualization of "ideology" is paramount. He offers two types of uses for "ideology" as a foundation for which ideological analysis/criticism can begin: an *evaluative* use and a *nonevaluative* use. The nonevaluative use is epistemically and morally neutral, and it is used primarily for purposes of description and explanation or to refer to large-scale political doctrines such as conservativism or liberalism. The evaluative use of ideology, or *critical conception* is couched in in the Marxist understanding and always suggests some level of criticism; Shelby offers, "To claim that a particular belief system is ideological, in the evaluative sense, is to impute to the system of belief some negative characteristic(s) that provides a reason to reject it (or at least some significant part of it) in its present form" (p. 157). Shelby then turns to *beliefs* as the primary unit of analysis; the profound social impact of ideologies is built on the reception of beliefs by the human consciousness. Beliefs are defined as "mental representations within the consciousness of individual social actors" (p. 157), and are used to express or imply knowledge claims about the world and what does or does not have value. Ideological beliefs are transmitted, represented, and reinforced culturally not necessarily in the consciousness of individuals, but in the discourse and cultural productions such as speech acts, jokes, slogans, films, music, arts, television shows, and the like of a group or members of a historical era, geographic region, social group, etc. Sets of beliefs that form ideologies are referred to as a *form of social consciousness* and require four features to be considered for ideological critique:

1. *The beliefs are widely shared by members in the relevant group; the beliefs are generally known to be widely held.* Here, beliefs need to be held by larger groups of people rather than simply by individuals to be considered ideological.
2. *The beliefs form, or are derived from, a prima facie coherent system of thought, which can be descriptive and/or normative*. Ideological beliefs do not exist independent of one another but are part of a network of beliefs which create a wider view of things; the beliefs are not necessarily built on facts, and critical scrutiny may reveal inconsistencies.
3. *The beliefs are a part of, or shape, the general outlook and self-conception of many in the relevant group*. Belief systems are deeply ingrained into members of groups and are used to create a sense of self-identity and self-worth for those subscribing to the beliefs.
4. *The beliefs have a significant impact on social action and social institutions*. Beliefs shape the social practice(s) of the group and its members.

Shelby then turns toward Raymond Geuss (1981) to provide a structural three-point approach to discussing the competing properties that form a social consciousness into an ideology. Chapters three-five of this dissertation will individually focus on one component of Geuss's approach to what makes a form of consciousness an ideology, though for cohesion the order for the chapters does not match the order for which Guess presents these conceptions.

Epistemic properties of ideologies

The first form of social consciousness can be ideological by virtue of its *epistemic properties* that consider the relevant rational belief formation. Here, Geuss (1981) refers to "such things as whether or not descriptive beliefs contained in the form of consciousness are supported

by the available empirical evidence" (p.13). Shelby turns to different descriptions of ideology as put forth by different scholars to make sense of the epistemic properties of ideology; Althusser (2006), for example offers that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p. 101). What Geuss shows interest in is the provable empirical evidence available as to where the belief systems originate, as it seems many ideologies are based in false consciousness and illusions. Nielsen (1989) provides additional support by suggesting that ideologies work "by presenting and inculcating a false or slanted perspective that arranges the facts in a misleading way, or fails to mention certain facts, or places them in an inconspicuous context" (p. 105); thus Shelby and Geuss are interested in the ways in which ideologies are formed from misleading and false organizations of information. Pines (1993) echoes previously identified conceptions of ideologies as they relate to classism, but also confirms their inclusion of skewed information used to form an ideology as "a social consciousness which takes certain false things to be true about matters having significance to the outcome of class-divided societies" (p. 165). For the purposes of this dissertation on the epistemic properties of the ideologies surrounding mustangs in the West, this research will consider the empirical data as well as the ideological illusions created from the reorganization of data that serve as the building blocks for ideologies. Specifically, chapter four will channel the three themes of Environmental Communication discussed in this chapter to illuminate the social landscape and material conditions that produced belief systems in the first half of the twentieth century about the land and animals impacted by Velma Johnston's crusade to save the mustangs. This research will discuss the ways in which pointing and naming created identification with mustangs, the borders and barriers that have engendered places in the American West as spaces

for the horses to live, and the performance of environmentalism through horse intervention as well as the limitations of access for participation in the lives of the animals.

Functional critique of ideologies

Geuss, and subsequently Shelby, explore the second way that a form of consciousness becomes an ideology through a functional critique that is based on the negative practical consequences of adopting ideologies for society or for the groups within it. Geuss (1981) is concerned with the functional approach as an exploration of the role ideology plays in supporting, stabilizing, or legitimizing institutional social practices. Part of ideology is about the way that it continues to replicate hegemony through shared beliefs, and serves to "establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical—what I shall call 'relations of domination'" (J. Thompson, 1990, p. 7); they are "'symbol-systems' that 'are mobilized to legitimate the sectional interests of hegemonic groups'" (Giddens, 1979, p. 188). Critiquing and analyzing the functional component of ideologies is ultimately about discovering the outcomes of the ideology: the ways in which belief systems are used to funnel power away from individuals and toward institutions or the ruling elites. This research will consider the functional effects of ideologies relating to the construction of some animals as *more than* others as a means of intervention on the animals, the land, and the people that share the American West. Chapter five will also discuss the three themes of Environmental Communication, but will do so by exploring the half-century since Velma Johnston's activity in the politics of the 1950s-1970s United States. How, then, are horses pointed-at and named as a consequence of Johnston's actions, what borders and barriers now exist for the horses and people in the contemporary landscape, and how has the plight of the horses created new problematic limitations for the performance of environmentalism and the access of those who wish to engage with the animals.

While Velma Johnston's beliefs may have been altruistic and served to benefit the animals specifically, perhaps they produced unintended and material consequence for the inhabitants and spaces of the West as a result of ideologies.

Genetic critique of ideologies

Finally, the third way in which a form of consciousness is an ideology comes through the virtue of its genetic properties (Geuss, 1981), or as Shelby (2003) suggests: "genetic critique of an ideology focuses on the negative features that are a part of the etiology or history of the form of consciousness" (164). The genetic properties of an ideology are found in the origin, genesis, or history of the beliefs; to discover these histories, one must consider the members of the groups with the ideologies, or the agents of the ideologies and how they came to have these beliefs. As ideologies exist as a shared set of social beliefs, the beliefs have origins in the lived human-experience of groups' members and their perceptions of reality. With group members acting based on their shared beliefs, part of those ideologies are embedded within the group in sometimes hidden ways: as Larrain (1991) claims, "'[I]deological' is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence—that is, the social effectivity, the very reproduction of which implies that the individuals 'do not know what they are doing'" (p. 48). Larrain's offering about ideology includes some level of ignorance about the beliefs from the group members, which is bolstered by Elster's (1982) description of ideologies as "a set of beliefs or values that can be explained through the (non-cognitive) interest or position of some social group" (p. 123). Analyzing and critiquing ideologies from a genetic perspective considers the construction of the "quasi-historical narrative" and "genealogical" narrative of an ideology to emphasize the historical conditions that produced the beliefs (Shelby, 2003), even when those conditions were not entirely clear to the agents. The next chapter of this text will

provide a biographical narrative of Velma Johnston's life and her lived experiences in the social and political landscapes of mid-twentieth century America that produced her beliefs as well as the beliefs of those around her that created ideologies surrounding wild horses and the very spirit of the West that the animals symbolize.

CHAPTER 3: GENETIC HISTORY OF IDEOLOGIES AND VELMA B. JOHNSTON

"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free."

–Aldo Leopold (1949)

For Stuart Hall (1986), the problem of ideologies "is to give an account, within a materialist theory, of how social ideas arise. We need to understand what their role is in a particular social formation, so as to inform the struggle to change society" (p. 29). To enter an analysis of the ideologies surrounding the ways we have imbued animals with human meaning and applied social hierarchical value to them in which some animals are *more than* others, one must understand the genetic history of how the relevant beliefs came to pass. Shelby (2003) adds that analyzing and critiquing ideologies from a genetic perspective considers the construction of the genealogical narrative of an ideology to emphasize the historical conditions that produce beliefs. As readers will see, Velma Bronn Johnston's life did not resemble contemporary projections of who or what an environmentalist is, but her narrative would later be used as an example for grassroots environmental change. Equally important to her role as an environmentalist is the ways in which her well-intentioned actions created long-term material consequences for the wild horses and the places of the West. To understand the epistemic properties and functional consequences of ideologies related to mustangs in the next two chapters, this research must first present the genetic foundations from which those ideologies sprang. The life of Velma Bronn Johnston uniquely represents a tension between humble origins in the West and the national celebrity of American politics.

Velma Bronn Johnston's small-town upbringing on a ranch in an early twentieth century near Reno, NV, provided her with close proximity and familial dependence on mustangs: her family's relationships with the animals were forged on an individual basis and produced beliefs that she would later share with others. Yet, her campaign later in life to save the mustangs from their inhumane treatment brought her to the nation's capital where she was confronted with vastly different beliefs about the animals by many who had scarcely interacted with horses at all. When Hall (1986) identifies that ideologies are "all organized forms of social thinking" (p. 30), he suggests the necessary shared beliefs of a community; to unpack those beliefs, we turn to a source who shared her own beliefs on a local, state, national, and even global level, garnering supporters from all across the planet. Horses, like other animals, are infused with human meaning in the Anthropocene, and the shared beliefs about what horses mean to *us* is rooted in ideologies that come to light and make sense when we unpack the narrative of Velma Bronn Johnston. This chapter provides a short biography of Velma Bronn Johnston that chronicles her early life to show the deep connection between her and American West, her political entry-point that identifies the brutality enacted upon horses in the 1950s, her political campaign as a woman from the West in a male-dominated landscape, and finally the convergence of Velma Johnston with her "Wild Horse Annie" persona that reveals her influence on spreading ideologies about mustangs.

The story of "Wild Horse Annie," or Velma Bronn Johnston began March 5, 1912 at Painted Rock Ranch outside of Reno, NV. Her humble beginning and relatively quiet life followed an unremarkable path until one notable morning in 1950 instigated a chain of events that resulted in animal protection legislation for the mustangs of the United States of America and impacted the ways in which people today ideologically understand the roles of wild horses in

the contemporary landscape. Her intelligent approach to enacting change as well as her love of the American West and wild horses provided her with the unique opportunity to dramatically impact the world that she inhabited with lasting effects. Johnston's lived experience provides a unique view that illuminates ideologies surrounding wild horses in the United States. Exploring her role as an environmentalist and political actor provide a unique reflection on the ways horses and the American West can both construct a person's individual beliefs as well as how those beliefs can be shared to create ideologies that impact a nation. "Wild Horse Annie" serves as the contemporary patron saint of wild horses: she fought a grassroots battle to protect the animals from human intervention during a time in which social ignorance enabled brutal round-up methods and mass slaughter of the animals as a mechanism for corporate greed. As horses are rhetorically entangled with "wildness" (Philipps, 2017) and serve as "living symbols of the pioneer spirit of the West" (Jackson, 1971), genetic analysis of the time and place of Velma Bronn Johnston's life that forged her beliefs provide a unique opportunity to connect her narrative with the ways in which contemporary beliefs of the United States have come into existence.

Early Life

Velma Bronn Johnston's parents, Joseph Bronn and Gertrude "Trudy" Clay met near San Juan California; during their courtship, Joseph would ride his horse more than 100 miles over the mountains between Reno and San Juan to visit and woo Trudy. They were married on Christmas Day of 1910 and began their family. The Bronns had four children, of whom Velma was their oldest. Her connection to the land and the wild horses of the West began before she was born, a connection that was firmly fixed to the histories of both her parents' family trees. She would often claim that mustangs were "in her blood" due to her family's heritage in the American West

and her father's profession that involved capturing, training, and working with the wild horses of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Later in life, she would tell stories to her friends about her paternal grandparents, Ben and Mary Bronn, moving from Ione, NV, to Nevada City, CA, in the late 1800s via covered wagon accompanied by a small host of livestock including a once-wild range mare and her foal. Weather and the hard conditions of traversing the West left the family with reduced supplies and resulted in Joseph's mother falling ill and not being able to produce enough breastmilk to feed her young son. Joseph's concerned mother turned to a lactating mare for milk to feed young Joseph. The journey's hardships continued one night when, as the story goes, a band of men from a Paiute tribe stole the family's livestock and some supplies. The following morning was met with a return of the bandits to "trade" back the stolen animals and goods to struggling family; the bandits celebrated as they left with the colt and left the mare resulting in the continued feeding of Joseph Bronn from the milk of a former mustang. For the rest of her life, Velma would cheerfully brag that her connection began in 1885 when her infant father was nursed by the milk of a mustang mare (Kania, 2012).

Joseph and Trudy Bronn immersed their children in the vistas and splendor of the American West, and in 1915, when Velma was just three years old, Joseph decided to introduce young Velma to riding on the back of a horse. Their inaugural evening ride would be a memorable experience: at one of their stops to enjoy a view, the horse that bore Velma kicked-up his heals and sent the young girl to the ground where she found herself looking up, terrified, at the underside of a fully-grown, domesticated mustang. Jospeph then chased the stallion that threw her, "running him into a box canyon on his own mount" (Johnston, 1967a). The salient early memory stuck with Velma into adulthood, instilling in her an admiration for the animals

that could not be transmitted through stories or lessons from a parent, but rather as a lived experience.

Joseph Bronn was a mustanger: he chased, captured, cared for, and trained wild horses for sport and business. The dozens of herds in close proximity to Reno, NV, provided Joseph with ample opportunities for success when he rode alone on a his favorite horse, a mustang he had captured, trained, and named Old Baldy (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). “Mustanging” still had a romantic connotation of one or a few riders chasing wild horses in what some thought to be a 300 year tradition of capturing small amounts of horses from wild herds roaming the West (H. S. Thomas, 1979, p. 44). Joseph viewed the pursuit and capturing of horses as an important part of his connection to the space that his family inhabited, which would serve as a foundation for his family’s beliefs about mustangs. While “mustanger” might have conflicting connotations by today’s standards that stem from the violent means of capturing horses, Joseph’s relationship with Old Baldy and his success in capturing and training the animals suggest that he maintained a respectful relationship with the horses he captured. While Velma was still quite young, Joseph started his own horse-drawn freight business that he called the Mustang Express: it utilized wild-caught mustangs that he gentled himself through more humane methods than “breaking” them (Switzer & Vaughn, 2003, p. 155). Clayton, Underwood, and Hoy (2001) describe “breaking” a horse as the *breaking* of the animal’s spirit to acquire a submissive and instinctively deadened, servant like response to human prompts. The Bronn approach to training their mustangs was centered on developing a relationship based on respect with the animals rather than dominance. The ways in which the family cared about the horses with which they worked, as well as those they captured, served as the foundation for Velma’s personal beliefs about the care and treatment of wild horses.

In 1923, when Velma was just 11 years old, she contracted polio, leaving her in a cast that covered most of her body and required her to live away from her family for six months (Downer, 2019). She viewed her time staying at a shared home for ill children as a joyless time and would later equate her time there to that of a prison sentence (Kania, 2012). Spending six months in San Francisco, CA, wearing an upper body cast from her hips to the top of her head left Velma physically disfigured with her face asymmetrically unbalanced for the rest of her life. Even after her time in the body cast was over, the road to recovery was painful and long; Velma described the experience as "agony" and the following five years as a "long period of getting used to being different than everybody else" (Johnston, 1973). Her disfigurement empowered her with resilience and determination that would manifest through a dedication to schoolwork, a steadfast sense of honesty, and a positive attitude in the face of adversity. The young children of the early 1920s attending school with Velma were unkind about the deformities she endured from polio. Velma was teased with regularity by other children and often left to be alone. Despite the ridicule from her peers and the isolation they inflicted, she chose to be positive and offer smiles as a response to the inevitable stares and whispered remarks from onlookers (Weiskopf, 1975). While she learned the best angles to hide her deformity from outsiders, she also learned the disarming power of a positive attitude and a smile to compensate for how she looked (Kania, 2012). Between her social isolation from peers and her empathy for confinement and suffering from her time in a body cast, she developed into a compassionate young lady with an enormous capacity for caring about animals.

Contracting polio as an 11 year old girl living a relatively isolated life outside of Reno, NV, in 1923 was likely a horrifying experience when one considers the mortality rates of those afflicted, the limitations to accessing treatment, and the painful "treatments" of often waiting-out

the illness. Poliomyelitis was first identified by Viennese physician Karl Landsteiner in 1908 (D. J. Wilson, 1998); the disease was found to be infectious a year later (Benison, 1974). Polio spread dramatically in the United States and became the single largest epidemic to impact the country in 1916 with 27,000 reported cases and 6,000 deaths nationwide (N. Rogers, 1992). Physicians at the time relied on traditional weapons in the fight against a quickly spreading disease: quarantine and hospitalization. Diagnosing the disease was difficult as the flu-like symptoms and fever resembled other common illnesses, ultimately confirming a case of polio was often only done after the second phase of the disease set-in, including sensitivity to touch and paralysis (Draper, 1935). Physicians had few tools to help patients once they reached paralysis; isolating the patient, making them comfortable, and keeping their muscles in a resting position served as the leading approach to prevent future deformities (Lewin, 1941). For those lucky enough to avoid paralyzed respiratory muscles and the subsequent need for the Drinker Tank Respirator, or the *iron lung* as it was more commonly referred, plaster casts, splints, and braces immobilized individuals to prevent unaffected muscles from unnatural twisting and bending while the paralysis ran its course. While many patients survived the miserable experience, orthopedic surgery was often recommended to correct and stabilize deformed limbs, joints, and the spine.

A polio diagnosis for young Velma was comparable to a prison sentence with a grim future, and her family made choices based on the available information of the time. The Bronns' limited financial resources prevented them from accessing the experimental serums, potions, and treatments made available following the 1916 epidemic (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010); with great effort they were able to send young Velma to Children's Hospital in San Francisco which housed an Infectious Disease Pavilion for poorer victims of the disease. Doctors placed Velma in body

cast that covered the top of her head to her hips. During her six months entombed in the cast she rarely walked and occasionally lost control of her bladder. When she returned to the family ranch the left side of her body had been pushing against the cast leaving it slightly twisted; her face appeared deflated with a drooping left eye, misaligned teeth, and a sagging cheek that presented a grimace where a girl's smile once resided. Young Velma's experiences with polio and her time in a body cast created in her an empathy for the afflicted and the sick as well as for those imprisoned and bound with limited mobility.

Returning to her home, family, and friends was difficult for Velma. She remained in continuous pain and had limited access to painkillers such as Bayer's Aspirin due to the finite financial resources of her family. The stress of her illness also impacted her relationship with her father, leaving little warmth between them (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). Polio weakened Velma's immune system to the point that the future champion of mustangs in the West developed an allergy to horses; being too close to the animals resulted in watery eyes, raspy breath, and a tickle in her throat. Her peers teased her about her twisted body asking if she was "coming or going" and calling her "humpy." The effects of polio and her time in the body cast changed Velma from a gregarious and articulate young person into a shy recluse that took comfort in literature. Velma, like other children, wanted to be accepted, and used the involuntary social isolation to cultivate her brain by spending long hours in the library reading about a wide breadth of topics. Her time away from school put her behind her peers academically, which threatened her opportunity to advance to middle school with her classmates; Velma used her time in the library to do twice the work expected of a sixth grader at the time. The school reluctantly worked with the Bronn family to allow young Velma the opportunity to show her academic prowess and complete an exam for the opportunity to advance with her classmates. She passed with ease and

advanced appropriately. Velma was articulate and well-read by all accounts (Kania, 2012), and she did not let her physical disfigurement impede her dreams of a life that resonated with the cultural norms for women of the time: a life with a career and a husband (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). Even as a young woman, she showed signs of resistance toward allowing her physical limitations and circumstances to define her actions and beliefs.

Velma enjoyed her close family relationships and spent much of her adolescent free time on her family's ranch caring for their animals; she used her other available time to surround herself with literature and was often found at the local library. Literature provided a refuge for Velma from her routine on the ranch and a respite from her peers who continued to keep her at a distance into her teen years. The library also provided access to information about contemporary culture and fashion that inspired Velma's creativity to sew and fashion her own clothing in the contemporary styles of the day to cover her thin, slightly deformed body from her childhood experience in a body cast. Velma's mother encouraged this desire for knowledge and would foster Velma's curiosity by taking trips to neighboring states with the intention of bringing geography and academics to life. With her mother's support and her zest for learning, Velma earned a position in the 1928 class honor roll and was able to graduate high school several months early (Kania, 2012). Her academic success helped her achieve her first job at the Farmers and Merchants Bank as the executive secretary for the bank's cofounder's son, Gordon Harris. He employed Velma for more than 40 years and remained one of her strongest supporters throughout her life. Her executive secretary role provided her with a modest, but steady, income during her life, and her friendship with Gordon Harris provided her with the necessary flexibility to maintain her profession as well as champion the mustangs of the West.

Her role in the female-filled position of an executive secretary was demanding but productive: she used it as an opportunity to succeed at her dreams of having a career, while also providing her with learning opportunities (unknowingly) to develop skills for political change in a time without the internet or other means to quickly diffuse information widely among networks. She could type 100 words per minute of clear and error-free letters, and could create hundreds of mimeographs in quick succession (Philipps, 2017). Her job, for all intents and purposes, was an opportunity for her to achieve her childhood dream of having a career, and she utilized the demands of her gendered job, predominantly held by women, to advance her own set of skills, generate an income, and occupy her time in ways beyond being a housewife. Working for Gordon Harris provided Velma opportunities to develop necessary skills that she did not know she needed while also providing a life-long friend and supporter.

While Trudy and Joseph Bronn supported their daughter as dutiful parents, and Gordon Harris supported Velma as an employer and friend, she found her most important companion while visiting her father in the hospital. Velma met her husband, Charles “Charlie” Clyde Johnston at Washoe General Hospital where he and Joseph were both patients and shared a room. Charlie was noted as a strong man of 6’4” towering over Velma at a mere 5’7”. Charlie moved to Reno to learn about ranching and benefitted from the knowledge of the Bronn family. Velma and Charlie’s courtship included long horse rides in Nevada’s mountains and square dances. Bank regulations of the time prohibited married women from being employees, so Velma and Charlie were married in secret without even her parents knowing of their nuptials. Velma’s employer left the bank shortly after to open his own insurance firm, and the two lovers were able to reveal their marriage to their friends and family. They purchased a 16-acre lot along the Truckee River near Wadsworth, NV. Velma and Charlie were unable to have children of

their own, which allowed them the opportunity to open their home and ranch to children of friends from all over the state as well as troubled youth from Reno, NV (roughly 30 miles away). Velma and Charlie both believed in the power of young people and that too many young people had been let down by adults, thus their shared belief meant they would work harder to keep up their ranch as a place for children and that they could not let down the young people whom they served.

Beginning a Crusade

Velma's life changed dramatically one morning in 1950 while she drove to work. While stopped in traffic, Velma noticed a gruesome amount of blood oozing from the full horse trailer in front of her vehicle. Growing up and living in the American West in the early twentieth century provided Velma with plenty of experiences relating to the capture, care, transport, and training of wild horses, but oozing blood was an uncommon image. Feeling compelled to investigate the scene, she followed the truck toward a slaughterhouse on the western border of Nevada where the source of the blood was revealed: the horse trailer was overstuffed with horses and two older stallions had trampled a young colt to death. The driver revealed that the animals had been captured during an airborne roundup of wild horses the previous weekend. Her own account of the scene adds historic context to the grim experience:

> I came upon a truckload of mutilated horses as I was driving from our ranch into nearby Reno, where I work. I discovered that they were wild horses, captured in an airborne roundup. Their destination was a [sic] slaughter house, where the sole requirement was that the horses be ambulatory and plentiful. The captors received six and one-half cents per pound. Because net profit depended upon quantity

> rather than upon condition, injury to the animals was of minimal concern.
>
> (Johnston, 1972a)

Though she had known that airplanes had been used to round up mustangs, she noted that the morning in 1950 "jarred" her own apathetic attitude into awareness about the means by which the horses were collected (Johnston & Pontrelli, 1969). The appalling sight created an immediate change in Velma's beliefs about the state of wild horses in the West, a change that would be the foundation of the political actor that she would become for the rest of her life.

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 regulated and controlled grazing rights of privately owned livestock on public lands, but in its second decade of existence, it was already proving an ineffective method for covering the costs of maintaining the land (Ross, 1984), encouraging horse roundups on public lands to offset the "damage" from wild horses and provide more resources for livestock. With the Taylor Grazing Act allowing roundups, and no laws in place to provide legal protection for the animals, Velma and Charlie wanted change but lacked the legal means to enact it. Philipps (2017) suggests that the two drove deserted mountain highways in western Nevada searching for unattended mustanger corrals to slip-open latches and let the animals free. Mustang roundups in 1950 were regulated by county commissioners and mustangers applied for permits to use vehicles such as airplanes to chase and corral the animals, thus Velma and Charlie's actions were illegal.

Yet, Velma and Charlie wanted to enact long term change and they believed the best way to provide better conditions for the wild horses being captured and shipped for slaughter would be through changing local, state, and even national laws. Freeing captured horses was both illegal and a small-scale effort responding to a symptom rather than a systemic large-scale change. As the two of them investigated the conditions and legislation in place from the federal

to local levels of government authorizing roundups, their beliefs in the system were shaken. Her ranch upbringing provided the necessary understanding of range management to support conservation, while her compassion for the animals created internal tension for her as the horses' role as living creatures was more valuable than their role as livestock. As she investigated the reasons and means by which the roundups happened, she was known to go straight to the source and use the techniques and patience learned from her experiences with polio at a young age, allowing her to get to know legislators and people in the industry somewhat quickly (Kania, 2012). She also built a network of whistle-blowers and informants who worked within the industry and government.

The Johnstons' network provided information that would lead to their first personal victory as activists in 1952. A regular and reliable informant called one evening in mid-March to alert Velma and Charlie that a ranch just eight miles from their home was storing wild-caught mustangs under inhumane conditions; armed with an inexpensive flash camera, the two went to photograph the animals and their accommodations. Nearly 70 horses were on the ranch: 30 in the corral and 40 more in the adjacent field. The flash of Velma's camera caught the attention of the mustangers. With the mustangers' vehicle still running, the alerted men advanced in their vehicle toward the Johnstons with intent to harm them but rerouted in the last moment when seeing Charlie's .38 revolver pointed at the advancing truck. Velma and Charlie were unharmed in the incident, but message was clear: dissent of the operation was not welcome. Both Velma and Charlie could have been seriously injured or even killed in this early experience with their opposition, but their commitment to the wild horses was clear and their resilience was only just beginning.

In June of the same year, the Johnstons received a tip that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had received a request for another airborne roundup of wild horses on public lands in their own Storey County. Wanting as much information as possible, Velma went directly to the BLM office for her community to gather details about the upcoming roundup; there she met Dan Solari, a BLM official who let slip, perhaps accidentally, that the county commissioner would grant permission for the roundup the next night during a public hearing at the Virginia City courthouse. Mr. Solari did not hide his personal stance that horses should be removed from public lands. Velma rallied her informants and other horse advocates and produced a crowd of nearly 50 like-minded supporters ("Battle Rages over Protection of Wild Horses," 1952). Not (yet) used to public confrontation, the Johnstons quietly observed while Postmaster Edward A. Gladden led the opposition and shared observations about previous roundups he had witnessed; he also indicated to the commissioner and audience that nearly 75,000 horses had already been removed from Nevada rangelands by the time of the hearing. The commissioner denied the application for the roundup, and within a month passed a resolution that ended the use of aircrafts to roundup wild horses in Storey County. Velma and Charlie witnessed their first legal victory for the wild horses; for the first time Velma experienced the ways in which grassroots movements could impact legislation for the range and its inhabitants. She later reflected on this success and its importance for enacting change:

> Legislation to prohibit the capture of wild horses and burros by means of airborne and mechanized vehicles met with its first measure of success in 1952 in the small Nevada county where I lived. Although it was an infinitesimal victory, it was the beginning of a movement that was to sweep the nation. (Johnston, 1972a)

Here, a different ideology begins to appear: Johnston did not know the impact of local courts, and her beliefs in the potential for large-scale change appear limited. When Shelby (2003) identifies that "a *genetic* critique of an ideology focuses on the negative features that are a part of the etiology or history of the form of consciousness," we should be drawn to the negative belief in the power of local governing bodies. While Johnston diminishes her own victory as "infinitesimal," the results created a precedent for future cases that impacted more counties in Nevada and later escalated to a national level. Her language reveals some of the shared beliefs constructed, perhaps, to minimize grassroots movements.

Though Velma only quietly observed the hearing at Storey County, her work leading up to it had gained attention from like-minded people, and the "Wild Horse Faction" asked her to become their spokesperson for wild horses. Her diligent work and willingness to engage called forth a new path for Velma as one to bring the plight of the wild horses and burros in Nevada and the American West to the public. The staunch gender norms of the decade provided an additional layer that she would have to overcome; as a newly appointed spokesperson she could not rely solely on the pathos of her audience, but would instead need to overcome the male perspective of women being overly emotional and use documented, objective evidence as the principle of her campaign. She later recounted in a letter to a friend that,

> "because I am woman, I cannot afford to indulge anything bordering on the sentimental…. There isn't anything wrong with emotion… but when a woman begins on it, fighting a man's battle in a man's world, she has three strikes against her to begin with. (Johnston & Pontrelli, 1969)

She knew that the foundation of her argument for the wild horses needed to center on range management and public use of lands for all users if she was to be successful. She believed in

democracy and the ability of leaders to enact change, and she knew that her own success would come through working within the system. Again, the genetic properties of ideologies about mustangs becomes clearer in regard to *who* can access change; Velma's recognition of minimizing her own femininity to engage in "a man's battle" in the political theater suggests that working with or for horses was, and may still remain, a boy's club in which women have limited access. The gendered nature of American politics also emerges through Velma's words as she sheds the "sentimental," which was affiliated with femininity, to engage politically with men.

As her popularity and clout grew, so too did the scope of her social change. Her ability to communicate on behalf of the animals and enact change in her community was clear and quickly gained recognition; shortly after her success with Storey County and appointment as spokesperson for the "Wild Horse Faction," the mailbox at her and Charlie's ranch was regularly stuffed with letters from individuals inquiring about how to help; she personally responded to each one (Kania, 2012). Her responses continued to express her belief in democracy and change through elected officials as she often included encouragement for involvement in the legislative process in people's own counties. Other Nevada counties followed the lead of Storey County, and other wild horse advocacy groups aligned with the goals of the "The Wild Horse Faction" leaving Velma as the (un)official spokeswoman for the wild horses of the state. Though present at the Storey County hearing, former U.S. congressman and then-representative of the Nevada Humane Society Charles L. Richards was formally connected with Velma in October of that year. The two quickly formed an alliance and began drafting local legislation in the spirit of the Storey County success. While their bill was introduced to the state senate committee, it did not make it to the floor for a vote. Nevertheless, Richards and Johnston continued to refine the language of their proposed legislation, considering a requirement for senators entrenched in the

livestock industry to remove themselves from voting. Richards passed away in December of 1953; though he never saw their proposal manifest, he influenced Velma to continue their work and rewrite the bill herself.

Wild Horse Annie

Capitalizing on her belief in democracy and the United States' system, she began her proposed bill with familiar language, "We the people, say it should be unlawful for any person to hunt wild horses, mares, colts, or burros by means of airborne vehicles of any kind or motor vehicles of any kind" (Henry & Lougheed, 1987, p. 115). Her proposal synthesized her stance toward the mustangs of the West along with the voices of like-minded supporters and political agents who helped her craft the piece of legislation. Their shared beliefs showed some of the group's ideologies and reflected their beliefs in the preservation of wild horses' and burros' heritage, the protection of the animals from inhumane roundup practices, the management of the animals by the government, and the protection of the public rangelands (Kania, 2012). The plight of Nevada's mustangs was positioned at the center of three factions with competing goals, beliefs, and values: the sheep and cattlemen desiring exploitation of the public ranges for grazing rights, the horse-meat industry pursuing the commercial slaughter and utilization of the animals, and the horse advocacy groups working on behalf of the animals' wellbeing. Though three groups intersected on the topic, the horse advocates were ultimately competing with the private interests of groups that stood to profit from the continued exploitation of horses by removing them from public lands. Shelby (2003) offers some insight as to *how* these factions represented the genetic history of mustang ideologies:

> First, ideologies are not created in a cultural vacuum but emerge in a particular sociohistorical discursive context, against the background of a given life-world.

> [….] Second, once an ideology becomes dominant and the system of oppression that it reinforces comes to have a socially accepted normative structure, the representational content of that ideology becomes part of the cultural heritage, passed down to subsequent generations through processes of socialization, whether via the family, educational and religious institutions, or the mass media. (p. 179)

The sheep and cattleman as well as the horse-meat industry both had "cultural heritage" of the West and the financial power to maintain their ideological dominance. As we will see in chapter four, gathering mustangs by whatever means possible was a profitable enterprise in the United States for the first half of the twentieth century, and the animals inhabited the same grazing lands to which the sheep and cattleman also wanted access. To ensure her own success over the competing factions in the David-and-Goliath battle ahead, Velma utilized her greatest weapon: her typewriter.

Having found success through grassroots labor in the past, she acted with gusto to produce individual letters to every Nevada newspaper editor about her proposed bill. Some of the letter recipients shared her beliefs as demonstrated by one reporter publishing, "the only opposition [Velma's proposed bill] can conceivably provoke is the opposition of greed, brutality, and total contempt for the best over-all interest of the public" (Beebe, 1955). With the help of state senator James Slattery of Storey County, Velma proposed a new iteration of her bill, but it again did not survive the initial committee hearing. Though the second iteration failed like the first, the movement was gaining momentum and more media coverage was illuminating the state's controversy with wild horses; the *Nevada State Journal* reported, "If we can let wild

creatures die in agony and torment, and ‘viva la commercialism’ is the order of the day, we’re losing a real part of our human dignity” ("Mustang Exploitation," 1955).

In March of 1955, Velma was summoned to the Nevada Senate by her bill’s co-author, state senator James Slattery. When she entered the chamber, her eyes quickly landed on the glaring face of the BLM official Dan Solari whom she had met in 1952 before the Storey County hearing. While she remembered him, he too remembered her and loudly whispered “Well, here comes Wild Horse Annie herself” (Johnston, 1959c). Again, perhaps accidentally, Solari had added fuel to Johnston’s campaign by bestowing on her a moniker that would last the remainder of her political and personal life. His intended insult became a rebranding opportunity that included “a curious three-way hybrid of Western American icons Wild Bill Hickok, Annie Oakley, and Buffalo Bill,” (Phillips, 2016) and it would remain with her forever. A new nickname was not the only thing to come out of the senate hearing, and despite multiple years of drafting, re-writing, and proposing, Senate Bill 133 was signed into law by Nevada Governor, Charles H. Russell on March 23, 1955.

Unfortunately, the bill had been watered down with several compromises and addendums including consideration of Section 16 of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 that reserved authority of federal law over state legislation. Forty-eight million acres of Nevada (roughly 67% of the land) was classified as federal land, and the new state laws would not protect the wild equestrian inhabitants of those spaces. Roundups by vehicles, both on the ground and in the air, could still continue on federal land allowing the horses to be captured for slaughter on the majority of Nevada and U.S. public land. Though the success was not complete, in just five years Velma had mobilized her resources as a diligent researcher and her belief in democracy to create something that would positively impact the animals for which she so deeply cared. She found like-minded

people from different walks of life that shared her beliefs, and she expanded her network of supporters to cultivate an ideology that supported the animals, respected the land, and challenged corporate beneficiaries. Through her local success she gained friends and supporters, and her clout grew with her state-level success, but concessions made in the legislation suggested that real change would have to happen nationally, and so she set her sights higher. Gaining national support would not be an easy route: beyond the vast difference in scale of her efforts, she also knew that the rugged wildness of the mustangs themselves did not “measure up to accepted standards of equine beauty” (Johnston & Pontrelli, 1969). Velma was also aware of the ways in which the animals and ranges had been rhetorically constructed in the hearts and minds of the people; mustangs were often classified as “feral” or “exotic,” which discouraged scientists from researching the ranges, herds, and impact of the animals (Kania, 2012).

Velma’s campaign received national attention in late 1957 (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010) when *Reader’s Digest* writer, Robert O'Brien (1957) published a piece about Velma and the mustangs of the West titled, “The Mustang’s Last Stand”. The magazine was at the height of their circulation and boasted 10 million copies per month, reaching 22% of the United States’ population. Obrien’s piece covered the issue with consideration for both sides of the discussion by including the BLM’s data about the impact the animals had on the ranges, but rhetorically favored Velma and the perilous times in which the mustangs of the West now found themselves. The article used first-hand accounts of the roundups from witnesses to paint a grim picture for the methods engaged to capture, subdue, and ship the animals often to West Coast chicken feed processors and canneries for dog and cat food. Even with national attention, “Wild Horse Annie” continued to produce letters to local news sources about roundups on public lands and descriptions of the BLM’s activities. Slowly, but surely, coverage of the issue found its way into

more newspapers in a wider breadth of western states. As coverage increased, so too did awareness by the public, and letters asking for guidance in ways people could help continued to fill Velma and Charlie's mailbox. After Obrien's article was translated into the *Reader's Digest* international editions, letters of support arrived from all over the world, with letters postmarked from places in Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Poland, Spain, Argentina, and beyond. Trudy Bronn, Velma's mother, learned to type to help her daughter's efforts, as Velma insisted that not a single letter be unanswered (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). The responses to each and every letter came at Velma's own expense; to each she sent a response that included packets of information about the horses inhabiting the West (Kania, 2012). Channeling her belief in the power of children, Velma paid particular attention to letters from schoolchildren and teachers in order to mobilize them as a resource for change. A "pencil war" with a "children's army" began as teachers and students received encouragement to write to their elected officials in support of "Wild Horse Annie's" cause.

As Velma assumed her role as "Wild Horse Annie" and her campaign shifted from the local and state level to a national stage, factual scientific information about the quantity of mustangs on government land was sparse and often limited to anecdotal reporting. The closest thing to objective quantifiable data would not be updated until 1958, when acting director of the BLM, Earl Thomas, provided information to Velma based on canvasing the (then) 59 grazing units under the BLM's control. His rhetoric included words such as "abandoned" and "unclaimed horses," while strategically omitting "wild horses" and "mustangs;" he reported an estimated 20,000 head grazed on federal land as well as 4,500-5,000 estimated on federal Indian Reservation land (E. Thomas, 1958). The mustangers of the first half of the twentieth century had done their jobs effectively; Philipps (2017) suggests that through anecdotal reporting that

mustang numbers in the early 1900s ranged between one and two million wild horses and burros in public spaces of the West. Despite several proposals for stronger counting methods ranging from counting horses in a grid system by plane to counting after snowstorms when their trails were easier to follow, no official method was implemented during Velma's campaign, leaving actual horse numbers unreliable at best. The muddied and inconsistent counts of animals added additional hurdles for Velma to overcome, but with the help of her growing network of supporters, reports of roundups (both legal and illegal) grew with gusto.

Beyond letter-writing and gathering support, Velma continued her diligent research and organization. She focused some of her energies on compiling reports of roundups as well as wild horse and burro numbers on the ranges. She sent a package of information to her local federal representative and childhood friend, Nevada Democrat Walter S. Baring. Though he was an unlikely supporter of Velma's cause, Baring had a reputation "for getting on the right side of issues that would eventually garner publicity and public support" (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). Using the information that she had provided, and the successful Nevada state bill, Representative Baring prepared a bill for national legislation. Much like its Nevada predecessor, Baring's bill did not make it past its initial subcommittee hearing, but Johnston and Baring continued to gather information and re-write their proposal. By July of 1959, their efforts came to fruition as national attention had gained enough momentum to bring Representative Baring's bill, H.R. 2725, to the national stage with a congressional hearing. Velma received an invitation from Baring to personally testify in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the mustangs of the West, as he wanted her to make the main presentation to the committee.

Velma made the trip to Washington, D.C. alone; her husband faced health issues and their finances could not support the travel. Velma's own ticket had been paid for by one of the

supportive Humane Societies in her network. Her arrival at the nation's capital was covered by nearly every national newspaper; the slim and often quiet executive assistant for a Nevada insurance broker who had become a spokeswoman for wildness in the West was greeted with varying levels of support. A reporter for the United Press International pejoratively offered "Wild Horse Annie was here at last, and word spread across the capital range like wind whipped fire through sagebrush" (Eleazer, 1959). The pejorative tone with which Eleazer approached his interview with and article about Velma illuminates the established, socially accepted normative structure: here a caricature of a woman was expected by the reporter and the opening lines of the article published furthered these genetic roots of the ideologies. The mustangs of the West represented a wildness that, surely, their most notable advocate of the time would reproduce as a human being misplaced 2,000 miles from the West where she dwelled. On the other hand, different people greeted her with the appropriate pride and support appropriate for a woman who would soon have legislation named after her; support even including a banquet held in her honor by the national organization, Defenders of Wildlife, which suggested that the mustang, too, was "wild" and deserved their protection.

Velma presented her information to the House Judiciary Committee on July 15, 1959. While she spoke, the audience had access to packets of information that she had prepared with testimonials and pictures; the images and narrative that she constructed left congressmen appalled (Korteba, 1959). Though the intended audience was only seventeen members of the committee, the chamber and the press gallery were full of spectators and supporters. At the heart of her testimony was a call for Congress to reexamine the policies that had been created to intervene on the land and animals while benefitting the ranching industry; the data, from her perspective, showed that too often had horses been scapegoated by ranchers who had let their

livestock overgraze their allotment and blamed the mustangs for damage (Kania, 2012). After a fledgling response from the BLM that leaned heavily on the meaning of "wild" and "wildness" when it came to the title bestowed on the unclaimed horses of the West, the hearing concluded after only one day. The bill went to the house for a vote the next month, and a week later passed the Senate; the "Wild Horse Annie Act of 1959," or it's lesser known and more official title, Public Law 86-234, became the law of the land with the signature of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on September 8, 1959. Congressman Baring later gave Velma the pen used by the president to enact the law that bore her name.

Myth and Legend

Just four days after the President of the United States of America signed legislation that Velma helped create, she traveled to Boston to receive an award from like-minded peers of the Massachusetts branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Angell Memorial Humanitarian of the Year award was a gold medal that had only been awarded three previous times by the organization in 97 years; Velma was the first woman to receive it. She returned to Reno the next day, but to her surprise Charlie did not greet her at the airport. He struggled with his health for several months before Velma went to Washington, D.C., but actively tried to minimize his concerns until they became too much to handle while she was in Boston. Charlie only moderately recovered from the case of shingles in his left eye's optic nerve (Johnston, 1959b), but while the shingles kept Charlie from greeting his wife at the airport, it was the least of his concerns: soon after he was diagnosed with bronchial emphysema. The two sold their ranch earlier that year and were staying on as caretakers, but Charlie's failing health became too much of a burden when Velma had to travel nearly 30 miles to her workplace in Reno. In the Spring of 1960, the two stabled their horses with a neighboring farm and then

moved to a house overlooking Reno to be closer to the medical care Charlie needed and Velma's job, allowing her to more easily check-in on him throughout the day. Following the whirlwind of 1959, Velma's relentless schedule did not allow for her to support her work family, care for her ill husband, and be the face of an international movement to save the horses; when something had to give she respectfully stepped away from the spotlight to focus on matters close to home.

Despite her near-immediate departure from the limelight, Velma was not completely separated from working for the horses. With the financial and operational support of John and Helen Reilly from Boulder, CA, Velma and Charlie founded the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB) during Charlie's sickness. Though she did not take an active and daily role with the organization, Velma served as the organization's president; her limited involvement allowed the Reilly's to keep her informed and seek her council when possible, but also allowed for her to tend to her husband's failing health (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). The slow and painful decline of emphysema kept Velma proximally within minutes of home to assist her husband for several years. Velma worked during the day and came home to deteriorating Charlie. By the summer of 1962, Charlie required an oxygen tank at all times; soon after, he needed a wheelchair to get around their house on the hill. In less than three years, she went from being on the television broadcast live from Washington, D.C., to spending her evenings smoking Virginia Slim cigarettes and watching the television with her husband. Unsurprisingly, the two lovers of the scenic American West and the wild horses that inhabited the space filled their media consumption with shows that reproduced the image of the wild West such as *Bonanza* and *Gunsmoke*. Charlie's pain grew as his body died, and he eventually began to ask his wife to bring him his loaded .38 pistol to end his own suffering. Velma loved her husband deeply to the point that she all-but gave up her passion for protecting the animals, but

she could not oblige his request; in a letter to a friend some time later she wrote, "I couldn't give him the loaded .38 but I could, and had the right, to give instructions that would keep them from prolonging a life that couldn't be saved" (Johnston, 1970). Charlies' death on March 14, 1964, left Velma emotionally devastated and financially broke. However, much like her affliction with polio at a young age bolstered her resilience, so too would the loss of her partner prove to strengthen Velma over time.

Velma received a phone call nearly one year after Charlie passed away from a novelist with whom Velma had some familiarity. Marguerite Henry wrote several children's books and novels about life in the West with many of the central characters being animals. Henry requested to interview Velma for her next biographical book with "Wild Horse Annie" as the protagonist. Henry's work established part of the epistemological foundation for the ways people of the time understood horses as part of the American identity; her most popular work, *Misty of Chincoteague*, was published in 1947 as noted in the 85th position of the Publisher's Weekly all-time best-selling children's books (Hochman Turvey, 2001). It is the first of a four-book series that focused on the ponies of two islands off the coasts of Virginia and Maryland that served as a home to ponies. The books created a small travel-industry for tourists to see the ponies as well as a 1961 feature film, *Misty* (Clark, 1961). Being familiar with Henry's work, Velma agreed nearly immediately and insisted that Henry stay with her and Trudy while visiting for the interview. The women became fast friends due to their shared interests in literature, wild horses, working with young people, and more. Henry was also an activist; writing her book *Brighty of the Grand Canyon* evoked a commitment to fight against the flooding of the Grand Canyon and the destruction of burro habitats. Like Velma had demonstrated from a young age and continued to do so as an adult, Henry was also a diligent researcher for topics that piqued her interest.

Preparing to write her book about a woman that fought to save mustangs, she immersed herself in the Velma and Trudy's lives for a week of interviews and exposure to the people, places, sights, sounds, and horses that influenced her subject. Both Henry and Velma had sizable networks of people with whom they corresponded – young women in particular reached out to the author after reading her books – and both women dutifully responded to their supporters.

Velma received her advanced copy of *Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West* in October of 1966. The book quickly became a national bestseller and depicted a fictional heroine made out to be a "simple cowgirl with a heart of gold" (Philipps, 2017). The back jacket cover of the hardcover book noted that the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* celebrated the novel, noting it was "engrossing as a story of the preservation of wild animals and truly moving as a story of a dauntless woman" (Henry, 1966). A *New York Times* reviewer identified the text as a "highly fictionalized biography" (Ambler, 1967) that culminated with the passing of the Wild Horse Annie law of 1959. While many of the characters and events followed the narrative ofVelma's life, creative liberties were taken to make the story more captivating and relatable to young audiences. On Velma's request, Henry left-out some of the potentially controversial elements of the Johnstons' journey (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010) such as the early efforts of Charlie and Velma to free captured horses illegally: Wild Horse Annie took pictures of horses in corrals rather than illegally setting them free (Philipps, 2017). While Henry took other liberties with the characterization of Annie compared to Velma's own narrative, the book was less about the heroine and more focused on telling a story about getting the legislation passed to protect the animals.

Following the success of *Mustang*, Velma was back in the thick of advocating for the mustangs. Within six months, she was making public appearances in libraries and schools, but

with renewed zeal as Wild Horse Annie rather than as Velma Bronn Johnston. She wore her "dude" outfit and moccasins, and showed children the bridle of Annie/Velma's horse, Hobo. She showed the children at her presentations a picture of Charlie and the spurs she wore with her riding boots (Johnston, 1967b). Henry even wrote Velma a script to follow when presenting so as to not confuse readers of the book, and Velma stuck to the pre-ordained words without fail. Soon, the legend of "Annie" exited Velma's lips so readily that even her family and close friends convoluted actual facts from Velma's life with "Annie's" story, which impacted media coverage of Velma's efforts (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). As the "Annie" legend consumed Velma's life, the book's popularity spread awareness of Velma's cause: influenced by Velma, Henry would often encourage fans of *Mustang* to write their elected officials to continue growing legislative support for condemning illegal mustanging operations and supporting policies that encouraged stronger protection for the wild horses.

The relationship between Henry and Velma proved mutually beneficial. Velma sold and signed books at her speaking engagements as "Wild Horse Annie," and Henry advanced the cause and added credibility to Velma's crusade. Cruise and Griffiths (2010) identify a short story about a twelve year-old girl named Trina Bellak of Virginia who enlisted two friends to raise money through bake sales to help the horses she read about in *Mustang*; the friends saved $300, got a money order at the post office, and mailed it Velma, with a label identifying "Wild Horse Annie" just in case. In 1971, an Oregonian school teacher named Joan Boslinger assigned *Mustang* to her fourth-grade class: the resulting outrage from the students emboldened them to write all 90 members of the Oregon legislature. Boslinger used "Wild Horse Annie" as a model for her students: Annie had written letters to her representatives and engaged in the democratic process, thus she exemplified studious behavior and was used to help the children grow their

vocabularies, improve their spelling, research for civics lessons, and more (Philipps, 2017). The class "deputized" their 10 year old classmate, Lynn Williams, to speak on their behalf to the Oregon lawmakers and later to the United States Congress (*Hearings before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 1971).

Velma's growing celebrity through the "Wild Horse Annie" character opened the door for teachers to educate children about engaging with the democratic process through communication with their elected officials. Young people and their families wrote letters to congressional representatives and senators on both sides of the political continuum. When Velma testified in front of the United States senate for a second time in Washington, D.C. in April of 1971, she did so in support of Washington Senator Henry Jackson's Senate Bill 1116. The message was clear: the wild horses of the West need better protection and current herd management operations were woefully ineffective. She advocated for a multiple-use concept of public lands so that livestock and wild horses could share in the resources of the West. She also addressed the need to include the wild burros under the proposed protection, as they too existed in a rhetorical limbo between "wild" and livestock, but had equally contributed to the heritage of the West. With the support of those influenced by Velma's work and Henry's character, the issue found bipartisan support and was passed unanimously. Three months later, Representative Baring's redrafted bill, H.R. 9890 unanimously passed the house vote as well. President Richard Nixon signed Public Law 92-195 on December 15, 1971 (Jackson, 1971). The legislation provided official language for classifying "wild free-roaming horses and burros," which effectively circumvented the existing issues of the rhetorical construction of the animals as "wild" rather than "livestock." The act also identified the heads of the department of agriculture and interior responsible for the animals' welfare on the ranges and provided better legal

protection for the horses and burros. It prohibited indiscriminate reduction programs and provided the language to create a plan for managing populations under humane conditions while prohibiting the sale of the captured animals for commercial purposes. Lastly, it criminalized the destruction of wild horses and burros with a $2,000 fine and/or one-year imprisonment. Velma's campaigns had come to a successful conclusion and her legacy was in place. Her goals had been two-fold: to advocate for the wild mustangs of the West, and to protect the animals' welfare for future generations.

Looking Ahead

Velma's narrative and influence did not end with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act; her legacy has stretched into our contemporary landscape. She died from cancer in 1977, and her obituary in the New York Times included that:

> She said that she started her campaign when, more than a quarter-century ago, she saw horses in a crowded van going to a slaughterhouse. Her efforts touched off controversy. Ranchers said that the wild horses were destroying grazing lands for domesticated animals. In 1974, she received a warning from an Idaho vigilante group. But she took the threat lightly and hung it on her wall of mementos ("Velma Johnston, 65; Wild Horses' Friend," 1977)

Even after her death, the ideologies that she challenged were evident, as controversies continue to arise when the order of how things *should be* gets challenged. The ranchers mentioned in the article excerpt believed that they had rights to allow their property/animals to access the land, yet the wild horses were "destroying" it. Here we see shreds of epistemic properties of the ideologies that will be discussed in the next chapter: the "wild horses" that had been pointed-at and named were consuming resources on the "public" land that ranchers expressed claim to, all the while

Velma received warnings for performing acts of environmentalism that supported a stronger sense of bioegalitarianism. As Phillips (2016) offers, “She was at the time of her death a legendary symbol of Western gumption;” her “gumption” represents her defiance toward the ideologies, gender roles, environmentalism, and how we make sense of our place coexisting with the wild horses of the West.

CHAPTER 4: EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

"There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism"

-Walter Benjamin (1989)

Raymond Geuss (1981) considers ideologies to be representative of illusions or false consciousness, which will serve as the important foundation for the work ahead that explores the epistemic properties of ideologies. Shelby (2003) clarifies that "false consciousness has to do with the way in which agents hold their beliefs, and not with the cognitive status of the discursive content of these beliefs, as the 'false' in 'false consciousness' might misleadingly suggest." To discuss the epistemic properties of an ideology, we turn to the ways in which agents of an ideology hold their beliefs as forms of consciousness. Where the previous chapter considered the lived experiences of Velma Bronn Johnston as a mechanism to explore the genetic history of beliefs surrounding Mustangs in the west, this chapter will focus on how groups construct their forms of consciousness. Returning to Geuss, he uses "form of consciousness" to mean "a particular constellation of beliefs, attitudes, dispositions, and beyond," and he states that "a form of consciousness is ideologically false in virtue of some epistemic properties of the belief which are its constituents" (p. 13). Shelby identifies that "an epistemic critique of an ideology is one based on considerations relevant to rational belief formation or theory acceptance," which suggests that exploring the epistemological foundations to ideologies requires investigating the ways in which beliefs are formed and theories are accepted. "Beliefs" for Shelby are the mental representations within the consciousness of individual social actors that shape "validity claims" as knowledge about the ways the world works. As an epistemic critique of ideology is based on the shared beliefs of a community, and beliefs are mental representations that form the ways in which individuals understand the

workings of the world around them, then it is necessary to explore what constructs beliefs of those that share them.

The purpose of this research is to explore the ways ideologies are formed about animals, specifically mustangs of the American West, and what are the consequences of imbuing animals with human meaning. Thus far, the focus of this text has explored the narrative of Velma B. Johnston and the ways in which her experiences shaped her beliefs about horses, wildness, the West, and more. Her individual beliefs did not come into existence in a vacuum, rather they were situated within the material and social contexts created from the early twentieth-century United States. Thus, while this chapter will still focus historically on Velma Bronn Johnston and the time in which her political activity was happening, this chapter will expand to include social historic contexts within which she was acting. How then did she come to hold her beliefs? They were not formed in a vacuum, as evidenced by the supporters that communicated from all over the world. What constellations of beliefs and attitudes intersected to create ideologies regarding mustangs and their roles in the American West? What rational belief formations are relevant for Johnston or for the social Others representing her opposition?

Velma Bronn Johnston's role in creating material change for mustangs represents a convergence of the shared beliefs of many voices that resisted the status-quo of the time relating to animals and the creation/dissemination of those beliefs to a wider audience. She not only gave some level of human voice to the mustangs, but she amplified the voices of her peers by using her status as a platform to expand their message. Seegert (2016) put forth the concept of *animate-rhetoric* as "the logic of possibility–all things might be speaking," but we are not always able to listen. Velma Bronn Johnston represents one who might have been listening to the communication efforts of the West and its other-than-human inhabitants in ways that extended

and pushed-forward the emergent themes of Environmental Communication. To explore the epistemic properties of ideologies about the other-than-human world through a lens of the mustangs in the West, this chapter will also consider the ways in which pointing and naming, borders and barriers, as well as performance and access were engaged before and during Johnston's political activity.

Pointing and Naming: The Epistemic Properties of American Mustang Ideology

While people today might imagine wild horses and cowboys as living in harmony in the West and cooperating to expand American control over the wildness of the great plains and the western United States, history suggests quite the opposite to be true. With the horse populations that ebb and flow based on the amount of human intervention that the populations receive at any given time, the herd sizes have been unmanageable at times leaving the voiceless horses without much agency in their own fate, rather their population is often dependent on human perceptions of the horses' role on the local ecologies. As populations historically shifted, so too did forms of consciousness about them: from utilitarian necessity for survival, to resource commodity, to nuisance, to victim, to symbol; the horses of the West have been pointed at and named a wide breadth of labels when they occupy human spaces. From the jarring conditions that started Johnston's crusade in 1950 to the international support she achieved throughout her campaigns, her experiences show a shift in the ideological construction of the wild horses that inhabit(ed) the West. The history of horses on the North American landmass is complex, and the relationship between the European immigrants that would become the nation's dominant demographic and the mustangs of the West was (and remains) equally complex.

Early history of the American West viewed horses as valuable commodity: horses were captured, trained, traded, sold, and even shipped across the world. When a new commodity, the

automobile, usurped the horse for many utilitarian purposes, the need for the animals shifted and resulted showed early signs of changing beliefs about the animals and their relationship with humans. When mustangs began to increase their population and had limited value to the individuals in the West, the ingenuity of a few people created a new need for the animals' bodies in the form of mass-produced canned dog food. In the wake of the horse meat industry's growth is when Velma Bronn Johnston entered the scene and understanding her beliefs, as well as those shared by like-minded others, requires historical context.

Capturing mustangs for sport and utilitarian purposes was depicted as a near-romantic endeavor of a mounted rider perusing and capturing a wild stallion emblematic of freedom and wildness. *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* author, Washington Irving, provides an early American view of this as early as 1832 with his narrative about his tour of the American prairies in which he illustrated the excitement and triumph of a lone rider chasing a band of horses with a lasso in hand to catch one of the "wild coursers of the prairies" (Irving, 1832). The commodity value of mustangs was then limited by the very small amount of wild horses any one person could capture and keep: when one rider could most often only capture one mustang, or in some cases a rider might be able to drive a small herd of horses into a corral, the resource of mustangs could only be harvested in small amounts. The railroads opened the Western United States to Eastern capitalists and a time of rapid resource extraction referred to as "the great barbecue" by historian Vernon Parrington (1954). Tens of thousands of mustangs were shot as the railroads marched west to send their hides back east to become baseball leather and "pony coats" among other products. Captured live horses were also packed into boxcars and sent to bigger cities such as New York to be low-end cart, wagon, and streetcar pullers because they were often stronger and healthier than their eastern-born counterparts. Grazing areas for mustangs and other ungulates

grew during this time in relation to the massive slaughter of American Bison; during this period bison populations decreased from 25-30 million animals in the late 16th century to less than 100 buffalo in North America in the year 1900 (M. S. Taylor, 2011), which perhaps connects to the mustang population growth during the early days of corporate mustanging. Furthermore, the limited competitors to and predators of horses, outside of humans of course, provided the opportunity for herds to massively expand. The number of horses soon became problematic for Western settlers, as the mustangs were known to break down corrals and set free domestic livestock: "They are of all sizes and colors, and are the wildest of horses… Settlers of the frontier would hail speedy extinction as a blessing, for when domestic animals get with them their recovery is simply out of the question" ("A Recent Letter from Sargent, Kansas," 1879). The horse population became so problematic that states such as Nevada began passing legislation to allow people to shoot mustangs on sight to allow more grazing for private livestock ("To Hunt Wild Horses in Nevada," 1894).

The invention of Ford's Model T began in 1908; fifteen million were sold by 1927 which effectively represented a number greater than all other American car manufacturers of the time (Alizon, Shooter, & Simpson, 2009). As more vehicles entered the market, the need for horses for the purposes of travel and labor decreased dramatically, and what was once one of the most valuable commodities in the west as wagon and plow-pulling beasts was quickly becoming a nuisance for farmers and ranchers. While Plumwood (2002), Sowards (2006), and Milstein (2011) articulate the value of nature identification through pointing-at and naming individuals in nature to create connections, quite the opposite is true for the mustangs, as they have been intentionally constructed as a mass-unit and commodity to be harvested. Much like Stibbe (2001) observed the ways that the ways we observe animals in mass "removes the individuality of the

animals, with the ideological assumption that each animal is just a (replaceable) representative of a category," the mustang was homogenized into a group of animals causing problems for humans.

Philipps (2017) directs readers to consider 1923 as another stop along the evolutionary road of the forms of consciousness used for understanding how horses went from a necessity of expansion and companionship with humans, to a nuisance for settlers to endure, to a massive commodity to be harvested. The first canned dog food was processed horsemeat. Horses were in abundance in the West and people were killing mustangs as a form of pest control. When a more lucrative option arose for the carcasses of the horses, humans quickly jumped at the opportunity to turn a profit. A New York horse dealer named Phillip Chappel entered the scene and convinced investors to purchase a failing meatpacking plant in Rockford, Illinois for the purposes of turning wild-caught mustangs of the West into canned dog food. The simple plan was to round-up mustangs in the west, load them on to eastbound trains, and turn them in to canned dog food ("*Round-up, Ground-up*," 1929).

The Chappel Brothers canning operation was neither the first nor the only meatpacking plant to use the flesh of mustangs from the west, but they were the biggest. The Chappel Brothers, Incorporated meatpacking plant was operational by 1925, and the scale of its operation was unprecedented processing 200 horses per day during a time in which estimates suggest that two million mustangs roamed western lands at this time. Ken-L Ration, the product of Phillip M. Chappel's plant with the widest distribution, used its own celebrity endorsement to sell dogfood. In fact, the biggest canine celebrity of the silent film era, Rin Tin Tin, was used to promote advertisements weekly during the featured broadcast (Orlean, 2011). The cultural support of a dog celebrity helped push the Chappel Brothers to a production demand of six million cans per

year at their peak (Philipps, 2017) requiring more than 50,000 horses (Kaufman, 2007). The success of the Ken-L Ration allowed the Chappels to open additional factories and lease ranch land; at their apex they controlled 1.6 million acres of the western United States. Mustangers supporting the industry could earn $5 per head in 1928 (Lord, 1928), but as supplies of wild mustangs dwindled in the west and the horses became harder to capture the costs of the gathers increased. The industry eventually began a steady decline during the 1930s. The depleted herds made finding the animals increasingly more challenging and capturing them more expensive.

Like other industries of the time, the mustangers and dog food canners did not invest in sustainability and, as a result, extracted too much of their resource to stay profitable. The horsemeat industry in the United States continued operations until 2007, when congress defunded the federal program to inspect horse meat which blocked sales of chevaline. While 100,000 horses from the United States are still slaughtered today, they are exported to plants outside the country to be processed into a consumable product. The use of wild-caught mustangs of the West to be canned as dogfood nonetheless was an answer, at the time, to a problem that stemmed from technological advancements. The rise of the automobile displaced the need for horses as a commodity, but horses do what animals do when confronted with abundant resources and no competitors or predators: reproduce. Humans occupying the same places as mustangs in the west developed new beliefs about the animals that were once a utility and a resource to be viewed more as a nuisance and a problem. Phillip M. Chappel represented a solution to the problem of too many horses and created an industry that used-up the horse resource. By the time Velma Bronn Johnston came across the bloody truck of mustangs in 1950, damage had been done and the mustangs' population had been decimated.

While the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act passed in 1971 identified mustangs and burros as "living symbols of the pioneer spirit of the West" (Jackson, 1971), the beliefs of many people inhabiting that same West suggested that mustangs were viewed as a nuisance or a commodity to be harvested. Velma Bronn Johnston's work to save the mustangs initially began as an effort to reduce and prohibit the brutal methods of the 1950s to round-up the animals from their habitats. The toothless Wild Horse Annie Act became an obstacle to easily overcome for ranchers, mustangers, and those that stood to profit from the mustangs. The 1971 legislation bolstered what was in place by providing legal protection for the horses from capture, branding, harassment, or death as they were finally recognized as an integral part of the natural systems of the West. The language of the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 illuminated the ideology of both sides of the ideological argument: Supporters of the legislation viewed the mustangs congruently to the language as symbolic creatures worthy of protection, while those opposed to the legislation might view the animals as a resource or commodity to be exploited or even as pest hindering their rights. The 1971 law illuminated beliefs about the animals that converge to create actionable shared beliefs about what horses are to humans dwelling in the United States as well as how we humans should interact with the living symbols of the West.

Borders and Barriers: The Epistemic Properties of The West

The American West is quite definitely physical place. Current understandings of geography are structured around the four cardinal directions, and places are considered in relation to a location's borders: cities, states, nations, and the globe all have their respective norths, souths, easts, and wests. Kinsley, KS is located at the intersection of Highways 50 and 183; the closest city of note might be Hays, KS, which is just-short of 70 miles to the north. Kinsley proudly claims that it is "Midway USA," as it located equidistant between New York

City, NY and San Francisco, CA. The town of Kinsley is not the only community in the United States to claim their status as a geographic midway point. The Smithsonian magazine published an article in 2017 suggesting that the geographic center of North America had moved from Rugby, ND, who had claimed the title since 1931 to Oliver County: 145 miles southwest. Saint Louis, Missouri constructed the Gateway Arch in 1965 (Campbell, 2013, p. 2) as a symbolic gateway to the West. All of these cities share a common theme of demarcating where the West begins and the East ends, be that through geographic bisection of the points between two highly populated US cities, the geographic balance point of the North American landmass, or the symbolic expansion over the "wild" places west of the Mississippi river. Each of these landmarks can serve as a border or a barrier for the West, but perhaps the American West transcends physical places. The West is bound by the ways people perceive it. It is a sometimes-ill-defined physical place that has been engendered with meaning about what and who America is. The barriers that contain the West are defined by the longevity of the myths and legends that describe it: as Janice Rushing (1983) says, "The story of America's westward movement and settlement, in its various manifestations, is the most enduring and characteristic American myth" (p. 15). Perhaps, then, the West transcends the physicality of borders and barriers to represent the beliefs, attitudes, practices, etc. of those lives that inhabit it.

Frederick Jackson Turner's (1893) *Frontier Thesis* described the expansion westward for the United States through land acquisition and industrial investments as a transformative opportunity for the American identity that posited "exceptionalism and transcendence as the keys to American character" (Rojek, 2017). While many of Turner's observations have been refuted, the myth of the American frontier remains through the perceptions of the independence, grit, and ingenuity required to expand American ideologies across the plains and into the West as

symbolic extensions of what it means to be American; in essence, the West *is* America. The word, “frontier” has several meanings that share a consistent thread: a border or barrier between two places, between the known and unknown, or between the civilized and the unsettled. Turner’s (1893) own words channel this definition when he claims that “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization” (p. 2).

Walter Benjamin (1989) says in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism,” which has two meanings important to the myth of America in this sense: first, contemporary civilizations is built upon exploitation that advocates modernity and glamorizes ideology at the expense of historical materialism; second, civilization is defined by the uncivilized, the barbaric. The myth of the American frontier is the foundation to the ways in which people have constructed the West as a “there,” as a separate and different Other from the civility of modernity.

Even from the earliest records of European settlers coming to the landmass that would become North America, the West has been something different, dangerous, and alien: a mentality that remains pervasive since. When Nash (2014) identified William Bradford’s comments in 1620 when first stepping on (what is now) American soil, the “hideous and desolate wilderness” lay to the west with the ocean and Europe to the east. The frontier thesis represents a continuation of Bradford’s thoughts in which the West was something that stood in opposition to the values of order provided by European heritage. By “taming” the West, we constructed a narrative about where the West was and what intersecting elements created it, but with narrative comes story, and from stories come illusions and ideologies. Kushner (1992) identifies the contrasting layers to the story of the frontier:

> Like all myths, the frontier myth tells us psychological and cultural truths, rather than factual ones. That is, it tells us in symbolic language something very powerful about American society. In particular, it speaks to the fundamental tensions that historically have informed American culture. On the surface, these concerns were attached to forging political unity among diverse interests and peoples. On a subterranean level, they encompass anxieties about gender roles, urbanization, immigration, and self-transformation.

The frontier thesis is essentially an American myth that posits heroic efforts of brave men and women championing the unknown and persevering in the name of independence and freedom; it expands the ideology that "civilized" white European immigrant men "tamed" the barbaric wildness of an unknown frontier by expanding *their* ideologies and exploiting *its* resources.

From the myths and legends of the West grew the romanticized image of the West: a wild place full of weather-worn cowboys traversing great expanses of plains, desert, and mountains on horseback. Comparable to Japanese images of samurai warriors fighting (perhaps ironically) for peace and serenity, and legends of English knights expanding Arthurian values to the great European unknown, so too did the idea of the American cowboy galloping across the plains embed itself as part of a historic national identity. As white settlers moved into the wild places of the Americas, the "frontier" shrank and the borders of the known expanded at the expense of the unknown. As the untrammeled places where men and women did not and could not dwell shrank, the borders of "wildness" became blurrier. Horses bearing their cowboy companions and the constellation of other people, places, and things that made-up "the West" represent a different "wildness." The West was no longer exclusively inhabited by the unknown, but by images of a new "wild" west. As Mark Cronlund Anderson (2007) illustrates:

> The frontier Western's conventions are as common as those of nursery rhymes and may include combinations of the following elements: cowboys; Indians; sage brush; gun play; saloons; horses; corrupted lawmen; Mexicans; dark-skinned whores; white female virgins; various sorts of lascivious, savage behaviour on the parts on non-white males (especially Indians and Mexicans). (p. 2)

With each new story of the West the complexity of understandings grew; new heroes emerged as romantic narratives sometimes based on real people such as Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Cody, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday, and Jesse James: all men on ill-defined sides civility and the law. The large openness of the West bred complex narratives, of which "Its most central and enduring theme is that of the frontier, a vast and stunning landscape where brave cowboys, rugged individualism, and dream fulfillment are the rule" (Blake, 1995, p. 203).

From the narratives of the West came book after book about the exploits of western inhabitants and their exploits that continued to serve American ideology about both *where* and *what* the West was. Owen Wister's 1902 novel, *The Virginian* became an important turn in literature in which the author produced a work that painted a believable image of the West from the perspective of a Virginian living in Wyoming. The novel established itself as an important part of the popular culture of the time with "a romance which defined the cowboy character and thus the ideal American character in terms of courage, sex, religion, and humor" (Davis, 1954). The story that included a misplaced explorer from the East, cowboys, guns, horses, villains, the power of love, and a shootout on main street; it served as the template for cowboy narrative upon which novelist Zane Gray would build. The established Western genre of literature painted a picture of the way in which people had engendered the place(s) of the West with human ideologies; though Zane Grey was not the inventor of the genre he was equivalent to the myth's

Henry Ford (Philipps, 2017). His writing career spanned thirty-six years of his life during which time he wrote more than 40 books and sold more than seventeen million copies; by the time of his biography by Gruber (1970, p. 143), Grey's work reached more than 40 million copies sold. Grey was a diligent writer who achieved an unprecedented level of success even publishing one novel a year for twenty-four years after his death (May, 1997, p. 151).

Grey shaped the image of the West through his depictions of the landscapes, people, and animals; specifically the relationship between man and horse as Davis (1954) identifies:

> The cowboy's horse is what separates him from vagabondage and migratory labor. It is his link with the cavalier and plumed knight. More and more, in our increasingly property-conscious society, the cowboy's horse has gained in importance. A horse thief becomes a symbol of concentrated evil, a projection of all crime against property and concomitantly, against social status.

Grey published his first western novel, *The Last Plainsmen* in 1908; his fame peaked between 1917 and 1924, during which time his books made Bookmen's top-ten list every year (Blake, 1995); his books *The U.P. Trail* (1918) and *The Man of the Forrest* (1920) topped the list in their respective years. With his popularity comes a wide dissemination of the ideologies expressed in his literature, and in this mythologized "West" is the world to which Velma Bronn Johnston was born. Though the narratives often took place in the 19th century, the image the literature presented persevered in shaping understandings of the borders and barriers of the West: a place where horses, both domestic and wild, served as an integral part people's lived experience.

Velma Bronn's family, heritage, and geographical location provided access to the "wild" in a way that many Americans could not achieve, which allowed her to cultivate a unique and (in some ways) privileged experience with the mustangs of the West. Her father provided a

constellation of beliefs about the animals as a necessary part of their lives as well as their livelihood through the use-of and engagement-with captured mustangs. Velma's beliefs and attitudes originated with her family but she continued to cultivate and reinforce her own way of thinking throughout her life. She began her crusade in 1950 during a time in which perspectives were changing across the nation: culture was shifting to include more ecological ethics for Americans and media seemed to both set the tone as well as reflect the sentiment of some of the population. While media is not the *only* formative element to beliefs, the various forms of popular media can simultaneously create beliefs for the constituents for whom the media serve and represent (Happer & Philo, 2013) while simultaneously reflecting the ideologies of the social elite (Kellner, 2011). Considerations of mainstream media can perhaps provide an entry-point for the influencing bodies on individual social actors.

One important piece of popular media that Velma Bronn Johnston, as well as many of her supporters in the following years, would have seen was Disney's Bambi (Hand, 1942). Popular psychologist, Eleanor Ringel (1988) identifies that Disney's animal characters are part of our cultural DNA, and Disney's 1942 animated feature film offers a heavy handed message about animal cruelty and hunting with one of the most beloved animal characters in their pantheon. Bambi was seen across the nation and set the stage for social change about how humans understand and interact with animals. Though the film presents anthropomorphized animals that, in nature, would be hunters, no images of them hunting or consuming the flesh of other animals is seen. On the other hand, the film suggests in two scenes that the predator to be feared in the forest is, in fact, human and a hunter (Hastings, 1996). The film received mixed reviews for its challenging message; Raymond Brown, editor of Outdoor Life magazine, used his platform in the summer of 1942 to refer to the film as "the worst insult ever offered in any form to American

sportsmen" (Cartmill, 1996, p. 178). The next year, Aldo Leopold, considered by some as the "father" of wildlife ecology in the United States, pressed for an antlerless deer season in which hunters would focus on does rather than bucks to control an overpopulated herd, but public outcry stopped his proposal in the aftermath of Bambi (Lutts, 1992). Beyond being a film that depicts animals as the victims of human intervention, the film was also released in the midst of World War II; it is no accident that the human presence in Bambi's forest is accompanied by technology and violence in which men wreak environmental terror on the animals (Robertson, 2008). Harold Tysk, BLM Director serving in 1967, would (later) reflect on the growing national concern for the welfare of the West's mustangs and offer a perspective bolstering the suggestion that media helps shape the beliefs of individuals with his quote in *True* magazine about the thousands of letters received on behalf of the horses, "I think this whole thing is an emotional issue whetted by Walt Disney movies" (Remsberg, 1967). Ecological change was brewing during this dynamic time and considerations for conserving the wild places and the natural spaces of the United States also grew in popularity.

Beyond the influence of the film Bambi, mustangs and cowboys were front-and-center for the American public in 1950 (the year Velma Bronn Johnston began her crusade) continuing the myth that "No figure has dominated American romantic folklore like the legendary cowboy. Daring, noble, ethical, romantic, he permeates our popular media to this very day. He personifies our national self-image - the conqueror of wilderness, savagery, and villainy" (Maynard, 1974, p. vi). Westerns were essential to the Hollywood culture production that year with movie theatre marquees advertising films such as *Branded (1950), The Baron of Arizona (1950), Broken Arrow (1950), Comanche Territory (1950), High Lonesome (1950), The Nevadan (1950), Rio Grande (1950),* and more (Philipps, 2017). The Nature Conservancy was founded the next year (1951) as

an organization to enhance and expand conservation efforts. The film *The Misfits* (Huston, 1961) featured Clark Gable and Merilyn Monroe exposed the horrors of mustanging and the mustang-filled dog food industry. In the same year that Richard Nixon signed the Wild Horse and Burro Act (1971), the now-classic children's book *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971) focused on the dangers of failing to conserve our resources. While Velma Bronn Johnston was surely instrumental in advancing awareness about the brutal conditions with which wild horses were rounded up as well as enacting political change on their behalf, she also operated in a time and place ripe for change.

Velma Bronn Johnston offers scholars a lens as to how images of the West shape images of its inhabitants. She was born into a social landscape that imagined the West as a wild space forged by "heroes" of American ideology that expanded historically European concepts of imperialism and exploitation across a vast landmass filled then only by the unknown and savagery. While she is just one individual born in the early twentieth century western United States, she represented the image of the West: cowboys, horses, guns, and a wildness that stood in contrast to the civilized East. Johnston operated during a time in which mainstream popular media advanced beliefs about ecological change while many of her own beliefs were rooted in her family's connection to the West. She identified that mustangs were "in her blood" and that her own father had been nursed on a mare's milk as an infant (Kania, 2012), she showed a deep connection to the wildness of the West since before she was born. Where she might have personified the West for some during her political activity, her very identity called forth questions about both who made-up this space known as the West as well as questions about the contrast between Western/American ideology and advocating for animals and land rather than individual property.

Access and Performance: Being Wild Horse Annie

The motivation behind BLM official, Dan Solari audibly whispering "Well, here comes Wild Horse Annie herself" (Johnston, 1959c) at the Nevada Senate hearing in 1955 is somewhat incomprehensible; his motivations for choosing those three words in that specific order are unclear. While Phillips (2016) articulates the connection to romanticized characters of Western mythology as a source for the nickname, Solari's perspective of its origins are unclear. Beyond introducing a new nickname for Velma Bronn Johnston that would stick for the rest of her life, Solari also provided an access-point for connecting ideologies about mustangs, women, and the West with themes that would (later) emerge in the environmental movement. Johnston serves as an exemplar for the intersection of two necessary considerations about ideologies: 1) being a woman in the middle of the twentieth century United States (what expectations existed for women of the West), and 2) limitations to performing environmentalism (What expectations existed to perform environmentally in a time in which the modern understanding of the term did not exist). In addition, Velma Bronn Johnston's performance of the "Wild Horse Annie" character illuminates a noteworthy tension for Goffman's (1978) "frontstaging" and "backstaging." To explore these considerations, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to unpacking Velma Bronn Johnston's identity and the ways in which she performed her various roles as a woman, a professional, and an activist in a time in which women had limited access to professional avenues and Environmental conservation/preservation had not yet taken on their modern form for the public..

Velma Bronn Johnston was born in 1912. Wild Horse Annie emerged in 1955, but gained notoriety in following the 1966 publication of Margarite Henry's novel, *Mustang*: *Wild Spirit of the West*. Though Annie was, in part, a caricature of Velma, their identities were powerful in

their own rite. Annie represented a heroine for young people to emulate while Velma modeled a real-life path to enact social change during a dynamic time. While Annie and Velma diverged in many ways, parts of their shared identity are important for considering their social impact on the mustang populations of the west as well as American understandings of the mustangs as cultural icons. From her early experiences with polio through and throughout her life, Velma Bronn Johnston cultivated an identity, later passed on to Wild Horse Annie, as a charismatic and powerful woman in a man's world. She called-into-question gender norms and expectations while she subverted the ways in which women of the time could ascend beyond the roles allotted to them in a patriarchal wild west.

The woman whom Velma Bronn became surpassed her childhood dreams, but not without labor and resilience. Even from a young age, she believed that she would need to overcome her physical body limitations in order to achieve her goals. In her 1975 interview with *Sports Illustrated*, she reflected that as a child,

> "I had to face people. When I'd see kids I'd ask, 'What're you playing? That looks like fun.' They'd let me join in. I know my face is not pretty, but now when people stare at me I know they can't help it and I smile at them. And, you know, they smile back" (Weiskopf, 1975)

She believed that she "had to" connect with her peers, and so she cultivated ways to hide and downplay her physical appearance to be more approachable. She demonstrated with comments like those in the *Sports Illustrated* article that she had some understanding for other peoples' experiences with her and the way she looked, but she also demonstrated a willingness to engage with others and disarm their often-painful stares.

Here, *performance* emerges as young Velma Bronn made choices about "frontstage" behaviors and images of herself to present. She used her many hours in the library enhancing her ability to *perform* academically, but she also used her diligent library time reading fashion magazines to improve her costume and makeup routines; she cultivated hair styles, makeup applications, and even eyebrow reshaping to shift the focus of onlookers away from her more noticeable features. She used materials that she could salvage or purchase to make her own clothing styled after the fashions she saw and read about in the library. In a letter to Marguerite Henry, Velma later wrote about the way she valued her appearance as a way to encourage her own self-confidence, "Good grooming and stylish wardrobes had a tendency to draw attention from that about which I was shy" (Johnston, 1965).

As a result of her experience with Polio, the teenage girl leaned-in to her feminine features during puberty in the late 1920s to establish characteristics that would be part of her identity through her life. Velma never amassed a large contingent of friends in the following years while attending middle school and then high school. Only one local friend was mentioned in her youthful correspondences and later adult reflections of that time in her life: Walter Baring, who would later assist her in writing, proposing, and ultimately passing legislation (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010).

In a review of women's magazines between 1900-1979 Cancian and Gordon (1988) found advice for young women to offer some troubling guidance: samples from the 1920s (during Velma's formative years) "advised readers to manage their love and anger by structuring the social situation and altering outer expression," while also offering that "Women's 'training for the job of marriage' included planning budgets and investigating what benefits of the community provided, such as pure water, libraries, and parks" (p. 315). While it's possible that

Velma read some of the very same magazine articles from that time, the picture they paint is not one of gender parity or one that encourages girls to pursue careers. In the recently mentioned letter to Marguerite Henry, Velma also noted that she wanted an idealized version of romance that included a tall, handsome husband who loved horses "slightly less" than he loved her, a ranch, a barn, and children (Johnston, 1965), which suggests some alignment with Cancian and Gordon's findings. Despite experiencing her formative years as a physically disfigured teenage girl living outside the then-small town of Reno in western Nevada, she embraced her femininity and desired being accepted socially as young woman. As a physically disfigured girl growing up in the West, controlling aspects of her appearance was a way to control people's perceptions of her and perhaps make her more attractive to "tall and handsome" men; she engaged with the norms of the time and the space to create what she thought would be a more socially desirable character of herself given the limitations of her physical body. Her choices at a young age offer a way to make sense of the world in which she lived and that world's ideologies about gender.

As Velma finished her teenage years and entered the professional world, she continued to engage with some of the gendered social expectations of the cultural moment within which she resided, but she showed her own beliefs consistently by pushing herself to surpass norms and subvert expectations about only wanting a husband. Women workers in the United States monopolized several gendered occupations in the early 20th century due to the continued industrial growth of the Western world and two world wars. The economic surge following 1940 allowed women to occupy more than 70% of the nation's nurse, teacher, librarian, telephone operator, stenographer, secretary, typist, and other clerical jobs (Oppenheimer, 1970). Nonetheless, being a professional woman in the United States during the dynamic 1950s and 1960s was challenging. Only 34% of women participated in the US labor force in 1950 (Toossi,

2002), and even those that did were most often relegated to specific professions as mentioned earlier in this text. Velma Bronn began her career as an executive secretary for a bank in Reno during a time in which the role was one of the few female-dominated jobs available, but bank regulations of the time prevented married women from holding bank positions (Kania, 2012). In a time in which women had even more limitations on their professional potential than even our contemporary climate affords, Velma Bronn Johnston took a job populated almost exclusively by females and then bucked at the limitations put on them by the male intervention in the work environment.

In a different act of resistance, Velma Bronn secretly married Charlie Johnston in July of 1937; they kept their marriage a secret for more than a year performing with social expectations of the time and place as though they were still courting (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010).Velma and Charlie's relationship offers a consideration of American ideologies at the time, as Hyde (2000) notes about media in 1938, "While social roles may have been changing during this period, women continued to be advised to make major personal sacrifices for marriage and motherhood." Nonetheless, despite having a job, of which she was proud, she tended deemphasize her professional and political accomplishments in favor of her marital status, maintaining that she was a "lowly housewife" for her husband (Johnston, 1972b); consistent with what feminists have termed the second-shift (Ehrenreich, Hochschild, & Kay, 2003), even after working full-time every week Johnston also helped keep-up the ranch she and Charlie purchased, cared for their pets, cooked, cleaned, and continued to make her own clothing as well as Charlie's. While she did not have the word, *environmentalist*, nor the readymade community and identity this term entails, she engaged with pro-environmental behavior in line with definition from Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002).

Beyond her roles as a "lowly housewife" and professional woman in a dynamic time for gender expectations, was Velma Bronn Johnston's role in the political arena of the United States. Despite politically identifying as a Republican throughout her life, she worked with both sides of the political spectrum to pursue change for her cause. Cruise and Griffiths (2010) identify that "Velma remained a staunch Republican and later admirer of California Governor Ronal Reagan, yet she made political friends from left and right." She believed in bipartisanism, and that proved fruitful and productive throughout her political career, and often involved small groups of representatives in private communications producing "really good legislation[…] that comes of both sides talking the thing out, and coming up with something mutually beneficial" (Johnston, 1959a). Velma Bronn Johnston worked with people that maintained very different politics, attitudes, and beliefs than her own, but she performed on behalf of the mustangs (serving as an extension of nature and wildness); this reveals a lesson that contemporary environmentalist can internalize. Conserving the wild spaces of the world in which the horses live and preserving the species roaming the West did not have to be partisan issues, but performing at a high level to communicate clearly on behalf of the environment produced results that contemporary environmentalists can follow.

Velma found value in other elements of the democratic system of her time and place. She proved herself successful throughout her time as a grassroots movement organizer, which she established through her belief in the creating political change through communicating with elected officials, writing once:

> I have many times wished that the average citizen would realize just how important his opinion is to his elected officials, not just about horses, but about all

> our social problems that afflict this great nation. I am sure it would change the apathetic attitude toward an apathetic constituency. (Johnston, 1959d)

Here, she showed a reflection on the success of her own efforts as well as her attitude that others can emulate. Her campaigns began with letter writing and communication with lawmakers and enforcers; by doing so she forged connections and expressed her attitudes and goals to those that maintained abilities to enact change. Velma Bronn Johnston and her avatar, "Wild Horse Annie" acted politically not just by being a face of a campaign, but by being the spirit behind it and the hands that brought it forth from the ether.

US politics were even more segregated by gender during Velma's campaigns than they are today: only seven women served as US senators and 41 women served as US congressional representatives before 1950. Working as a woman in the during this was peppered with social and cultural challenges but pursuing national change in the political arena on behalf of an environmentally conservationist cause such as protecting the wild horses of the west as a woman was all-but unheard of. From her first victory in Storey County, resulting in her first steps toward a public and political future, Velma Johnston knew that the worlds of politics and range management were male-dominated spaces that she would need to navigate. She knew that her path must be calculated, and that change would require some level of inclusion of her feminine qualities as well as the masculine directness born from a strenuous life on the ranges of Nevada. She described her approach to this gendered battleground as fighting with a "velvet glove covering an iron gauntlet" (Johnston, 1959d), which provides a dichotomous metaphor of the traditionally necessary metal hand covering from medieval European male warriors engulfed by something soft and feminine.

As “Wild Horse Annie” grew in fame and Velma’s work gained attention, her mailbox became increasingly fuller with fan letters and requests for how people could get involved. During her crusade, she would often respond to requests for photographs with a picture of her wearing self-made clothes of a practical nature suited to riding horses in the American West. Figure 1, below, is a touched-up reprint of the photograph with which Velma Bronn Johnston would reply to requests. From the time she was a young lady she made her own clothing in styles drawn from fashion magazines; while she enjoyed making and wearing dresses, her life on the range necessitated practical pants, shirts, gloves, boots, and more: most of which were made by her. Velma enjoyed wearing the fashion of the day as well; according to the Fashion Institute of technology, American women’s fashion of the 1950s “continued the late 1940s style with very full skirts, cinched waists and sloping shoulders. Another popular silhouette was the narrow pencil-skirt look. Daywear consisted of skirts and jackets or day dresses in tweeds and woolens” ("Fashion History Timeline," 2018). She valued her feminine figure and embraced style as part of her identity once claiming, “All I need is tight girdle and a case of hairspray to keep me going” (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). Velma Bronn Johnston loved fashion and embraced cultural norms about what it meant to be feminine.

Figure 1. Velma Johnston on *Hobo.*

Nonetheless, her persona of "Wild Horse Annie" affected expectations and the reception of Johnston gender performance. Expectations of Johnston were often preceded by Annie's image, which was fueled by pictures of Johnston in practical western gear; while the myth proceeded her before Marguerite Henry's book, the following speaking engagements showed Velma leaning-in to the construct with her intentional "Annie" costume. The myth and reality of her identity clashed when she arrived in Washington DC in 1959 for the senate hearing that created the "Wild Horse Annie Act," she surprised politicians and reporters alike when she stepped off the plane. While the politicians expected a gun-slinging cowgirl from the wild west as suggested by Eleazer (1959), she arrived in the nation's capital wearing white high heels, a matching bag, a white pillbox hat, and wrist-length white gloves (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010). For Eastern journalists and those that often perpetuated the myth of "Wild Horse Annie," Velma

Johnston was markedly different: where some expected boots, guns, a ten-gallon hat, and dusty worn jeans, they were often surprised when they met a graceful woman in touch with her feminine side who also enjoyed getting "damed up," as she would say.

Figure 2. Picture of Velma Johnston.

The clash between Velma and Annie's persona shows a tension between people's expectations as forms of consciousness; people's attitudes and beliefs about what a woman and the West. Frank Eleazer's impression of Velma Johnston was quickly changed upon meeting her as he reported in his United Press International article about Velma's first trip to Washington in 1959:

> I buckled on my fountain pen and galloped through the Capitol canyons to the office of Rep Walter Baring (D-Nevada) where Annie had agreed to have a few words with a posse of pressmen. I was feeling uneasy about my citified suit and bow tie, and the fact that I wasn't packing a gun. But Annie, it developed, wasn't holstered up for the rendezvous either. I thought for a minute I had fallen into the wrong company. Here was a slim little lady in a crisp linen sheath, kind of blue-green, with stiletto heels, ho laid aside her white gloves and white bag to shake

> my hands. My ‘Hi-ya pardner’ died in my throat. ‘How do you do, mam?’ I managed instead.

Eleazer’s article reveals not only the pejortive way with which the Eastern press approached their meetings with “Wild Horse Annie,” but it also reflects the immediacy with which meeting Velma Bronn Johnston changed their tune.

Here, more of the ideology is revealed in the way that those with power interact with those whom they perceive have less; as part of the media and through his actions Elzear represents an extension of the tools to maintain hegemony and his perceptions of meeting a woman coming from the West were clear. This interaction also begins to reveal perceptions of environmentalism before the term had manifested in the cultural moment: both Annie and Velma presented a pro-environmental goal that pushed-back against the status-quo of the time in which resources were there to be exploited, and the mustangs in the West were part of those resources. It is possible that Velma and Annie’s efforts to save the horses were perceived not as the efforts of a person that believed in the conservation of the land in which the horses lived or the preservation of life, but that her/their goals rather stemmed from femininity; the simple fact that Velma Bronn Johnston was a woman. While the research about relationships between gender and empithetic behaviors toward animals conducted by Graça et al. (2018) is a contemporary, it builds upon accepted premises and documented perceptions that women demonstrate stronger connections to animals and greater capacities for caring.

Being a woman and advocating for the animals were not a causal relationship for Velma Bronn Johnston, as established in chapter three of this research; she did, however, believe in the welfare of the animals themselves over exploiting them as a resource. She established her goals early in her political activity identifying that her motivation surpassed the empathy already

established to include beliefs that would, later, be in line with pro-environmental behavior: "It would seem this is no longer an issue of preserving the ranges for the sheep and the cattlemen, but has become a matter of purely commercial slaughter, for a financial gain of a few, at the expense of the many" (Johnston, 1955).With the financial and operational support of John and Helen Reilly from Boulder, CA, Velma and Charlie Johnston founded the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB) in 1960 (Cruise & Griffiths, 2010); she remained the president of the organization during the majority of her political activity.

While the Johnstons were among the most well-known horse advocates, they were not alone and competing factions of supporters rose and fell with different organizational agendas and goals. Tom Holland, for example, served as the president of the National Mustang Association (NMA); the organization was created in 1965 as a club of "patriotic" Americans interested in keeping alive the heritage of the American West (Kania, 2012). The two groups appeared to work together for the betterment of conditions for the horses on a number of political battles, but the relationship remained tenuous at best. The incompatibility of their goals became clear when the NMA, and Tom Holland, demonstrated a higher value on raising funds than actually helping the animals during the highly publicized 1969 event in which a massive snowstorm stranded a herd of horses at Pryor Mountain in Montana. Holland and the NMA had access to an aircraft to deliver hay for the struggling and starving mustangs; Johnston and other supporters of the ISPMB showed their beliefs in helping the animals by mobilizing their own resources to purchase the necessary hay for the NMA to air-drop for the herd; ultimately discrepancies between the amount donated by the ISPMB and the amount spent on hay by the NMA showed a suggested the illegal skimming of finances by Holland himself. The majority of the NMA board members resigned over the next month. The Pryor Mountain issue reveals

conflict in the performance of (what is now known as) environmentalism in which Velma and her organization of like-minded horse advocates acted on behalf of animals to provide better chances of survival in a dangerous situation, while another group that publicly presented their similar goals acted quite differently. These events also point toward a problem that will be explored in more depth in chapter five regarding the incompatibility of pro-environmental groups.

Looking Ahead

Velma Bronn Johnston brought the plight of the mustangs to an international audience through diligent and hard work. Beginning with a gruesome image in 1950, she saw a problem and then pursued avenues to make change not just the horses in the bloody trailer or even the herds from which those horses originated, she pursued change that would be long lasting and valuable for all of the mustangs living in the West. A false consciousness existed, and prevails today, that the mustangs of the West and the land that they occupy are resources that humans can exploit. Ideologies surrounding wild horses and the West itself had enforced hegemonic beliefs throughout American history about what animals can and should mean to people, where those animals get to live, who could advocate for the animals, and how those people could advocate. Through channeling themes of Environmental Communication that include pointing and naming, boundaries and barriers, and performance and access, to explore the life and historical contexts of Velma Bronn Johnston as well as the caricature of her, “Wild Horse Anne” the ideologies of America begin to come to light. Her efforts, with the support of her political friends and the organizations with whom she worked, found success twice: The Wild Horse Annie Act (Baring, 1959) and The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (Jackson, 1971), but that success comes with consequences. The efforts to *save* the mustangs may have only redirected the

suffering of the animals. The *functional effects* of the ideologies discussed here will be explored through a contemporary point of view.

CHAPTER 5: FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; that they contribute to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and enrich the lives of the American people; and that these horses and burros are fast disappearing from the American scene. It is the policy of Congress that wild free-roaming horses and burros shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death; and to accomplish this they are to be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands.

– The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (1971)

The second property of an ideology for Geuss (1981) and Shelby (2003) is the *functional critique* of the illusions of ideology in which scholars consider the consequences of an ideology. As Shelby suggests, the "functional critique of an ideological form of consciousness is based on the negative practical consequences its wide acceptance has for society or some social group within it—for example, the stabilization of oppressive social relations, or the promotion of the interests of a hegemonic group" (p. 164). At the heart of ideologies, beyond their genetic history and their epistemic properties, is the idea of power in the interest of maintaining hegemony. Shelby explores multiple definitions of ideology from scholars to formulate his understanding of its complexities as a term, among those definitions comes Thompson's (1990) description that suggests that ideologies are the ways in which meaning is used to maintain asymmetrical power relationships. Shelby then turns to Giddens (1979), who conceptualizes ideologies symbol systems used to legitimate hegemonic groups. When ideologies are formed through the shared beliefs of a group of people to serve the purpose of maintaining power, the consequences begin to surface. Geuss (1981), importantly notes that that not all forms of conciousness, or "a

particular constellation of beliefs, attitudes, dispositions, and beyond" are necessarily ideological:

> To be sure, a form of consciousness can't be ideological unless it thwarts some human desires, wants, or preferences. It is also true that true that *if* a form of consciousness is ideological that means it will that it will legitimate and stabilize Herrschaft. (p. 69)

The German word, *herrschaft* used by Geuss is complex, and he uses multiple pages to describe it, but to offer a synthesized iteration: he is referring to *the exercise of power within a political order to repress others*.

In essence, the functional critique offers a consideration of who suffers and who benefits as an outcome of an ideology; it illuminates how messages and their meanings are used to maintain hegemony. With ideologies being a mechanism to enact power and extend hegemony over those with less power, there is an organic response to *reject* those ideologies when the masses are not part of the powerful ruling elite. Shelby (2003) reminds readers that we cannot reject form of social consciousness, or the sets of beliefs that form ideologies, "itself if it is not cognitively defective, that is, if it accurately represents reality or provides a genuine justification." Shelby's reminder works in harmony with Geuss' (1981) note from above: shared beliefs are not ideologies unless they are forms of false consciousness, or illusions, that extend and stabilize power relationships. This research considers American ideologies about the human-nature relationship as it manifests with animals when we socially construct some animals as *more than* others: when we apply hierarchical value to some at the expense of others. The problem of the wild horse (over)population in the American West is just one of a near-infinite supply of examples for the problems that arise from human intervention on the other-than-human

world, and considering the effects of these ideologies might provide links to other elements of the world we inhabit that also suffer at the hands of human disturbance.

Where Velma Bronn Johnston and her narrative have been central to the previous chapters, here we turn to the consequences of her work, both intentional and the unintended outcomes. This chapter, then looks at the functional effects of those ideologies that involve horses in the contemporary scene; while many of these were directly related to Johnston's work, others existed before her involvement and persist today. Research here will consider questions such as who, then, benefits from ideologies about the mustangs of the American West? And what human desires, wants, or preferences are consequently thwarted from these ideologies? Ideologies about mustangs also reveal consequences related to how we understand and interact with environmentalism. This chapter will first provide a brief narrative of The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFRHBA) (Jackson, 1971) as it serves as a historical transition point to move beyond Velma Bronn Johnston's involvement and look toward the functional effects of that legislation. Next, this chapter will turn to the three established themes of Environmental Communication that will serve as three windows to view the effects of ideologies about wild horses and how they impact animals (pointing and naming), land (borders and barriers), and environmentalism (performance and access) following the "success" of saving the mustangs in 1971.

The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971

The Wild Horse Annie Act of 1959 (Baring, 1959) primarily prohibited the use of motorized vehicles by land or air to hunt wild and unbranded horses on public lands as well as the pollution of watering holes for the purposes of trapping, injuring, or killing a wild unbranded horses on public lands. The legislation enacted some change for the animals, but the ambiguous

language of “wild unbranded horses” and the limited focus on motor vehicle never dealt a killing blow to the poor treatment of the animals or the mustanging industry. Despite Velma’s active recommendations during the writing process and at the hearing before the senate committee hearing that the law include a program that protected the animals, managed the land, and controlled the populations of wild horses and burros, the final legislation failed to include any measures, let alone comprehensive efforts, to create long-term change for the future. Mustangers and those standing to profit from the capture and slaughter of the mustangs were only temporarily inconvenienced by having to slightly change the means by which they obtained the horses.

Hence, the first problem of the Wild Horse Annie Act was in the shortsightedness of the legislation itself and the lack of ability to enact long-term change for the animals. As previously established, The Taylor Grazing Act (E. T. Taylor, 1934) provided controlled grazing on our public lands for private stockmen; it also allowed the government to negotiate trade with private landowners and collect fees from ranchers who let their livestock access and graze in those spaces (Ross, 1984). The tension between the Taylor Grazing Act and the Wild Horse Annie Act came from the ways in which private ranchers used the public land for their own livestock and implied ownership of “wild” horses that had wandered into their own herds. Ranchers used loopholes in the system and released small amounts of their own (branded) horses into the wild herds and then round-up as many as possible claiming “unfortunate mistakes” of the wild horses also being captured along with the branded ones.

A significant hurdle then remained unresolved during and after the 1959 legislation had to do with the language of “wild” and “unbranded” horses and burros as well as the qualifications of being a “true” mustang. Following Velma Bronn Johnston’s testimony to

congress in 1959, a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) range officer named Gerald Kerr offered the Bureau's response. Among his arguments was the classification of "wild" horses which he described as "animals turned loose or escaped from their owners" (*Committe on the Judiciary Report*, 1959). He continued to add that horses on public lands were not "wild" unless they were proven to be decedents of the horses that carried Conquistadores. From the BLM's perspective, the name applied to the unclaimed horses of the west carried enough meaning to be a cornerstone of their stance against the animals. The construction of "wild" and "wildness" was accompanied with value for the national audience and was subsequently used as an important obstacle for the passing of the Wild Horse Annie Act. The House Judiciary Committee to whom Velma presented her testimonial would convene again less than a month later to revisit the language surrounding unclaimed horses in the west. Unbranded horses, mares, colts, and burros running at large on public lands became *wild* on August 11, 1959 extending the (limited) legal protection of the Wild Horse Annie Act. The protection under the law was still limited to motorized vehicle roundups and the act of poisoning water sources that horses and burros could access. Newly deemed "wild" horses and burros remained in the crosshairs of stockmen and industries such as the floundering dog food companies that still utilized horse meat.

While the legislation that bore her name was a "win" for horse advocacy in the West that brought the issue into the television sets and radios across the nation, it actually did very little for the animals. Pontrelli (1969) identifies six important inclusions important to Velma Bronn Johnston for the follow-up legislation that would replace the Wild Horse Annie Act:

1. Wild horses and burros must be under the jurisdiction of the federal government, specifically the Secretary of the Interior, and protected as a national heritage.

2. More areas must be set aside which have as their primary function the preservation of these representatives of our national heritage.
3. In other areas of the West where wild horses and burros now exist, they should be included as a component of the range and be managed along with other animals in a multiple-use concept. Wild horses and burros should not be removed from all other lands specifically set aside for them.
4. That there be strict prohibitions against the release of domestic horses on the public lands for the purposes of harvest.
5. That studies be carried out so that management be practices can be implemented from sound ecological base and ensure human procedures.
6. That a national advisory board be maintained to be responsible to the public, and to advise the Secretary of the Interior.

As later legislative efforts marched toward the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971, Johnston's goals were central for her campaign to strengthen the failed previous legislation. Her rigorous speaking schedule allowed her to meet with various groups representing a spectrum of private interests corresponding to the use of land in the West and the treatment of the wild horses and burros inhabiting it. Developing an acceptable and agreed-upon definition of "wild" horses and burros was paramount to her success with groups of stockmen, private ranchers, and even the National Cattlemen's Association. Prioritizing the language about the horses and burros was important, among other reasons, due to the fact that they were not native to the United States and therefore did not receive the same protections of other animals such as American elk, deer, antelope, etc. from the 'Endangered Species Act' (Johnston, 1971).

Senate bill, S 1116, would later become the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. It passed the senate hearing without dissent in June of 1971. Though S 1116's house bill counterpart, H.R. 9890 met more challenges and revisions, it unanimously passed in October of the same year. President Richard Nixon signed Public Law 92-195 on December 15 marking the last step in approval of the new legislation. Velma Bronn Johnston (1972a) herself noted that though "the new law does not provide the Utopia its proponents hoped to achieve, wild horses and burros of Western America at long last have been assured a measure of protection they have never known before." The law provided a fairly comprehensive plan for the ranges of the West and the wild horses and burros that inhabited; it also accomplished all of Velma's previously mentioned goals including providing a definition for wild horses as "all unbranded and unclaimed horses and burros on public lands of the United States" (Jackson, 1971).

For all intents and purposes, the WFRHBA was the culmination of Velma's (then) twenty-one year journey; while previous legislation shared her moniker, this was the goal of her efforts. With intentions to "save" the mustangs from the time's brutal methods to capture the animals on public lands for capitalist purposes of rendering the animals for dogfood for domestic distribution or chevaline to be to be sold abroad. While the legislation represents the outcome of her work, the consequences would not be clear for many years to come. The effect of Velma Bronn Johnston on horses was not static, nor is it today; rather, her life's legacy represents a dynamic impact on ideologies regarding horses, wildness, the West, femininity, and environmentalism.

Pointing and Naming: Mustangs of the West

The fauna that also inhabit are planet are global co-pilots that exist with us in a complex system of life, death, dominance, and support. Among the many ways that Environmental

Communication provides scholars with tools to consider the ways we understand communicating with and for the other-than-human world is *nature identification* (Milstein, 2011). Nature identification uses Burke's notions of identification (1984) and consubstantiality (Burke, 1969) to show how humans construct artificial barriers between themselves and the natural Others that of our world. Pointing and naming serves as a way for humans to make connections with the other-than-human world by means of animalcentric anthropomorphism that considers the perspective of the animal from their own lens rather than a human understanding (De Waal, 2008). Each of these point toward how *we*, both collectively and individually, make meaning of the life in the world around us. The meanings we forge serve as the foundations to our beliefs, which are in turn used as part of the forms of consciousness (Geuss, 1981) that create ideologies to advance hegemony and power. A functional critique of the meaning making about mustangs in the West serves as a tool to reveal ideologies about environmentalism today.

Where Milstein (2011) suggests a rhetorical power in nature identification in which we point-at and name individual representatives of a species to identify with them, and establish stronger bonds with the animals, what we do with mustangs and other problematic species is quite different. Rather than making personalized connections with the animals and sharing their individual narratives in an act of animalcentric anthropomorphism, we point to the mustangs as a mass group and apply human meaning to them in different ways that reinforce the illusions of what *they* mean to us. We use labels to express the roles that mustangs get to play in the drama of humanity such as *invasive* (problem/threat), *nuisance* (annoyance), and *victim* (poor recipients of negative treatment). By applying labels, we continue to imbue the wild horses with different human meaning in which the animals themselves have little-to-no agency in navigating. By selecting them as a group we symbolically point at them as a mass and we call them something;

by doing so, those somethings continue to reinforce ideologies in which the animals and people continue to suffer while other humans continue to gain. Here, I will share an exploration of some of the labels that we have applied to mustangs of the West as well as how those labels invert the power of *nature identification* as a tool to build stronger bonds with the other-than-human world.

Invasive

When first exploring the issue of the mustang population in the American West, one of the first points of interest that arises is the non-native status horses have on this landmass, as discussed in the introduction of this research. Non-native species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species are referred to "invasive alien species" by Pejchar and Mooney (2009); while their description includes "non-native species," the focus is on the threat that the invasive species offers to others. Lowe, Browne, Boudjelas, and De Poorter (2000) offer a list of the then-top 100 invasive species: mustangs of the American West were not on their list, but the Crazy Ant (Anoplolepis gracilipes) has caused damage from Hawaii to Zanzibar by preying-on and disrupting the reproduction arthropods, reptiles, birds and mammals on the forest floor and canopy. Also on the list is the Feral Pig (Sus scrofa) that damage property and crops of humans while also spreading diseases such as Leptospirosis and Foot and Mouth Disease. Clearly, the top 100 list includes 98 other species of flora and fauna and each inclusion is based on their ability to cause harm to people, land, or other species. Applying "invasive" to the ideological construction of horses has a connotative suggestion that that beyond non-native, the mustangs are also harmful. While the mustangs do cause harm to the places they inhabit (Masters, 2017a), labeling horses as invasive (see: Hugo, 2018; K. Klein, 2014; Rubinoff & Lepczyk, 2015) rather than non-native provides an unnecessary tension and advances ideologies that the horses are problematic.

"Native" brings a different level of nuance and consideration for the classification we apply to elements in the other-than-human world, including the mustangs. Philipps (2017) offers an important consideration for understanding native in the United States:

> Of course the definition seems obvious: A plant or animal is native when it exists in its natural range or ecosystem, as opposed to a species introduced by man. But it actually isn't so simple. The natural range of a species is often thought of as static. In North America, we generally define it as wherever it was found by the first European observers.

Philipps draws readers' attention to European lens with which we view species on a different continent. Labeling something as "non-native" in the United States thus applies to the things that Europeans did not observe and document. When Simberloff et al. (1997) point out that horses are non-native to this landmass, they extend Eurocentric ideologies of identifying species not by their habitat, but by their observation by Europeans. Terms such as "native" and "non-native" imply a pursuit of balance or restoration to how things were at the moment of human (European, in this case) intervention. If the native horses of North America went extinct at the end of the Pleistocene 10,000-12,000 years ago as suggested by Grayson (2007), but were reintroduced by Europeans half a millennium ago, what does that really mean for horses here today when they have been a part of this ecosystem for more than 500 years? The earliest known horses emerged during the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, roughly 55 million years ago (Secord et al., 2012); while visiting the Bighorn Basin in Wyoming, Philipps (2017) met with archeologist Ken Rose who has found 50 million year old fossils of *Hyracotherium* found in Wyoming (p. 8). With 50 million years of existing on the North American landmass, missing 12,000 years is only

missing .024% of the species' total duration of time inhabiting the location by their own historic timeline.

Nuisance

Mustangs remain a similar state of tension today as they were when the Chappel Brothers canning industry took-hold of their fate in the early 20th century: many still find them to be a consistent problem for which we do not have a clear answer. The mustangs of the West are in many ways a *nuisance* or problem to be dealt-with today. The BLM is stuck in an unproductive spiral in the aftermath of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA) that consumed $81.226 million ("Program Data," 2019) of American taxpayer dollars, a comparable amount to 2017. Too many horses inhabit the rangeland reserved for them, and they reproduce too quickly; this leads the BLM to round-up the excess horses and place them in costly private storage. From storage, mustangs go out for adoption and national tours of once-wild horses are made by BLM officials that allow those who meet basic criteria to adopt an animal; until recently almost anyone could adopt a mustang for $125 from the BLM (Philipps, 2017), but the system was simply not removing enough horses from storage through adoptions. As of March 12, 2019, that program changed dramatically when the BLM's policy shifted: under the new program they would pay individuals $1,000 ($500 up front and $500 after one year of care) to adopt a mustang (Hauser, 2019). The relative newness of the new program shows a willingness to try something new as well as a statement to the breadth of the problem with more than 48,000 horses currently in storage ("Program Data," 2019). The quantity and the very wildness of the horses has allowed the application of labels such as "nuisance" to mustangs; private ranchers commiserate that the horses destroy their fences, consume resources for their livestock, and threaten the ecology of the

ranges while the BLM is saddled with the task of removing the excess horses from the wild spaces they inhabit, storing them, and providing homes.

Though the WFRHBA was passed in 1971, an amendment was made in 1978 authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to euthanize healthy excess mustangs humanely when the adoption demand was not met by the public (Nazzaro, 2008). An internal memo circulated the BLM outlining plans to use lethal injection when possible and to shoot others on the range and burn their carcasses. That memo leaked to the public in 1981 (Philipps, 2017). Though Velma Bronn Johnston passed away in 1977, the organizations to which she belonged continued their advocacy for the mustangs of the West. Joan Blue, the acting president of the American Horse Protection Association, was one of the leading voices for the animals claimed to the press that "the ranchers have always wanted to get rid of all those wild horses, and now they've got the right administration. We're appalled by this and we're going to fight it" ("Federal Government to Kill 6,000 Horses," 1981). No compromise was met between the horse advocates and the BLM who believed that the horse and burro herds were destroying the ranges for livestock, bighorn sheep, antelope, and other denizens of the region. Horse advocates filed suits against the BLM claiming that the 1971 act was violated; the BLM ultimately backed down, and the population "problem" continued to escalate. Nazzaro (2008) of the Government Accountability Office identified that by 1984, roughly 60,000 wild horses resided on the ranges, which was also the first year in which the BLM reported official Appropriate Management Levels (AML) for the mustangs.

AML, at the time, were inconsistently conceived by the BLM's Herd Management Area (HMA) field offices, and several of their initial AML were conceived simply by the amount of horses that officials observed in the space at the time of establishment. Much like the term "native," original AML seem to be conceived only through a lens of *what was here when we*

arrived rather than scientific evidence. As horse numbers grew in these areas, so too did the tension between the BLM and the private ranchers of the West as lawsuits began coming from ranchers instead of horse advocates. *Dahl v. Clark* (1984) was a turning point for the BLM in which private rancher, DeMar Dahl filed suit demanding the BLM reduce the herd size of three HMAs to their 1971 level; the BLM responded on a grounds that the AML of the time was inadequately established; as a result of the case, AML numbers needed to be more accurately conceived in the future through more in depth research to the land's ability to support both the horse herds as well as the public's right to access the land for grazing purposes. The tensions surrounding mustangs in the West of the late 70s through mid-80s show the beginnings of a trend for the BLM: existing in place between the interests of horse advocacy groups, interests of private ranchers, language of the law, and access to resources to make change.

The BLM's budget for managing horse populations jumped in 1985 from $5 million to $17 million (Philipps, 2017). The BLM spent $81.226 million in 2018, and 61% of that went to private off-range holding costs ("Program Data," 2019). The private storage corals, pastures, and public pastures can be found in places ranging from California to Illinois and Arizona to South Dakota; many of them are in Kansas and Oklahoma. The long-term storage of horses consumed $ 49.428 million of US taxpayer dollars in 2016; the BLM paid Robert Hughes, for example $2 per horse per day for the just-over 4,000 horses in his care, which points to a price tag of $2.92 million (Philipps, 2016). The Hughes Ranch is located in Bartlesville, OK, a town once said to "harbor more millionaires than any town west of the Mississippi" (Martin, 1981); Robert's family has been among those millionaire's since before the BLM started adding nearly $3 million each year. Philipps (2017) expands on the existing conditions for other recipients of animals in the private storage program of the BLM:

> Many of these contractors are already wealthy, and the program is making them more so. One was a former CEO of Koch Industries, another is a banker and oilman with a business degree from Stanford, a third made millions leasing his land to his brother-in-law, the founder of Walmart. One of the newest contractors bought his ranch with the proceeds of a $232 million Powerball ticket. (p. 189)

The mustangs, here, represent a burden to the US taxpayer that continues hegemony by lining the pockets of already wealthy (predominantly white) people that have access to the necessary resources of land, food, and water for the horses at the expense of every US taxpayer. The BLM is surely no victim, though they are caught in a challenging place between the private ranchers of the west claiming rights to access spaces free of mustang intervention, horse advocacy groups claiming more rights for the horses to survive and thrive, and legal limitations created from the WFRHBA.

Victim

The final label to discuss, though not the final label that we apply to mustangs, considers the ways in which mustangs have been victimized by human intervention. Velma Bronn Johnston was not the first person to see brutalized horses on a trailer dripping blood and consider the unethical ways in which the animals experienced humans, but she used her experience as a platform to draw attention to the plight of the animals to a larger audience. The events of 1950 changed Velma's life, but it also changed the trajectory of living conditions for the mustangs whom she found so captivating; through her letter campaigns and political involvement, she painted a picture for people that the wild horses of the West were suffering and *we*, the people, could make a difference. Since her efforts culminated in the success of the WFRHBA, the human-nature relationship with horses continues to exist with tension as the horse populations

have continued to swell in the West. Where once horses were seen as victims of direct human intervention from their bloodied bodies captured on photograph and distributed to the masses, their victimhood has changed to something else. The animals continue to suffer violent roundups, but now their bodies are used less frequently for utilitarian purposes, rather they are shipped to private holding facilities (discussed in the next section) or chemically sterilized if and when they survive the gathering procedures. The “living symbol” of the West is alive, but the current image of the mustang considers the question: what kind of life is it?

Johnston’s own organization the ISPMB, the Mustang Heritage Foundation, the American Wild Horse Campaign, and the Cloud Foundation are just a four of the many groups advocating for better treatment of wild horses in the West. At the core of their message(s) is the image of the horses today: the Cloud Foundation claims on its home page that “they are in danger of being 'managed' into extinction” ("Who We Are," 2019) while the Mustang Heritage Foundation aims to “provide information and education about wild horses and burros, [and] elevate their image and desirability” ("The Primary Mission," 2019), suggesting that the image and desirability is currently lower than they think it should be. Wild horse advocacy groups exist on local and national levels to provide interested parties with access to getting involved as well as the ever-present “donate” button on nearly all of their websites, but to encourage participation they lean on the problematic ways in which wild horses are victims. These organizations, as well as the media, draw attention at first to the violence of the gathering procedures. The BLM removed 11,472 horses from ranges in the West in 2018 ("Program Data," 2019) by way of helicopter roundups (Hampson, Zabek, Pollitt, & Nock, 2011). The use of aerial vehicles to roundup the horses produces a calamity that scares the horses into motion and drives the herds much like a land-based predator would chase its prey. While the aerial chase method appears

brutal, one study by Hansen and Mosley (2000) shows no increased agonistic behavior for the surviving captured horses after three weeks nor does this method decrease reproductive rates in horses, but the image of the chase over days and sometimes weeks shows the public distressed and worn horses being chased by humans in machines for which the horses have no defense. Thus, the image of victimhood is maintained even when there are limited effects on the behaviors of the surviving animals. Horses do, in fact, die during these roundups; one incident of note happened during a round-up conducted from December 28, 2009, to February 4, 2010. The BLM captured 1,922 free-roaming horses, of which 86 free-roaming horses died from diet and metabolic failure, physiological changes, and stress related to captivity; 40 heavily pregnant mares also aborted during this roundup (Nock, 2010). The chase often ends with the horses being directed into a temporary coral covered with burlap to hide it from the animals; a trained "judas horse" mustang leads the herd directly in to the pens (Philipps, 2017, p. xxviii) after they have been chased for several days, weeks, or even months.

The captured horses are then loaded on to trucks and shipped to private storage facilities elsewhere, or they are (rarely) administered a treatment of a contraceptive that lasts 12-22 months. There are two types of porcine zona pellucida immunocontraception (PZP) used to decrease the reproductive rates of the mustangs; one of which reliably lasts for a year, but a second injection later can produce up-to five years of contraception for the animals. Female free-roaming horses begin producing foals when they are between two and three years old; the survival rate of free-roaming horses into adulthood and reproductive maturity is also higher than other comparably sized mammals with 70-95% reaching adulthood which allows populations to grow between 15-20% each year (Collins & Kasbohm, 2017). As the BLM is charged with "managing" the herds, they must investigate alternative management methods for the constantly

growing herd sizes. With limited effective, affordable, and easily delivered options, the BLM turns to a chemical sterilization process:

> The currently available fertility control vaccine, known as porcine zona pellucida (PZP), is limited in the duration of its effectiveness – a one-year formulation (initially assumed to be 22 months) that must be hand-injected into a captured wild horse. A second formulation of PZP can be deployed via ground-darting, but is also effective for up to only one year. ("Program Data," 2019)

Zona pellucida is a naturally accruing sticky protein that covers mammals' eggs and allows for sperm to bind to an egg; PZP is a form of that extracted from the ovaries of pigs. Pig DNA and their zona pellucida are different enough from horses that injecting the protein into the female horse's bloodstream calls forth antibodies in the body to bind and neutralize the foreign entity. The similarities between horse and pig zona pellucida are close enough that the antibodies bind to the horse's protein and effectively "block" the sperm from penetrating the egg. Using PZP in harmony with established roundup practices could save the BLM nearly $8 million over 12 years of administering it to one HMA serving as the home for 874 animals (de Seve & Boyles Griffin, 2013); current estimates suggest there are roughly 498 animals on average per HMA.

There are nonetheless two main problems with PZP relative to the mustangs of the West: 1) the immediacy of the population problem calls for more immediate responses compared to the slower impact that PZP offers, and 2) applying PZP to larger herds requires roundup efforts and hand-administering the treatment. With estimates as recent as March 01, 2019 indicating 88,090 wild horses and burros in the BLM's HMAs that should hold 26,690, more immediate action is necessary: reducing the herds now rather than preventing their growth over the next decade is paramount. Furthermore, if the BLM is going to spend a comparable amount of money to

roundup the horses for administering PZP dramatically decreases the savings of using the treatment in the first place.

Be it a *victim, nuisance,* or *invasive species*, the ways in which we have looked to the mustangs of the West and labeled them in the fallout of 1971's WFRHBA have dramatically changed the ways in which we humans are able to identify with the animals. The legislation that Velma Bronn Johnston worked so hard to get passed officially made the mustang part of American heritage and a symbolic representative of the indominable spirit of conquest tied to westward expansion and the spread of American ideologies. Their status as "living symbols" (Jackson, 1971) stands in contrast to the problematic ways in which their legacy has been manipulated to show them as victims of intervention and their own inability to manage themselves, as nuisances that cost taxpayers money and line the pockets of the already-wealthy, or as invasive animals that simultaneously do not belong *here* and cause damage. All of these labels share the common thread of applying human meaning to the other-than-human world by categorizing animals by their value, threat, or burden to people. Ideologically imbuing these animals we make them *more than* others; even when we strip them of their positive attributes we add to them by the amount of resources necessary to continue our intervention.

Borders and Barriers: Herd Management Areas

One might ask themselves, if William Bradford set foot in Massachusetts in 1620 and said "hideous and desolate wilderness" (Nash, 2014), what might he have said when looking at the vast deserted emptiness of the spaces that we made into HMAs following the campaigns of Velma Bronn Johnston? Similar to the ways in which we create categories and hierarchies of animals in their relationship to humans, we also do that with places of the world. In the spirit of how Emily Dickinson (2016) considers the ways in which we create borders and barriers as both

physical separations as well as metaphoric distinctions between where people and civilization exist and where “nature” or the wild exist, the HMAs that geographically bind the mustangs of the West show us very specific locations where *they* are compared to where *we* are. A functional critique of the development of public lands into the HMAs to become a home for the mustangs of the West reveals extensions of ideologies by way of the power they illuminate and the suffering the perpetuate.

There are currently 177 HMAs in the country that exist over ten states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. Figure 3, below, is a map produced by the BLM to illustrate the locations of the HMAs that account for 31,583,386 acres of land for the impacted states; Their total shared coverage of the land accounts for for roughly 4.41% of the total available acres in the 10-state area. Altogether, HMAs cover more US land than the state of Mississippi. Velma Bronn Johnston’s own home state, Nevada has the most ground covered by HMAs: 22,890,624 acres (larger than the state of Maine) of Nevada’s 70,763,000 acres are HMAs (32.35% of the state). HMAs have names such as Desert, Devils Fence, Hot Creek, Lava Beds, Muddy Mountains, Murderer’s Creek, Rocky Hills, Sand Spring-Last Chance, and Snowstorm Mountains [NV] that might suggest these are not places in which humans want to dwell. These lands are among the least desirable places in the country, yet we have created borders to say this is where the wildness of the free-roaming horses and burros gets to exist.

Over the ten states in which one could find HMAs, the geology, flora, and fauna are complex and diverse, but Nevada’s HMAs reveal some of the ways in which humans have extended their ideologies about the mustangs of the West by the ways we have bound and limited the places in which they can dwell. HMAs themselves seem to reveal false consciousness and

illusions about the locations reserved for the wild symbols of American expansion over the West. They are illusions themselves; though they are on “public” land owned by the U.S. government, access to them is limited to these locations by the citizens the make-up the public. Philipps (2017) opens his book with a multiple page rendition of his experience “watching” a wild horse round-up conducted by the BLM in which he was kept company by a representative of the BLM and an armed federal agent; he was required to stay within a tapped-off area the “size of walk-in closet” and he could scarcely see the animals over the distance between him and the activity (p. xiv).

Figure 3. BLM HMA Map.

Garrott (2018) identifies the unsuitable and often extreme conditions of the lands routinely occupied by the mustangs of the American West; under the extreme and inconsistent conditions of these locations horses experience "a slow death due to dehydration and/or starvation, with large numbers dying periodically during droughts and associated severe range deterioration." The places in the West that are home for the animals offer dangerous living conditions as it is, and only hearty animals can survive in the arid climate. Wild horse grazing has more of a dramatic effect than livestock grazing offers; horses may have larger consequences even in lower-population areas due to the year-round unmanaged grazing habits compared to livestock management through fencing, rotation grazing, herding, salt and mineral supplementation, and water sources" (Beever, 2003). Horses also problematically graze to a point that they impact the soil and increase risks of soil erosion through increased soil penetration resistance and decreased soil aggregate stability (Davies et al., 2014).

The mustangs of the West consume resources at a comparatively unsustainable rate, suggesting that they are a victim of their own design, as the geographic limitations on where they *can* be create unintended consequences due to the scarce resources provided by the land; thus, their suffering has transitioned from potential death by slaughter to potential death by starvation and/or dehydration. Should we stop our human intervention on the horses, then other consequences might arise. Ben Masters (2017b) suggests that stopping our human intervention will lead the mustangs down a worse path: the population would eventually swell to 150,000 horses in an area that currently holds 26,690 ("Program Data," 2019) resulting in the eventual starvation of the animals by the tens of thousands, other animals would also starve, and the extreme grazing pressure on the land would damage the ecology for generations. Velma Johnston set out to save the mustangs, to prevent suffering, but the current situation suggests that there

have been unintended material consequences for the animals tied closely to their presentation as victim.

HMAs in southern Nevada such as Bullfrog, Reveille, Stone Cabin, Hot Creek, and Nevada Wild Horse Range are just some of the HMAs in Nevada's Nye County. The Nevada Test Site is also in Nye County, and located about 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas; between 1951 to 1992, 828 underground nuclear tests were completed there (*United States Nuclear Tests: July 1945 through September 1992*, 2015), with most of the of the tests completed in five areas: Pahute Mesa, Rainier, Mesa, Yucca Flat, Shoshone Mountain, and Frenchman Flat. Nye country is among the least human-populated places in the country with only 2.4 inhabitants per square mile compared to the national average of 87.4 (*2010 Census: Population Density Data*, 2010). Figure 4 highlights the specifically mentioned HMAs in comparison to the Nevada Test Site; the image is a composite of a BLM-provided map of Nevada's HMAs and a google maps of Nevada. The provided maps and the HMAs of Nye county illustrate the proximity of the HMAs to the nuclear testing site that continued nuclear testing for 24 years after 1971's passing of the WFRHBA.

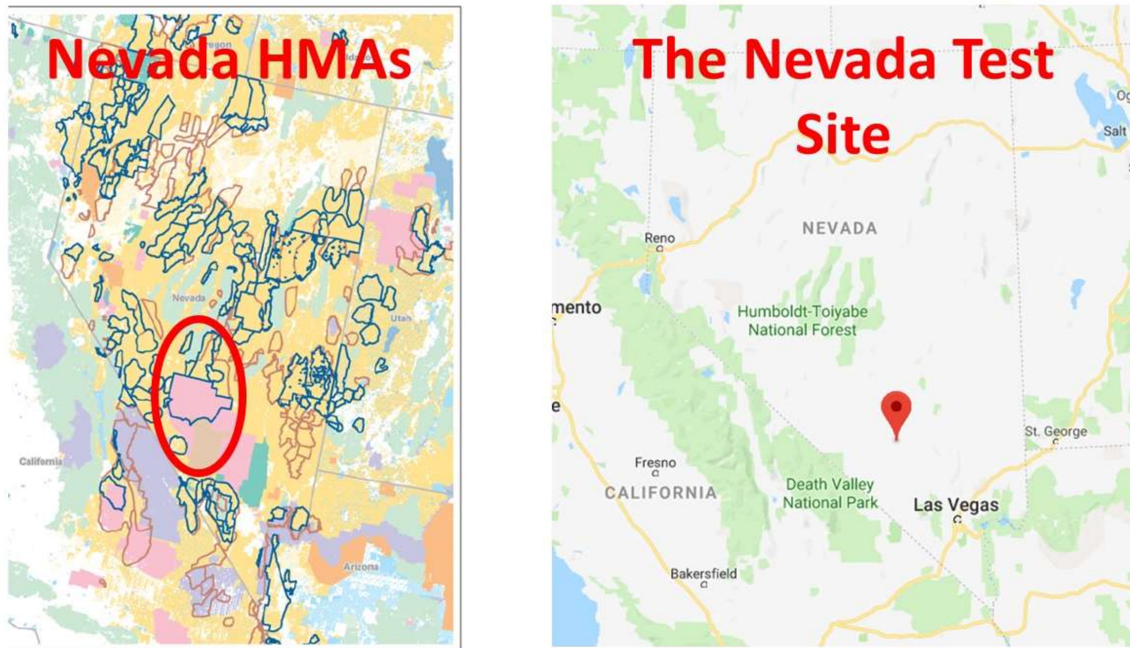

Figure 4. Nevada HMAs and The Nevada Test Site.

Nye county is not just home some wild horse HMAs and the United States' historic testing site, it is also the home to Yucca Mountain and its now-stopped High Level Waste Nuclear Waste Repository that has been central to Danielle Endres' (2009a; 2009b; 2012) research. Yucca Mountain is located on federally controlled land; use of the land was and is contested by tribal claims by the Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute. Beginning in 1978, The Department of Energy began studies on Yucca Mountain to assess its suitability as a long-term repository of spent nuclear waste (Surry, 2015). While other sites were being studied, congress amended the Nuclear Waste Policy Act in 1987 to direct research on only Yucca Mountain (Endres, 2009b). When discussing *why* Yucca mountain was selected for this purpose, Kuletz (1998) offers the following description:

> The nuclear landscapes in the region began to emerge in the 1940s and have included many aspects of nuclear activity - from uranium mining and milling to

> the development, manufacture, and testing of weapons to the present activity of siting nuclear waste repositories. Uranium mining, nuclear weapons testing, and nuclear waste dumps are not the only activities that have transformed the West and Southwest over the last 50 years, but they comprise significant activities that demonstrate how nuclearism can be understood as a form of internal colonialism. (p. 7)

Kuletz presents a useful understanding of the way Americans have sectioned-off parts of our country, such as Yucca Mountain, as a place that serves a nefarious but utilitarian purpose. Yucca Mountain is part of the southern American West and it serves as an exemplar for the colonial expansion even within our own national borders; it represents the pushing-out of the Other, the Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute for Yucca Mountain that marginalizes them as a people and their beliefs to be replaced by American waste. Much like Yucca Mountain, the mustangs of the West have been pushed out-of-sight-out-of-mind into the "sacrifice zones" that *we* (white Americans) do not want for ourselves, and equally do not want others to have.

The HMAs of southern Nevada in Nye county bring forth a return to De Certeau (1984) and representations of *place* compared to *space*. As De Certeau points out, "a place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence" (p. 117); HMAs provide the necessary order of elements for the mustangs including hundreds and thousands of acres of land that provide opportunities to forage for food, find water, seek shelter, and multiply. Hearty animals *can* live in these locations, as the HMAs meet the basic needs of habitation. The American West and the locations that we have bound as homes for the (over)population of mustangs are also spaces. De Certeau continues, "A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is

composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense articulated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it" (p. 117); by binding the locations of the West for HMA purposes, humans have intervened on the places and imbued them with the meaning of what we bring with us. On those HMAs take place the semi-regular BLM roundups of mustangs that facilitate the movement of the horses' velocity, direction, and time via the employ a technique that involves chasing the animals with helicopters into temporary corals to capture, remove, and relocate the animals into private storage (Roe & Grossman, 2018). As a place, the West continues to exist much as it did before Velma Bronn Johnston and the WFRHBA, though more human-made things exist in it; on the other hand, humans have chopped-up the West and facilitated movement through it to say where both horses and people can go as well as how they can move through those spaces. It is no accident that the HMAs are exclusively in the West; with no presence east of Colorado (note: there are BLM-funded private storage facilities and ranges in states East of Colorado, but no HMAs); while there are other public spaces in the East, the mustangs are *part of* the West as though (through the efforts of the BLM) the "problem" of the mustangs is not a "problem" for all of America, but only the West.

Who then suffers as a result of the borders and barriers of the West and the 177 HMAs that fill the least desirable locations in that part of North America? On the surface, the animals themselves are the first line of suffering as a result of ideologies about them. Their suffering begins with the very locations that humans have allowed them to be as they are often uninhabitable for most humans. Beyond the challenging conditions provided by the locations of the HMAs are the activities of human intervention that take place including violent roundups, forced chemical sterilization (also sometimes administered after the horses have been rounded up), and even brutal deaths. Brian Maffley (2018) of *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported four

mustang deaths in August of 2018 as a result of the mustangs being chased and some running in to barbed wire. Other animals suffer at the expense of the horses; Masters (2017b) points out some of the other potential animals that can and have inhabited these locations including bison, bighorn sheep, elk, pronghorn, and mule deer. Humans also suffer as an extension of the HMAs as indicated previously through the taxpayer burdens via the BLM. While the HMAs are often located in places less inhabited by people, such as Nye County in Nevada, these are not completely devoid of humans. Private ranchers believe they too have some claim to the public spaces and forage land that the mustangs also inhabit. The borders and barriers that keep the HMAs are not often physical, which allows the mustangs to cause damage to private property.

Perhaps, though beyond the human and animal suffering tied to the wild horses of the West something else is at stake. "Wildness" itself also suffers: When the image of freedom (being free of domination, wildness) is threatened by the human-made confines that require the animals to well on the barren locations of the West, it challenges the interpretation of freedom. The WFRHBA opens with:

> Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; that they contribute to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and enrich the lives of the American people. (Jackson, 1971)

As "living symbols" the wild free-roaming horses and burros represent what it means to be *the West*, and the west is more than its people; rather it is the attitudes and beliefs that form that shape how people understand and interact with the world they inhabit. The mustangs of the West extend ideologies in many ways, but the ways in which they serve as a symbol for being free and untamed say something about those values when *too much* freedom leads to chemical

sterilization, violence, incarceration, relocation, and even death; Ben Master's (2017b) exploration of allowing the mustangs to be unmanaged paints a grim picture, but it extends the ideology that they (the horses) need human intervention at the hands of the US government. As a material problem, the horse herds thrive because they reproduce too quickly and they have very few natural predators leading to high rates of survival to reproductive maturity, which allows for a near-constant population growth. This constructs a message that the horses *must* be "managed," or they will eventually exhaust the resources and die as emaciated empty shells. What then does it mean for people represented by the "living symbol" of the West? The horses, then, exist in tension with themselves: they are both symbol of the West, tool to subdue it, and victim of the very internal American imperialism they unwillingly helped advance. The American West, and the wildness it once held made manifest by the mustangs still roaming its ranges, has been bound as *part of* America that represents a symbol of the dominance and expansion of which we are capable, but it simultaneously represents the dark underside of marginalization of people and nature.

Performance an Access: Impact on Environmentalism

Velma Bronn Johnston modeled environmentalism, even though she might not have known she was doing so. Reflecting on her narrative and the years that followed provide a view as to who is allowed the opportunity to perform the acts of environmentalism. The inadequacies of the Wild Horse Annie Act of 1950 were quickly revealed: the short-sited legislation without teeth to enforce any long-term change lacked language and nuance to account for conservation and preservation efforts. As noted in chapter two, the term "Environmentalist" only emerged in the 1960s and described "people who were concerned about the physical environment, the pollution of our air and water" (Wiley, 1998). Neither Cruise and Griffiths (2010) or Kania

(2012) identify that Velma Bronn Johnston ever identified as an environmentalist, but her goals for the mustangs of the West and the land they inhabit align with contemporary understandings of environmentalism; though some of her politics, attitudes, and beliefs supported ideologies that suppress environmentalism, her actions and legacy provide a way of viewing environmentalism differently that allow for a different understanding of the performance of environmentalism and who can access it. This section will consider the functional consequences of Velma Bronn Johnston and her legacy on the performance-of and access-to contemporary environmentalism with consideration of the goals of horse advocacy compared to those of environmentalism, the intersection of environmentalism and horse advocacy, and a final reflective look back to explore how people might (today) view Velma Bronn Johnston as an environmentalist.

Conservation, preservation, and restoration appear throughout Environmental Communication. Conservation, according to Kopnina (2017), has evolved to have two contemporary meanings in environmentalism: 1) the mainstream use of the term refers to the "conservation as preservation of natural resources for human use," while 2) the more radical and deep-ecological view that refers to "conservation as protection of nature for its own sake." These considerations of conservation suggest oppositional understandings, where the first resonates with Pirages and Ehrlich's (1974) *Dominant Social Paradigm* by placing nature as subject to human and the conservation of nature as a utilitarian opportunity to enhance human longevity. The second resonates with the bioegalitarian approach of promoting equality of species within a complex system to extend and improve the system rather than just the dominant species. Conservation also retains an undertone of "using less," as pro-environmental behaviors such as conserving water involve taking shorter shower, turning faucets off when brushing one's teeth, decreasing grass lawns, and others. Conservation in the more radical of the two understandings

offered by Kopnina promotes the protection of nature, which is made possible through the decreasing dependence on resources. Velma Bronn Johnston's legacy exists primarily in the material consequences for the mustangs of the West: through her intentions to "save" the mustangs, she unintentionally re-routed their suffering and reinforced power structures of the U.S. government's intervention on the land of the West. When considering her impact through a lens of conservation, a turn to Pontrelli's (1969) list of goals Velma had for the success of the WFRHBA including forward thoughts to better "range management" (inclusion 3) and scientific studies to better understand the needs of the land and animals that inhabit it (inclusion 5). Range management, or range intervention, remains an important consideration for environmentalism as it intersects with the population concerns of mustangs in the American West.

Preservation and restoration are, I argue, closely linked despite how they might seem, and require one to understand the other. "Preservation" suggests keeping things as they are and saving them for the future; when applied to environmentalism and nature, preservation becomes contextual. Returning to Cronon (1996) and his offering that "Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it [the wilderness] is quite profoundly a human creation - indeed, the creation of a very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history" (p. 69), preserving the wilderness and nature then become about preserving our understanding of those things from the point in which (predominantly white) European migrants came to access them. Are we, then, preserving nature as it was before human intervention, and if so, how would we know what that was like? Preservation of the mustangs of the West and the lands they inhabit has been a point of contention manifested through the AML of the herds: in early cases AML was determined simply by how many horses were believed to be occupying a space at the point of legislation (1971).

Restoration is the act restoring something to a way it was before; in an environmental sense restoration suggests returning nature, the environment, or the wilderness to ways in which they existed before humans intervened upon them. But this calls into question something discussed earlier: much like the ways in which Simberloff et al. (1997) pointed out that horses are non-native to this landmass, that configuration of understanding horses is grounded in a particular time, place, and ethnocentric point of view. Restoration implies one of two things: 1) restoring something to the way it was before, or 2) restoring something to a "better" version of itself. The connection between restoration and preservation is this: both are predicated on the idea that one version of something, be it the mythical past or the peak of observation is better than the current version. Environmentalism and the wake of the WFRHBA intersect with preservation and restoration in the sense that they all operate in a nostalgia for a better past that requires the present to be *less than*. Perhaps they are all correct and human intervention *is* the problem as it manifested through nostalgia for Eurocentric understandings of "nature" when white settlers "found" it. Both contemporary Environmentalism and the WFRHBA illuminate the consequences of human intervention on the other-than-human world, and through better understanding of the ways in which our interventions are problematic, we can navigate better solutions for the environment and for the free-roaming horses of the West.

With considerations of conservation, preservation, restoration, pointing and naming, and the borders and barriers of the world, a new question arises: where do horse advocacy and environmentalism intersect? The specific goals of each free-roaming horse and burro advocacy group offer a spectrum of desired outcomes, but considering their messages in harmony produces a consistent outcome: the mustangs of the West deserve better conditions. The American Wild Horse Campaign, for example, claims on their homepage "Our goal is to protect America's wild

horses and burros by stopping the federal government's systematic elimination of these national icons from our public lands" ("Defend America's Wild Horses," 2019); the Humane Society of the United States' website offers a similar sentiment of:

> Free-roaming horses and burros deserve first to be given every chance to live out their lives wild and free, if and when intervention is required, we owe them our best efforts to ensure that any human actions that affect their lives—such as gathers, fertility control, transportation, confinement and adoption—are conducted in a way to assure their humane treatment. ("The HSUS and our vision for wild horse and burro management in the U.S.," 2019)

Reviewing the goals of other like-minded groups suggests a consistent attitude of humane treatment of the animals, protection from humans, and (not in many cases) preserving their legacy.

Akin to the harmony of one underlining goal from the different factions of mustang advocates is the unified goal of environmentalism: the planet deserves better. How that goal manifests is broader than mustang advocacy: Tesch and Kempton (2004) produced four categories for which environmentalists see their peers as 1) lay environmentalists, 2) conservationists, 3) activists, or 4) radicals with *performance* at the core of these categories. The extent to which a person engages with pro-environmental behavior and sacrifices their own resources as well as luxuries becomes the metric for which one can navigate through these categories.

Tesch and Kempton's categories could easily apply to mustang advocacy groups and the individuals that embody them: both mustang advocacy and environmentalism require sacrifice and performance as measurements for the extent to which one is identified within the groups.

Both groups advocate for the protection of nature for its own sake (conservation). Both seek the preservation of intersecting elements at a specific time that have constructed understandings of nature and wildness. Environmentalist and mustang advocacy groups also both pursue a restoration to a time with less human intervention. The difference between the groups appears to primarily manifest in the specificity with which agents engage: where one group (mustang advocacy) promotes conservation, preservation, and restoration of the free-roaming horses of the West and the environments that support them, the other group (environmentalism) promotes a broader spectrum of things for which agents should conserve, preserve, and restore.

Conclusion

How, then, would Velma Bronn Johnston be viewed by contemporary environmentalists? By the rationale of Tesch and Kempton (2004), Velma would likely qualify in the third level of the environmental hierarchies as an "activists" by her engagement on the local, state, and national levels of government to produce material outcomes for the animals. Some of her early work involved small acts of civil disobedience that included photographing those that rounded up horses in the early 1950s to expose the conditions of the animals and the means with which the men used to obtain and keep the horses prior to slaughter (Johnston, 1958), which may suggest some of the fourth level of environmentalism as a "radical." Her diligent work and life-long commitment produced material change for the animals and legislation to "protect" them. She advocated for stronger legislation for the protection and "management" of the land on which the horses dwelled. She also did small things throughout her life that could be pro-environmental behavior such as making her own clothing; Tapper (2011) and Wasinger (2009) identify that crafting and activities like making/mending your own clothing involve the pro-environmental behavior of upcycling of materials, which Velma Bronn Johnston did throughout her childhood

and adult life. Through her activism to protect the wild horses from the brutal conditions of their round-ups, her public advocacy that gathered more people to her cause and spread the pro-environmental message of protecting animals, and some of her more practical day-to-day activities she very much could qualify as a contemporary environmentalist.

On the other hand, (Kania, 2012) identifies that Velma Bronn Johnston was a staunch republican, supporter of Ronald Reagan, a regular smoker, and traveled (usually) by vehicle all over the American Southwest to give talks as both Velma Bronn Johnston and "Wild Horse Annie." Dunlap and Gale (1974) offer some early insight as to relationships between environmentalism and politics; they found that most Americans saw environmental quality as important, but efforts to protect the environment generated opposition from pro-business republicans that value limited government and were cautious toward social change. Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright (2001) discuss the differences elected officials and their constituents in the pollical divide between parties identifying that:

> While the evidence for partisan differences in environmental concern among the American public has been weak, ideological differences have been more apparent as virtually all studies employing measures of political ideology have found liberalism to be significantly related to environmental concern.

Ronald Reagan's environmental legacy is contested, but as New York Times writer Philip Shabecoff (1989) identified, "many environmentalists insist that the Reagan environmental record will be remembered as one of the worst of any modern Presidency. 'Eight Lost Years.'" Tobacco use also has anti-environmental concerns including but not limited to pesticide use, land degradation, deforestation, tobacco product waste, and "thirdhand smoke," or the residual chemicals left on surfaces from tobacco smoke (Novotny, 2015).

Velma Bronn Johnston's legacy and impact offer an opportunity to consider the consequences of American ideologies that construct humans as dominant over nature. Her work provides a window with which scholars can unveil the ways in which we construct some animals as *more than* by infusing their image with human meaning while also suggesting that those very same animals are problematic and the lands in which they dwell are unworthy of human habitation. She also provides an opportunity to rethink how we conceive contemporary environmentalism through her work and life. By reflecting on who she was in the moments of her activity and the dynamic times that followed, her legacy is that of an exemplar to whom we can turn and see that not all environmentalists fit a mold, nor do they have to subscribe to a consistent constellation of attitudes, beliefs, and values. She encourages us, a half century after her death, to work against the injustices we see by the means available to us. Finally, she models one path, of seemingly infinite options, to push back against the systems that are used to maintain asymmetrical power.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Wild free-roaming horses in the American West exist in a unique intersection of ideologies, environmentalism, symbolism, and history. Horses are deeply tied to human history, as the domestication of free-roaming horse remains one of the most significant achievements in human history that improved travel, communication, combat, agriculture, and beyond. Though no horses were observed by the first European travelers to arrive in North America, the animals are deeply tied to American history and they serve as mechanism for human intervention on the North American landmass as well as its inhabitants. As more Europeans came to this country, they brought with them more horses that became an integral part of bringing new human beings across a foreign terrain. The animals carried pilgrims, conquistadores, revolutionaries, and pioneers westward into a great wild unknown in an ever-expanding American empire. Our proximity to and dependence on horses constructed an idea of what horses meant to us: the perception of the horse as evolutionary partner was replaced as perceptions rose that horses were a symbol of strength and an icon of freedom for the historic American West (Beever, 2003). The symbol was called in to question in the early twentieth century as changing technologies decreased our dependence on the animals, which produced an abundance of the horse commodity. As populations bulged, we found a new utilitarian purpose for them and began rendering our once-noble companions into canned dogfood. Acquiring horses required methods that some found inhumane, which produced the rhetorical situation that Velma Bronn Johnston entered in 1950. Her political campaigns began in a time when the wild horses of the West were gathered, slaughtered, and made to feed one of our other companion species. The impact of her 21-year campaign is clear in the ways she brought forth legislation to create legal changes with the intention of improving the circumstances of the horses. Though her intentions were noble and

she used the means available to her to enact change, the unintended consequences of her legacy have returned the horse to a point of contention in the politics of the contemporary United States.

This research considers the ways in which humans extend their dominance over the other-than-human world by way of ideologies. Using the wild free-roaming horses of the West as an exemplar, this text reveals the ways in which humans construct some animals as *more than* others to produce material consequences for the animals as well as humans. Velma Bronn Johnston remains a central figure for this research and the mustangs of the West: her narrative helps to illuminate the ways in which ideologies about animals come into existence, are modified, and produce results that extend existing power structures. She also provides a unique view into contemporary environmental practices and those who identify as environmentalists, though she does so in an unconventional way. Her experiences provoke questions about how we identify animals and how we identify *with* animals: by challenging the ways we categorize and understand horses, she models a way that perceptions and beliefs can, in fact, be changed. By empowering the Bureau of Land Management to intervene on the animals and the land, we have allowed the American government to place the animals in some of the worst locations the United States has to offer. Places in the West have become spaces engendered with politics and meaning that challenge perceptions of "nature," "wildness," and even perceptions of what it means to be "the West." Velma Bronn Johnston died in 1977, but her legacy brings forth reflections on both how we conceive environmentalism as well as who can be an environmentalist.

Ideological analysis is historically built from the work of Marx and Engels (1970), who suggested that ideologies are upside-down, or inversed, versions of reality, claiming "If in all ideology of men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on

the retina does from their physical life-process” (p. 47). These inversed perspectives imply an illusion of real circumstances for people, and they are used to maintain and extend asymmetrical power that privileges the ruling elite and disenfranchises the majority of people. With this understanding of ideologies as “illusions” used to maintain power, this research sought to uncover what false consciousness exist about the American West and the mustangs that inhabit it as well as that illusions are used to conceptualize environmentalism. To consider the ways in which humans create inversions of reality with environmental implications this text was modeled after a very specific passage offered by Raymond Geuss (1981)

> In what sense or in virtue of what properties can a form of consciousness be ideologically false, i.e. can it be an ideology in the pejorative sense? I will consider three kinds of answers to this question:
>
> (a) a form of consciousness ideologically false in virtue of some epistemic properties of the beliefs what are its constituents;
>
> (b) a form of consciousness is ideologically false in virtue of its functional properties;
>
> (c) a form of consciousness is ideologically false in virtue of some of its genetic properties. (p. 13)

From Geuss’s model for entering ideological analysis Tommie Shelby (2003) provided a conceptual framework and used racism in the United States as an example to discuss and the construction of, evidence for, and consequences related to the false consciousness of ideologies. Where Shelby applied his research to the “*ism*” of race to expose the ways ideologies were used historically and are continued to be used today as a mechanism of marginalizing people of color, this research reapplies the model to look at environmental*ism* and the ways beliefs are shaped for

the continued subjugation of the other-than-human world. Both Geuss and Shelby served as spiritual guides for this research by calling forth theoretical suggestions for unpacking ideology.

Analytical Review

Chapter three considered the genetic history of ideologies surrounding horses in the United States by focusing on the lived experiences of Velma Bronn Johnston: a woman from the West whose exclusive constellation of circumstances uniquely positioned her in a time and place to be the catalyst for political change. Above all, her narrative offers us an exemplar for the ways in which material change for the other-than-human world can come from unlikely places. Her early life experiences with polio left her physically disfigured. She grew up in a time and place with a wider gap of unequal privilege distribution by gender than our contemporary landscape offers, and took pride in her role as a "lowly housewife" (Johnston, 1972b). Though she had known for many years about the conditions for the horses, she took no action as a younger woman; by her own account the practices concerned her, but she chose to take no action because the problems had not "touched" her life (Johnston, 1972a). In many ways, she demonstrated that the political life was not something she *wanted* in her earlier years, and that a life with her husband that reflected the social norms of women in the West at the time would keep her content. She represents the mundane and the everyday circumstances in which individual actors come to and contribute to something greater than themselves by the way she, for all intents and purposes an everyday woman, perceived injustice and acted. Her life shows us, today, that we too can act: we, the everyday people, can create change on a national scale. She models a path to divorce myths of environmentalism that wide-spread change must come from the top-down from the realities of environmentalism that we all can enact change. She shows us that there is not one

way that environmentalists have to look or be, and that there is no cookie-cutter shared identity for performing environmentalism.

Chapter four discussed the epistemic properties of ideologies about the West and wild horses primarily during the time of Velma Bronn Johnston's political activity (1950-1971). This chapter revisited themes grown from environmental rhetoric and cultural studies that provided a framework of pointing and naming, borders and barriers, and the performance and access of environmentalism. The attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions of Americans in the 1950s shaped their perceptions of horses, wildness, and the West, which enabled the maintenance of ideologies. Velma Bronn Johnston's political involvement show a woman activist with radical ideas that needed to be performed in accessible middle-of-the-road ways. While she was able to implement many of her ideas that created changes for the animals, the very radicalness of the ideas required her to work as a political bipartisan. In a time that limited political access for everyone outside of the white-male demographic, she mobilized her resources to spread her ideas and unify people under a banner that brought her and her message to Washington DC. As Velma Bronn Johnston's popularity and influence grew, her moniker, "Wild Horse Annie" emerged as fictionalized version of the real woman fighting for change. Though a caricature, "Wild Horse Annie" enabled Velma to continue her efforts for change in the opportune time in which the image of the West evoked a sense of patriotism, freedom, and individuality that Wild Horse Annie embodied. Lurking in the background of this chapter, however, is the reality that Velma's circumstances that birthed Annie and brought them to the nation's capital were also tied to her/their whiteness. Would a woman of color, or a member of the Western Shoshone been able to be as successful? Would the path to success have been expedited if white male New Yorker led the charge? The circumstances of her life allowed her to resonate with a broader audience and increased her

legibility with white male lawmakers. The epistemic properties of ideologies regarding the West, animal rights, horses, and environmentalism exist within the zeitgeist of (global) Western white male politics, as those are the "ruling elites" who perpetuate beliefs about human interactions with the other-than-human world as well as perceptions about that world itself.

Chapter five turned from Velma Bronn Johnston's life to unpack her legacy in the wake of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971. The functional properties of an ideology are tied to the material consequences of beliefs: they reveal the unequal distribution of suffering and benefits consequential to ideologies. Though time has relentlessly marched forward following her political activity, the conditions for mustangs of the West have only slightly changed; they continue to suffer from human intervention, though their suffering only takes a different persona. Where once they were chased across the ranges by vehicles, corralled into pens, and shipped to rendering facilities that transformed their flesh into canned dogfood, they are now chased across the ranges by helicopters, corralled into pens, and shipped to a different part of the country to live out their days in "storage" or they are chemically sterilized. On the other hand, they are also now legally protected symbols of American internal colonialism and get the privilege of representing the active marginalization of the native human inhabitants that resided on the North American landmass prior to white European migrants invading and destroying the wild and natural places of the world. Environmentalism, too, has changed over the past half-century. Velma Bronn Johnston modeled environmentalism in a time when environmentalists where scarcely organized, and the spread of the movement was only beginning for individuals. She demonstrated many environmental values even though she might not have known she was doing so at the time. Reflecting on her narrative and the years that followed provide a view as to who is allowed the opportunity to perform the acts of environmentalism and

what it means to be an environmentalist. Her narrative offers a mechanism to reflect on contemporary environmental efforts through the question: what does environmentalism look like? Velma Bronn Johnston was a white woman of the West, a staunch republican, a supporter of Ronald Reagan, a cowgirl, a heavy smoker, and more (Kania, 2012): her identity imperfectly aligns with what one might affiliate with contemporary environmentalism, yet she diligently worked to create long-term change for the other-than-human world through the mustangs of the West. This research unveils the ways in which human ideologies about animals extend dominance over the other-than-human-world by looking at the ways we have pointed to horses and elevated them as *more than* other animals by infusing horses with human meaning, which could not have been possible without the work that Velma did on their behalf.

Implications

This research adds to the existing literature in three ways: (1) it illuminates the life and impact of an uncommon environmental hero, (2) it reveals the consequences of ideologies about mustangs and environmentalism, and (3) it adapts Shelby's framework of ideological criticism to illustrate how the successes of the early environmentalism movement, and not just their losses, have contributed to our current environmental crisis. This last point particularly matters, for as Sue Curry Jansen (2009) argues, mythologizing the past "is not just flawed history; it also promotes escapist politics" (p. 223).

Though Velma Bronn Johnston operated in a specific rhetorical moment, her impact on the environmental movement and environmental activism linger in the contemporary landscape, though perhaps in unknown ways to the environmental practitioners and activists that benefit from her legacy. Though the environmental movement has a rich history in the global West, the developments in the 1960s saw the mobilization of the movement that corresponded with

scientific advancements, increased rates of higher education, and improved understanding of environmental impacts all advanced the social movement (Rootes, 2007) during the peak of Velma Bronn Johnston's activity. Social movements, such as environmentalism, do not simply come in to existence as fully-formed ideas, rather they are called forth by the rhetorical situations that our world of complex humans create; According to Jamison, Eyerman, and Cramer (1991)

> to be a social movement, a collection of organizations, groups, and individual activists must develop and attempt to realize a collective project, based on specific knowledge interests. It is that which gives identity to a movement and which makes it a potential force for fundamental social change. (p. 197-8)

The mustangs of the West and Velma Bronn Johnston are part of the environmental social movement of the time in which she was operating. As an individual, Velma Bronn Johnston served as the president of one organization that acted on behalf of the mustangs of the West, the ISPMB; they worked with other organizations throughout her tenure as leader to improve the conditions of for the animals as part of the other-than-human world. Specifically, the ISPMB worked with the National Mustang Heritage foundation on multiple projects to act on behalf of specific herds as well as the animals as a whole. Her work with other organizations, political actors, activists, and supporters of her cause positioned her as a, perhaps unknowing, part of the early calibrations of the environmental movement.

Velma Bronn Johnston's grassroots approach to saving the mustangs also resonates with the very grassroots origins of the environmentalism movement; As Rootes (2007) offers that "grass-roots environmental activism is, as well as an important means of social learning about environmental issues and a school for participation generally, an entry point for new activists and new issues" it shows the a harmony of the historic points of entry for activism with Velma Bronn

Johnston's own path. Her efforts to save the wild horses began with gruesome image on her way to work; when the unsettling scene contrasted with her view of how the animals *should be* treated, she entered the scene to which she had no intent of becoming an international celebrity. Through diligent letter-writing and constant communication with like-minded people and supporters she slowly became a prominent feature in the community of activists and politicians that wanted social change on behalf of animals that represented the mishaps of human intervention on the world that supports them.

As she typed her way through her unintentional political career, she presented values about the ways in which the people and government of the United States used land, treated animals in inhumane ways, and exploited the other-than-human world as a commodity; while these values manifested primarily in the form of the advocacy for a specific group of animals, the values she expressed can easily be attached the environmental movement's values that Pakulski and Crook (1998) call "green" issues that concern with the preservation of natural environments. Again, Velma Bronn Johnston serves as a model for environmental activism in the ways that she simply saw a problem and then mobilized the resources to which she had access to positively impact her local community via her early success in Storey county, her state through the Nevada legislation to ban vehicular roundups of horses, and her country by way of the legislation that bore her moniker as well as the WFRHBA of 1971. By not self-identifying as an environmentalist, it is also possible that she allowed herself to be accessible to people on across the political spectrum; if anything, she made an environmental issue apolitical by focusing on the animals themselves as representatives of American ideologies.

This dissertation then reveals the functional effects of ideologies that impact the ways we understand and interact with animals (by way of pointing and naming), land (by way of borders and barriers), and other like-minded environmentalists (by way of performance and access). Milstein (2011) highlights the positive impacts of *nature identification*, but this research complicates her observation to expose the consequences of pointing to animals and categorizing them *en masse* rather than as individuals. By identifying mustangs as *invasive, nuisance,* and/or *victim*, we strip them of their individuality and continue to infuse human values that limit the animal's agency in a human world. Though the contemporary horse stems from an ancestral line that went extinct on the North American continent some 10,000-12,000 years (K. Klein, 2014), thus identifying them as a non-native animal, the time between extinction and reintroduction by European explorers serves as brief stepping-out from the ecological party in the Western hemisphere. Those that find the mustangs to be a "nuisance" often base their claims on damage to personal property and the impact the horses have on the public lands which impact private ranchers' abilities to let their livestock graze the same public lands being destroyed by too many animals (including mustangs) seeking finite resources. The label and ideas that support the mustang as a "victim" (often by way of human intervention) stands in stark contrast to their official symbolic role as embodying the pioneer spirit of the West. Though the data suggests that the effects on the rounded-up animals are both temporary and limited, horse advocacy groups continue to use images and narratives to suggest that the animals are victimized and brutally treated by human hands; yet it remains ambiguous as to which is worse: potential dehydration/starvation on the range, or enduring violent chases across many miles with the potential of separation from family and living the animal's remaining days in "holding." Though the options are not limited to a simple binary for the animals, this consideration offers a lens of

the potential harm provided by grossly oversimplifying the complex issue, which many horse advocates as well antagonists pursue as rhetorically persuasive methods.

Dickinson (2016) invokes a conceptualization of the boundaries that humans create to separate themselves from the other-than-human world, thus widening the human-nature divide. This research adds to that line of thinking by exposing the ill-defined borders and barriers of the American West that are used to separate where civilization ends and wildness begins. It also presents the problematic ways in which the *places* of the West have become sacrificial *spaces* to receive our unwanted and discarded waste including nuclear byproducts, wild horses, and marginalized people. Nye county, Nevada serves as an example of a place that exists within arbitrarily-assigned borders of county-lines: it is home to some of the BLM's HMAs, the United States' historic nuclear testing site, and the controversial Yucca Mountain as a contested location for the country's High Level Nuclear Waste. The sparsely-populated part of the country offers a lot that makes it unique, but it also represents the uninhabitable locations in the Western United States to which many citizens have turned their back or channeled willful ignorance about the plight of the inhabitants. This research suggests that we humans intervene on the land that sustains in ways that separate it from us, this from that, good from bad, and so much more. The mustangs of the West that have been placed on this land experience the natural dangers of such a barren swath of land as well as the dangers of the country's complex history with nuclear advancement. The history of colonists and settlers from Europe pushing-out the cultural others of those that inhabited the land before the European invasion is still alive in the ways that "pushing-out" eventually became "pushing-toward" in which the native people's and the discarded things that European-Americans did not want were pushed-toward places for which white America had little-use.

The performance of environmentalism and the limiting factors that regulate the uneven distribution of access to being an environmentalist are also scrutinized with this research. While contemporary environmentalism is part of the *New Ecological Paradigm* (Cotgrove, 1982) and pushes against the *Dominant Social Paradigm* (Pirages & Ehrlich, 1974), it still has hierarchical categories of participation that exclude people for not being environmental *enough*. A theme worth noting from this dissertation, specifically in the ways in which Velma Bronn Johnston intervened on the concept of environmentalism, emerges in the idea of *unintended consequences*. Her political activity on behalf of the horses had unintended consequences that emerged over time for the animals, but her political life also produced consequences for environmentalism both at a time when the Western world was only beginning to formalize the environmental social movement as well as in the contemporary landscape. Her background, politics, and even her own lived experience simply would not align with many of today's expectations for who can practice environmentalism and by what means. Yet, her voice and her Western woman's body brought her to the apex of formal social change in the United States as she was an essential part of creating and passing US legislation twice without serving as an official lawmaker. She modeled not only grassroots methods to spread ideas and enact change, but also a path for people today to follow to enact large-scale social change with passion, dedication, endurance, and a necessary ability to communicate across political lines.

Finally, this research adds to the breadth of Environmental Communication literature by using Shelby's (2003) model of ideological analysis to the ways in which conceptions of contemporary environmentalism contribute to illusions that extend and maintain power relationships that reinforce the ruling elite. Racism and beliefs that one group is superior to another based on the color of their skin has a negative connotation, and it is fairly safe to assume

few people would happily admit their own racism. Environmentalism, in contrast, promotes an agenda of conserving resources, protecting our shared planet, and restoring the other-than-human world to healthier state marked by less human intervention. This research, then, adds to the theoretical literature by shifting the focus to more broadly held system of beliefs, and illuminates some of the more unfortunate outcomes of environmentalism.

Directions for Future Research

The most important omission of this research is embedded in the title of the 1971 legislation that served as historic marker for a shift in ideologies about the mustang: this research provides almost no attention to the noble burros that served as beasts of burden to the same pilgrims, conquistadores, revolutionaries, and pioneers that made this country possible. Films, books, news coverage, etc. all privilege the mustang as romantically emblematic of the cowboy and the West, while burros and donkeys are the ass-end of a joke. The burro represents a different iteration of the marginalization and subjugation of the other-than-human world under human dominance, but rather than being imbued with symbolic status akin to mustangs, it is saddled with the burden of carrying the heavy load of human baggage both corporeal and metaphorical. This dissertation is also limited by the primary focus of Velma Bronn Johnston and the mustangs of the West, while the horses in the Southeast United States suffer in very different ways: the capitalistic greed and affluent whiteness of the horse racing scene are equally ripe for analysis. The field of Environmental Communication and ideological analysis would benefit from more scholarly attention to the inappropriate and dangerous conditions created for the bodies of horses in the pursuit of gambling.

Final Thoughts

Exploring the American West, Velma Bronn Johnston's life, and environmentalism have been an enlightening experience. The peaks and valleys of constructing this dissertation have revealed more than expected, but it still *feels* incomplete. Reading their biographies of Velma Bronn Johnston in harmony draw readers' attentions to issues ranging from gender politics, to disability concerns, to the American political system. More than anything, her narrative holds a mirror up for me to consider how I would perceive her and her pursuits for environmental change. She did not look the part, nor did she speak the language in a way that aligns with how many people think environmentalists should look and act. Environmentalism today is discursively overloaded to the point that it is a stumbling-block in its own way, and I do not believe Velma Johnston could do what she did then in today's landscape. While I read about her in the biographies and other sources, I would often think how inspiring she was through her determination and attitude as well as the raw fact that she did what so many want to do: enact change. But she was also a person whose politics did not always align with contemporary presentations of performing environmentalism. Though her actions have contributed to the uneven consequences of our problematic present, she warrants recognition for having accomplished what she did under imperfect conditions.

This dissertation presented the ways in which adding human-conceived value to the natural world and its inhabitants can be problematic. We create ideologies about *how the world should be* through our media, language, and culture, but we perhaps do not often consider either where these ideas come from or whom they serve. Our beliefs about horses that come from the films we watch, the books we read, the songs to which we listen, etc., and they often paint the image of the mustang as a noble friend to our species. Without much mental energy, many

Americans can easily conjure a memory of something involving cowboys riding on the back of a horse with a big hat and a six-shooter gun. While for some these might seem innocuous on the surface as just stories for entertainment, they serve a purpose: the normalize not only the ways in which *we* have made horses more special than other animals, but it also washes-over the real history that many of those romanticized cowboys represent a real history full of blood, violence, rape, and death. Mustang populations continue to grow because they have no predators according to Philipps (2017), but that's not entirely true: *we* are the last real predator who kill for utilitarian purposes (dogfood, for example) and fun (big game hunting, for example). The unfortunate reality for horses is that they have outlived their usefulness, and our shared evolutionary history now renders them obsolete: we do not need them to carry us on their backs, drag our plows across fields, or pull our carriages. We do, however, need them to mean something; we need them to help us romanticize a repugnant past, because what would a cowboy be without his horse? Instead of continuing to *use* horses for our purposes, both physical and metaphorical, the horses and other denizens of planet Earth would benefit from a stronger sense of bioegalitarianism from humans.

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