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What Is So Bad About Veganism?

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What Is So Bad About Veganism?

A Social Media Based Sociological Exploration And Explanation for Vegan's Stigmatization

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Personal Reflexive Statement

Veganism is “a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals”.¹ Before I understood the philosophy of veganism, my relationship with it seemed to be artificial. My transition from a predominantly meat-based diet to a plant-based diet had nothing to do with the philosophies or ethics surrounding veganism, but were more personal and superficial. Unfortunately, in more ways than one, I was unhappy with my appearance at the start of my dietary journey. I was self-conscious about my hair and my skin, so when my family told me about veganism and its supposed positive effects on the human body, I decided to try it out. My eldest sister persuaded my brother and my sister-in-law first, stating that going vegan had done wonders for her skin, hair, and overall well being. Their decision to go vegan furthered my own unhealthy obsession with diet as a quick-fix for improving appearance, and I became even more self-conscious. These insecurities founded a plant-based diet in which wellness fell to the wayside, and a lack of balance and nutrition resulted in significant weight loss. It got to the point where I ultimately looked and felt more unhealthy than I did before my vegan transition. However, through more research, I have learned about the positive effects of veganism and benefits that a vegan lifestyle can have on the body as well as the environment. I am also starting to see non-human

¹“Definition of veganism.” The Vegan Society, www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism.

animals in a different light; I have started to recognize the underlying agencies that non-human animals have in the world on an inclusive scale, and these realizations both please and intrigue me as a conscious consumer and a self-proclaimed animal lover.

I would currently describe my relationship with veganism as weird, oddly personal, and uniquely specific. I am no longer a “true” vegan, or I at least do not follow a traditional vegan diet. However, I have significantly reduced my intake of meat and dairy in the interest of environmental and animal welfare concerns. I have made peace with my need to find balance in diet, and have decided that, at least for now, my days of a strict plant-based diet are over. In all honesty, however awful it may sound, I play favorites—I am quite selective about which non-human animals I choose to eat, or not eat. For example, I do eat chickens and their eggs because I have a difficult time connecting with them on an emotional level, at least more than I do with other animals. For this reason, I feel significantly less guilt about eating them or their eggs. I do not exactly know what I mean when I say “I do not connect with them”, but I think it has something to do with my inability to detect human emotions in chickens. I do not mean to say that chickens do not display human emotions at all, just that I am not able to notice them. This is also the way I feel about fish, another class of animals that have found their way into my diet. If I really like the taste, and find it difficult to feel bad about eating them, I will inevitably keep eating them. The two other components that have an impact over which animals I feel comfortable eating and abstaining from include the size of the animal, and whether or not the animal is domesticated. I was raised in a family where our dogs and cats were not just pets, they were members of our family. While there were certain animals, like cats and dogs, that I thought were morally wrong to eat, I also

thought that there were other animals, like chickens and fish, that I thought were morally okay to eat. I do not think I was ever specifically taught a moral animal hierarchy at any point in my life, but it is likely a byproduct of my family, culture, and upbringing. Along with domestication, the size of the animal can also largely influence whether or not I feel comfortable eating it. The bigger the animal, the more discomfort I will likely feel about having it on my plate. My diet could be classified as a very selective omnivore: there are some animals that I feel comfortable eating (albeit very few), and other animals that I do not.

The day I decided to try going vegan was an enlightening day. Most of my siblings had already made the switch, and when I told my mum about my decision to join them she let out a big groan and said “Ughh, not you *too!*” (Nordstrom).² I was confused by this reaction, and asked her why she had such a strong and negative response to me going vegan. My mother has always loved cooking, and she explained that now with all of her children becoming vegans, cooking would become much more complicated and therefore less fun. In her case, the negative reaction towards veganism stemmed from her worry that a vegan diet would limit her ability to cook and share her favorite recipes with her family. This emotional response to diet kickstarted my thoughts on how possible stigmas were attached to veganism and the social implications it could have for anyone transitioning to a vegan diet or lifestyle.

Chapter 1: Introduction

² Nordstrom, Katrina. Personal conversation. 12 April 2017.

There is a change underway in our grocery stores. A slow but steady creep of alternative food and drink staples are finding their way into grocery carts and baskets nationwide. A look at the milk section of most grocery stores today will offer a glut of alternatives to the traditional dairy milk. Plant-based alternatives offer “milks” from almonds, peas, oats, cashews, soy, hemp, and coconuts—to name a few. From 2009 to 2015, the amount of dairy alternatives sold in the U.S. more than doubled, creating a more than \$21 billion dollar market, while the consumption of cow’s milk dropped 13 percent from 2013 to 2018.³

A shift in consumer demand away from dairy milk does not necessarily reflect a change in attitude towards dairy milk production, the rights of milk producing livestock, the environmental impact of dairy farming, or the nutritional benefits of dairy— at least not for these reasons combined— but it does indicate that the market was not accurately representing the needs of consumers. With the market now providing easy access to plant-based foods and drinks, being, or becoming, vegan is more accessible than ever before. The effort required to follow a vegan diet has been lowered, and never before have there been so many vegan-friendly options for conscious consumers to choose from. Grocery stores have selections of pre-made meals explicitly stating their vegan-ness, and vegan frozen dinners and microwave meals proudly sporting the little ‘V’ logos on them for shoppers to quickly distinguish vegan meals from non-vegan meals. Popular oat milks boldly pronounce 100% Vegan, “no dairy, no nuts, no gluten” on the

³ Parish, Carol Rees. "Moo-ove Over, Cow's Milk: The Rise of Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives." *Nutrition Issues in Gastroenterology*, Jan. 2018, pp. 20-27, med.virginia.edu/ginutrition/wp-content/uploads/sites/199/2014/06/January-18-Milk-Alternatives.pdf.

front of the packaging.⁴ Veganism has never had it this good before. Yet, despite all these options, veganism still appears to be a fringe ideology, a loud, vocal minority, with little growth over recent years. From 2012 to 2018, there was only a 1% rise in the number of vegans in the U.S., from 2% to 3%, and vegetarianism remained a flat 5%. On the other hand, sales of plant-based foods grew 8.1% in 2017 alone.⁵

Demand is apparent from the increased consumption of plant-based alternatives among consumers. However, the lack of growth in the vegan and vegetarian population indicates that the demand is driven more by a consumer interest in alternative foods rather than an interest in a strictly plant-based vegan diet, or animal welfare and rights. This data suggests that there could be some underlying cause for the slow growth of vegans. The potential causes for this underlying slow growth in vegan numbers is not the main purpose of this project, but is an extension of my main research question: Why do vegans and veganism carry a social stigma? In this project I will provide a brief historical background of vegetarianism, the animals rights movement, and vegansim. I will also provide a chronology of veganism showing how it has evolved, and present research exploring some of the reasons people have for transitioning to a vegan lifestyle. I will show how veganism has acquired a substantial amount of attention in the media, which is showcased in many New York Times articles, and the effects of veganism on American cultural and dietary norms, human health, and the environment.

⁴ "Oatly Products." Oatly, us.oatly.com/collections/all.

⁵ Reinhart, RJ. "Snapshot: Few Americans Vegetarian or Vegan." Gallup, 1 Aug. 2018, news.gallup.com/poll/238328/snapshot-few-americans-vegetarian-vegan.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=NEWSFEED&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Snapshot%3a%2520Few%2520Americans%2520Vegetarian%2520or%2520Vegan.

Finally, I will provide my own content analysis that aims to explore the question of the vegan stigma. I will use the social media platform Reddit to gather the necessary data to answer my research question: Why is there a social stigma attached to being vegan?

In order to properly analyze the vegan social stigmatism, I must first establish that there is, in fact, a vegan stigma. To do this, I have utilized research carried out by Cara C. MacInnis and Gordon Hodson "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target". In their research, they provide "the first social psychological evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans, from both source and target" (MacInnis and Hodson [740]).⁶ MacInnis and Hodson empirically tested, using three different studies, whether or not a bias exists toward vegans and vegetarians. Overall, these studies concluded that a negative bias does exist, and that both men and women were targets of this stigma, with men viewed slightly more negatively than women when given the descriptor of vegan. This negative bias was also found to be heightened in those with conservative views, explained by heightened perceptions of vegetarian and vegan threats (MacInnis and Hodson [723]).⁷

Based on these studies by MacInnis and Hodson, along with existing literature and my own research findings, I am confident in my assumption that a vegan stigma exists and that the question of why there is a stigma may now be explored and studied. The question of why vegans and veganism are stigmatized is much more difficult to answer,

⁶ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

⁷ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

and will be the question that ultimately drives this project. As this project is rooted in sociology, I will use the sociological theory of deviance and intersectionality to answer this ultimate question of why vegans and veganism carry a social stigma.

Historical Background of Vegetarianism, the Animal Rights Movement, and the Creation of Veganism

In order to explore veganism, it is first necessary to provide an explanation for how it came about. This is important because the historical background of veganism plays a fundamental role in its philosophy. Its history encompasses vegetarianism/meat abstention, and the animal rights movement.⁸ Meat abstention, now known as vegetarianism, traces back to ancient Indian and eastern Mediterranean societies. Ancient Indian societies abstained from eating meat mainly for religious reasons. European travelers journeying to India in the seventeenth century discovered a religion far older than their Christian religion: Hinduism (Stuart [39]).⁹ Hinduism, in reference to meat abstention, is a religion with an “unbroken tradition of vegetarianism and exercising an extreme moral responsibility towards animals...” (Stuart [39]).¹⁰ Ancient Mediterranean societies, like Greece, abstained from eating meat for ethical and philosophical reasons (Stuart [42]).¹¹ Pythagoras, the ancient greek philosopher from

⁸ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

⁹ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

¹⁰ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

¹¹ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

the greek island of Samos, believed in “the notion that all living things are kindred, and the corollary that it is wrong to cause suffering to animals” (Stuart [41]).¹² However, it is largely believed that meat abstention actually originated from Hinduism, and not originally from ancient Mediterranean societies like Greece (Stuart [39]).¹³ It seems as though these ancient societies in the Mediterranean actually adopted ideas related to meat abstention from India, and thus incorporated them into their own philosophies and ethics (Stuart [41]).¹⁴

Over the course of meat abstention’s long history, its core values seem to have remained unchanged. In ancient Indian and Mediterranean societies, the reasons why people abstained from eating meat was for religious, ethical, and philosophical reasons. One of the only differences was that during these ancient times, meat abstention was not a movement. There was no name or term provided to meat abstention, indicating that no specific movement was associated or attached to their decision not to eat meat. While there were certainly those that believed that animals should have rights, like Pythagoras, there was no indication that social activism was involved in his philosophy.¹⁵ As previously mentioned, the care for animals has remained constant throughout time, however, the way in which people show care for animals has changed. I believe the reason for this change is due to the creation of the animal rights movement and the coining of the term ‘vegetarian’ and ‘veganism’.

¹² Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

¹³ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

¹⁴ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

¹⁵ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

In the early nineteenth century, the animal rights movement in the United States was slowly underway, and the contemporary understanding of vegetarianism was beginning to take shape. In 1822, preliminary discussions and debates in the United States were being held on the topic of whether or not animals had rights. “The animal rights movement, which claims that some 53 billion animals, not counting fish caught in the ocean, are killed each year, is unique in that it is the only social movement in which the ostensibly oppressed party is not the party directly campaigning for an end to its oppression” (Rich and Wagner [2]).¹⁶ This fact is what those opposed to the idea that animals should have rights, find damaging to the animal rights movement. If these animals cannot even think of the rights they are supposedly being denied, why should they be granted rights (Rich and Wagner [2]).¹⁷

The animal rights movement all started with the passing of the III-Treatment of Cattle Act in 1822, which prevented the cruel and improper treatment of cattle (Rich and Wagner [2]).¹⁸ Furthermore, the coining of the word “vegetarian” in the 1840s, and the formation of the Vegetarian Society in 1847, easily allowed for a new type of social movement to arise (Stuart [XVII]).¹⁹ Following this was the founding of The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in 1866, to “bring national attention to the issue of animal rights and to what activists saw as the mistreatment of

¹⁶ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

¹⁷ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

¹⁸ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

¹⁹ Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

animals” (Rich and Wagner [2]).²⁰ However, since factory farming was not developed until the 1950s, the dairy and egg industry were not originally seen as issues relating to the mistreatment of animals. As factory farming began to grow rapidly as a method of producing animal products, due to its reduction in costs and increase in efficiency, the absence or extreme lack of well-being for the animals in these factory farms was eventually noticed (Rich and Wagner [2]).²¹ These factory farms confined their animals in “small windowless cubicles, feeding animals hormones to improve the flavor and texture of their meat and milk, limiting exercise and interaction with other animals” (Rich and Wagner [2]).²² As factory farming continued to grow, so did the animal rights movement.²³ It was around this time, specifically in 1944, when the word “veganism” was coined.²⁴ A lot of controversy exists around exactly what “veganism” is and means. There are many different definitions, some include environmental and health motivations as core identifiers, while others claim that environmental and human health effects are just extensions rather than priorities. Throughout this project, I will present how the meaning of “veganism”, and the reasons why people transition to eating and living a “vegan” lifestyle, have shifted over time. In the interest of continuity and clarity, for the duration of my paper, I will use the Vegan Society’s definition for veganism

²⁰ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

²¹ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

²² Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

²³ Rich, Alex K., and Geraldine Wagner. "Animal Rights: An Overview." 2018. Salem Press Encyclopedia, Great Neck Publishing.

²⁴ "Vegan diet." Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

because I believe that it highlights the core values and historical significance of veganism most effectively: a philosophy focused on animal welfare.

Universal Definition of Veganism:

“A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals”.²⁵

Chronology of Veganism

On the surface, veganism may seem quite innocuous and that a mere diet would not be so controversial. Veganism is a type of diet and lifestyle that includes not eating or using any animal products or by-products like meat, eggs, fur, and skin. Veganism is a stricter version of vegetarianism. While a vegan diet consists of not consuming any animal products or by-products, a vegetarian diet allows the consumption of animal by-products such as cheese and eggs, just not the animal itself. Veganism was coined by Elsie Shrigley and Donald Watson in 1944.²⁶ They were irritated that people who called themselves “vegetarians” still ate fish and dairy products, so they combined the first

²⁵ "Definition of veganism." The Vegan Society, www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism.

²⁶ "Vegan diet." Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

three and last two letters of “vegetarian” to form “vegan”, intending to indicate that “vegan” was the beginning and the end of “vegetarian”.²⁷

Today, with the increase in technological advancements, like the internet, vegans can spread their philosophy, and recipes, much more easily. At its core, the vegan philosophy does not prioritize the potential health benefits, nor the the positive environmental effects, but is instead focused around the ethical treatment of non-human animals. While animal welfare was the defining characteristic at the time of veganism’s creation and coining, more recent knowledge of its positive effects on the environment and health benefits have helped promulgate the vegan agenda to people who otherwise would not have taken up a vegan lifestyle and diet.

A portion of veganism’s current popularity and explosion into mainstream media has been attributed by some to celebrity promotion and the knock-on effect that occurs when a prominent figure endorses a new product, lifestyle, or diet (Budgar [38]).²⁸

Stephanie Redcross, the managing director of Vegan Mainstream, a San-Diego based marketing firm that targets the vegan and vegetarian community states that, “Any time [a celebrity] does something that’s considered not traditional, it tends to get a lot more coverage. It heightens people’s awareness of what veganism is and what it means”

²⁷ “Vegan diet.” Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

²⁸ Budgar, Laurie. "Veganism on the Rise." Society For Popular Democracy, Summer 2017, p. 38, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA512288950&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=fulltext&issn=09753966&p=AONE&sw=w&authCount=1&u=nysl_se_eldorado&selfRedirect=true.

(Budgar [38]).²⁹ For example, celebrities such as the boxer, Mike Tyson, the famous talk show host, Ellen DeGeneres, and actor, Woody Harrelson, are all vegan (Budgar [38]).³⁰ Though celebrities and social media 'influencers' have some effect on veganism's popularity, it is the vegan community that is largely responsible for spreading the vegan philosophy, and with the increase of social and cultural movements in contemporary society, like animal rights or environmentalist movements (to which veganism is closely tied), the vegan philosophy spreads to more people (Ulusoy [420]).³¹ All of this has helped to propel its growth and establish its place in modern society.

There are three main reasons why someone today would transition into veganism: environmental reasons, ethical reasons, and health reasons. Transitioning to veganism could have a substantially positive effect on the environment. According to Chelsea Whyte, in "Living on the Veg", "Studies show that if we all went vegan, two of the biggest environmental problems — greenhouse gas emissions and clearing land for agriculture — would be slashed".³² Whyte continues by citing the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

²⁹ Budgar, Laurie. "Veganism on the Rise." Society For Popular Democracy, Summer 2017, p. 38, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA512288950&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=fulltext&issn=09753966&p=AONE&sw=w&authCount=1&u=nysl_se_eldorado&selfRedirect=true.

³⁰ Budgar, Laurie. "Veganism on the Rise." Society For Popular Democracy, Summer 2017, p. 38, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA512288950&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=fulltext&issn=09753966&p=AONE&sw=w&authCount=1&u=nysl_se_eldorado&selfRedirect=true.

³¹ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

³² Whyte, Chelsea. "Living on the veg." *New Scientist*, vol. 237, no. 3162, 27 Jan. 2018, pp. 26-31, doi:10.1016/S0262-4079(18)30171-4.

“a quarter of the ice-free land on the planet is used to graze livestock. On top of that, a third of all cropland is used to produce additional food for them... Livestock eat more protein than they return for human consumption — between 3 and 20 times more... one obvious way to feed billions more people is to eat more of the plants we grow, and feed fewer animals”. In the context of greenhouse gas emissions, the FAO also claims that “Livestock farming is responsible for 14.5 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions — on par with all trains, cars, ships and planes. Cows are the worst offenders, responsible for two-thirds of the total, and crucially for the vegan cause, it’s not just because of meat production. Beef and dairy cattle produce similar amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.”³³

The main ethical reason for transitioning into a vegan diet is to fight against animal cruelty and suffering (Ulusoy [420]).³⁴ On PETA’s (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) website, their slogan states “Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way”.³⁵ The health-related reasons for going vegan include lowering risks of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer rates.³⁶ It is important to explore all of these reasons that motivate people to transition to eating a vegan diet and adopt a vegan lifestyle, because among these reasons are the source from which vegan’s stigmatization arises.

³³ Whyte, Chelsea. "Living on the veg." *New Scientist*, vol. 237, no. 3162, 27 Jan. 2018, pp. 26-31, doi:10.1016/S0262-4079(18)30171-4.

³⁴ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

³⁵ PETA. www.peta.org.

³⁶ "Vegan diet." *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

Why Go Vegan?

The Environment

The environmental impact that a vegan diet has is regarded as difficult to accurately measure. The metrics of sustainability across a global supply chain have yet to be standardized to assess the full impacts of particular diets.³⁷ To claim a diet as being significantly more environmentally friendly in comparison with other diets, a balance of all environmental impacts must be taken into account. The United Nations developed a list of environmentally impacted areas that should be considered when attempting sustainable development in the future.³⁸ This list included food resources and sustainability considerations ranging from marine eutrophication, marine debris, depletion of fish stocks, urban air quality, to water scarcity.³⁹ Without accurate metrics to analyze these areas of impact across the global supply chain, it is unlikely that a consensus can be reached on dietary choices and their sustainability.

However, with the increase of social movements in contemporary society, the vegan philosophy and its effects on our environment are spreading. Vegans view the livestock industry to be a fundamental contributor to our current environmental degradation,

³⁷ Ridoutt, Bradley G., et al. "Dietary Strategies to Reduce Environmental Impact: A Critical Review of the Evidence Base." PubMed, vol. 8, no. 6, 7 Nov. 2017, pp. 933-46, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5682998/#b20.

³⁸ "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Sustainable Development, United Nations, sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

³⁹ Ridoutt, Bradley G., et al. "Dietary Strategies to Reduce Environmental Impact: A Critical Review of the Evidence Base." PubMed, vol. 8, no. 6, 7 Nov. 2017, pp. 933-46, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5682998/#b20.

pollution, global warming, and global poverty (Ulusoy [422]).⁴⁰ Furthermore, if we all decided to transition into veganism, greenhouse gas emissions and clearing land for agriculture would diminish. We use an enormous amount of the world's land purely for animals or animal feed, and in doing so we turn forests into pastures and fields. This is an issue because forests capture and store carbon dioxide, and when they are destroyed, the carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, which is a cause of global warming.⁴¹ By eating a vegan diet, vegans manifest that their actions inhibit the impacts of capitalistic meat and dairy industries that exploit and kill animals, and thus "contribute to the relative social, economic, and environmental well-being and, thus, ultimately to social justice" (Ulusoy [422]).⁴²

While this information presents evidence on the positive effects veganism would have on the environment, veganism's ethical standpoint concentrates more on innate morality than empirical evidence. Meaning that vegan's ethical argument is less about what is true and false, and more about what is moral and immoral.

Ethical

Ethics is the core of veganism, and is undeniably the reason why veganism was created. Vegans believe in equality between all animals, both human and non-human. They are against the notion of "speciesism": the idea that humans are superior to all

⁴⁰ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

⁴¹ Whyte, Chelsea. "Living on the veg." *New Scientist*, vol. 237, no. 3162, 27 Jan. 2018, pp. 26-31, doi:10.1016/S0262-4079(18)30171-4.

⁴² Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

other beings. Vegans view speciesism as equivalent to racism and sexism. Vegans view people who state they are against racism and sexism, but engage in speciesism through acts of consuming meat for example, as inconsistent and hypocritical. Speciesism “has been understood as a form of domination, and working as a system of oppression” (Greenebaum [360]).⁴³ Vegans are also against animal discrimination: the idea that, based on cultural differences, humans treat certain animals one way but other animals a different way. An example of this would be how in the U.S. we treat dogs and cats differently than cows or pigs. Related to this is the sub-ideology of speciesism: carnism. In “Questioning the Concept of Vegan Privilege: A Commentary” by Jessica Beth Greenebaum, Greenebaum quotes Melanie Joy from Joy’s *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism*, stating that carnism is the invisible “belief system in which eating certain animals is considered ethical and appropriate. Carnism is structurally and systematically imbedded into the institutions and norms of human cultures so the idea of eating some animals and not others seems normal, natural, and ethical” (Greenebaum [360]).⁴⁴ Vegans use carnism to strengthen their ethical argument, to be a carnist is “to not have to think about, feel, or observe the effect of your diet on animals, the environment, and/or other animals, is a type of privilege” (Greenebaum [360]).⁴⁵ In this argument, the act of carnism translates to a privilege of navigating the food world with a freedom from not knowing the harm being caused to non-human animals.

⁴³ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

⁴⁴ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

⁴⁵ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

Health

While many vegans proudly identify with the ethical beliefs behind their diet, health reasons are also a strong motivator, and many vegans care a large amount about their personal health (Ulusoy [422]).⁴⁶ Vegans are very conscious about what they put into their body, and are aware of what is and what is not healthy for you. Vegans, and non-vegans, continually research the nutritional and health benefits of going vegan. They associate meat and other animal by-products with cancer and heart diseases (Ulusoy [422]).⁴⁷ Studies have found that vegans have a lower chance of being obese or overweight, and typically have lower cholesterol and blood pressure as well as a lower risk of type 2 diabetes.⁴⁸ There is also evidence that supports the idea that vegans experience less stress and anxiety than non-vegans.⁴⁹ However, over time, the reasons for becoming vegan are shifting.

Evolution of Why People are Becoming Vegan

⁴⁶ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

⁴⁷ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

⁴⁸ "Vegan diet." *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

⁴⁹ "Vegan diet." *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*, 2017. Research Starters, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=2307c973-552c-40ac-b76d-1c4db79dedfb%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=94416303&db=ers.

While health, the environment, and ethics are certainly influential factors in becoming vegan, there is a noticeable transition in the explanations people give for why they are becoming vegan. As touched upon already, animal welfare is the main reason for why people become vegan, but there is a growing number of vegans that are becoming vegan due to environmental concerns. In *Veganomics: The Surprising Science on What Motivates Vegetarians, from the Breakfast Table to the Bedroom*, Nick Cooney presents seven studies in which he seeks to find the real reason for why people ditch meat. Cooney states that people stop eating meat mainly for ethical and personal health/well-being reasons, “What is clear is that most people go vegetarian to improve their health or to protect animals from cruelty” (Cooney [162]).⁵⁰ In the second study, a U.S. written survey that was performed in 2012, out of the 145 participants, 67% reported going vegetarian for ethical reasons, 20% reported going vegetarian for health reasons, 9% for the environment, and 3% for religion. In the seventh and last study, which was performed in 1989, seventy-six people were interviewed with the intention of finding out why they decided to stop eating meat. Out of the seventy-six people, 57% went vegetarian for ethical reasons, 17% stated they went vegetarian for personal health related reasons, 12% for reasons related to a disliking of the taste of meat, and 1% for the environment (Cooney [163-167]).⁵¹

⁵⁰ Cooney, Nick. *Veganomics: The Surprising Science on What Motivates Vegetarians, from the Breakfast Table to the Bedroom*. Apple Books ed., Lantern Books, 2013.

⁵¹ Cooney, Nick. *Veganomics: The Surprising Science on What Motivates Vegetarians, from the Breakfast Table to the Bedroom*. Apple Books ed., Lantern Books, 2013.

In all seven of Cooney's studies, it is clear that people transition into vegetarianism mainly for reasons related to their health and for ethical reasons. However, in the studies from 1989 and 2012, it is clear from their results that over time people are transitioning into vegetarianism for reasons related to the environment: In the study from 1989, only 1% stopped eating meat because of the environment, but in the 2012 study, 9% reported that they went vegetarian for environmental reasons (Cooney [163-167]).⁵² This growth could be due to the heightened awareness of environmental issues and ease of access to information. The lack of interest in the environment in 1989 could have been due to the state of technology at the time, and the absence of the internet as we know it now could have made it very difficult to engage in environmental activism or spread information about environmental crises on a large scale. One last reason for why there is an increase of people who are transitioning into vegetarianism because of environmental reasons, is because of the increase of social and cultural movements in contemporary society (Ulusoy [420]).⁵³

According to Cooney, people who want to make the transition into veganism are more likely to do it for ethical and environmental reasons, rather than health reasons. Cooney describes a 1998 study that found that vegans were twice as likely as vegetarians to report their concerns for non-human animals as their main reason for the transition, "An online poll conducted the same year found similar results: while vegetarians were more

⁵² Cooney, Nick. *Veganomics: The Surprising Science on What Motivates Vegetarians, from the Breakfast Table to the Bedroom*. Apple Books ed., Lantern Books, 2013.

⁵³ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

likely to be motivated by health concerns, vegans were more likely to be concerned about animals” (Cooney [179]).⁵⁴ Moreover, as a group and social movement, vegans can be seen as extreme and radical, and are stereotyped as being “arrogant, judgmental, wealthy, and white” (Greenebaum [367]).⁵⁵ Vegans are skeptical of people’s ethical sincerity when they say that they are purchasing plant-based products and/or fair trade products for ethical reasons, but are simultaneously not vegan, “...and, thus, contributing to the animal cruelty as well as the collective and institutional exploitation and abuse of animals” (Ulusoy [421]).⁵⁶

While one cannot argue with facts surrounding veganism, such as the positive effects “going vegan” could do for the environment, or the fact that “going vegan” would make it difficult to consume important vitamins because of the diet’s limitations in plant based foods, one can question why some perceive vegans and veganism negatively. While the vegan community can be very determined in their quest for equality between human and non-human animals, this can also evoke a significant amount of anxiety and social pressure for some vegans. This social pressure, produced by the vegan community can be grounds for negative perceptions of vegans and veganism. Furthermore, what social problems arise from veganism, and what are the social consequences of being vegan?

Chapter 2: Veganism in the News

⁵⁴ Cooney, Nick. *Veganomics: The Surprising Science on What Motivates Vegetarians, from the Breakfast Table to the Bedroom*. Apple Books ed., Lantern Books, 2013.

⁵⁵ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

⁵⁶ Ulusoy, Emre. "I Think, Therefore I am Vegan: Veganism, Ethics, and Social Justice." *Ethics and Social Justice*, pp. 420-24.

Despite veganism's growing popularity today, "vegan" has become a very loaded term, and is often seen in the media to take on a negative tone or connotation (Wright [90]).⁵⁷ Laura Wright, in *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror*, uses a study that was done by Matthew Cole and Karen Morgan to support the above claim, called "Vegaphobia: Derogatory Discourses of Veganism and the Reproduction of Speciesism in U.K. National Newspaper" that showed that out of the 397 newspaper articles they examined, only 5.5% were positive, 20.2% were neutral, and 74.3% were negative. Being vegan has become surrounded with the idea that veganism is a fad, and that people who decide to be vegan is more about participating in something cool or hip rather than being vegan for ethical, environmental, or health reasons. Or that vegans are stereotyped as being white females, privileged, and oversensitive (Wright [91, 100]).⁵⁸

However, contrary to the above paragraph, I read and analyzed 13 New York Times articles from 1991 to 2017, and found that the majority of the articles on veganism, or in relation to veganism, were not negative. In fact I only found one article, where the entire article described veganism as only negative. However, that is not to say that the rest of the articles were all positive. Within many of the positive and neutral articles on veganism, there are negative attitudes or perceptions toward veganism that can be found.

⁵⁷ Wright, Laura. *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror*. University of Georgia Press, 2015.

⁵⁸ Wright, Laura. *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror*. University of Georgia Press, 2015.

Negative Views of Veganism and Articles

List of negative articles:

- Nina Planck, "Death by Veganism" (May 21, 2007)

In "Death by Veganism" (May 21, 2007), the author, Nina Planck describes an incident where a 6 week old child that weighed 3.5 pounds, named Crown Shakur, starved to death. Based on the title of the article, the author attributes veganism as the cause of death. However, throughout the article it becomes clear that, while the author most definitely portrays veganism in a negative light, it is not veganism that caused the death of the child but the parents due to a lack nutritional knowledge. The parents of the child were convicted of murder, involuntary manslaughter and cruelty. Planck argues that you cannot raise a child on a vegan diet, and expect that child to be healthy. According to Planck, based on health and nutrition for humans, and especially babies, veganism is not a healthy way to live and grow. Planck states that it is irresponsible to raise a child on a vegan diet. It is the lack of essential nutrients in a vegan diet that causes deficiencies and can lead to health problems. While this article is mainly meant for parents who are raising children, the author also states that, "There are no vegan societies for a simple reason: a vegan diet is not adequate in the long run".⁵⁹ Based on health and nutritional reasons, Planck describes veganism negatively.

⁵⁹ Planck, Nina. "Death by veganism." New York Times [New York], 21 May 2007.
 GALE, go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T004&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&atPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA163661880&docType=Editorial&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZGPN&prodId=ITOF&contentSet=GALE%7CA163661880&searchId=R2&userGroupName=nysl_se_bardcsl&inPS=true.

In Anahad O'Connor's, "Advice From A Vegan Cardiologist" (Aug 6, 2014), Dr. Kim A. Williams, the president-elect of the American College of Cardiology, tells his patients who have high cholesterol levels to try going on a vegan diet to try to lower their cholesterol. Dr. Williams tells his patients this because he was concerned with his own high cholesterol level, and after going on a vegan diet, he was able to lower it from 170 to 90. However, many people responded to this negatively, "One person suggested he was promoting a radical diet to his patients based on the experience of a single person: himself".⁶⁰ The use of the word "radical", and the targeting of his anecdotal evidence as the basis for his recommendation, makes this response negative. Moreover, Dr. Williams states that people protested against the matter, "The response was really loud, and much of it diametrically opposed".⁶¹ "Diametrically Opposed" meaning against or in opposition to Dr. Williams telling his patients to go on a vegan diet.

In relation to negative attitudes towards veganism based on nutritional and health reasons, there are also negative attitudes about veganism from a more cultural and social context. In Deborah Blumenthal, "Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed" (March 26, 2006), a group of firefighters from Austin, Texas decided to go vegan after hearing about the health benefits it would have on their high cholesterol level. One firefighter, Specialist Rae, found out that his cholesterol level was dangerously high, "The American Heart Association ranks anyone with a level of 240 or

⁶⁰ O'Connor, Anahad. "Advice From a Vegan Cardiologist." New York Times [New York], 6 Aug. 2014, well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/06/advice-from-a-vegan-cardiologist/.

⁶¹ O'Connor, Anahad. "Advice From a Vegan Cardiologist." New York Times [New York], 6 Aug. 2014, well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/06/advice-from-a-vegan-cardiologist/.

more to be high risk; Specialist Rae's hit 344".⁶² However, even though going vegan could have been extremely beneficial for Specialist Rae, some of the other firefighters did not take this transition kindly, "Inside the freezer are a bag of cheeseburgers, French fries and a package of beef next to vegan offerings. One firefighter even put up provocative posters on the walls, including one that reads, "Beef. It's What's For Dinner"".⁶³ This negativity towards the vegan firefighters might stem from societal views of firefighters, that they are extremely masculine — consider the thousands of half naked firefighter calendars and posters as evidence of this⁶⁴— whereas veganism is seen as a more feminine characteristic. Deviating from this strong cultural view could cause these negative attitudes from other firefighters.

Going vegan is not an easy feat. In Tara Parker-Pope's, "The Challenge of Going Vegan" (Apr 16, 2012), Parker-Pope explains the challenges related to going vegan. One of the many significant challenges that relates to the experiences of the vegan firefighters are the social challenges. Parker-Pope quotes Hanna Schösler, a researcher at the Institute for Environmental Studies at Vrije University in Amsterdam, who studied consumer acceptance of meat substitutes, stating that "It's not very accepted in our

⁶² Blumenthal, Deborah. "Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed." *New York Times* [New York], 26 Mar. 2006. GALE, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO%3aedsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20060326&spage=18&pages=&title=The+New+York+Times&atitle=Firefighters+Gone+Vegan%3f+Even+Austin+Is+Impressed&aulast=Blumenthal%2c+Deborah&id=DOI%3a&site=fff-live.

⁶³ Blumenthal, Deborah. "Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed." *New York Times* [New York], 26 Mar. 2006. GALE, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO%3aedsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20060326&spage=18&pages=&title=The+New+York+Times&atitle=Firefighters+Gone+Vegan%3f+Even+Austin+Is+Impressed&aulast=Blumenthal%2c+Deborah&id=DOI%3a&site=fff-live.

⁶⁴ "The Best Firefighter Calendars of 2019." *The Fire Critic*, 20 Nov. 2018, www.firecritic.com/2018/11/20/the-best-firefighter-calendars-of-2019/.

society not to eat meat”.⁶⁵ Going vegan is challenging, in many areas of life (social, economic, and political) and sometimes even family can make it difficult. Parker-Pope describes Ms. Salisbury’s experience when she baked some vegan donuts for her family, Ms. Salisbury’s family would say “things like, ‘I’m going to go eat some eggs now’”.⁶⁶ Ms Salisbury expresses her distaste stating that “They were very condescending. They don’t understand and don’t make any effort to understand”.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the health and social/cultural aspects surrounding veganism seem to have the most negative perceptions.

Positive Views of Veganism and Articles

List of positive articles:

- Deborah Blumenthal, “Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed” (March 26, 2006)
- Christine Muhlke, “The Hippies Have Won” (April 4, 2017)
- Amy Joy Lanou, Nicole Speer, Lynette C. Kelly, Zoe Weil, “The Vegans And Their Children” (May 23, 2007)
- Eric Asimov, “It’s Easier To Be Green” (Apr 8, 2001)
- Mark Bittman, “Why I’m Not A Vegan” (May 21, 2013)

I categorized these articles as positive because, while there may be some negative attitudes within the articles, the articles themselves mainly display positive attitudes and perceptions of veganism.

⁶⁵ Parker-Pope, Tara. "The Challenge of Going Vegan." New York Times [New York], 16 Apr. 2012, well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/the-challenge-of-going-vegan/.

⁶⁶ Parker-Pope, Tara. "The Challenge of Going Vegan." New York Times [New York], 16 Apr. 2012, well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/the-challenge-of-going-vegan/.

⁶⁷ Parker-Pope, Tara. "The Challenge of Going Vegan." New York Times [New York], 16 Apr. 2012, well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/the-challenge-of-going-vegan/.

In response to Nina Planck's "Death by Veganism", four different authors wrote "The Vegans and Their Children", making claims against the belief that a vegan diet was the cause of Crown Shakur's death. Amy Joy Lanou (one of the four authors), a nutritionist who testified as expert witness in the criminal trial of the parents of Crown Shakur wrote "this poor infant was not killed by a vegan diet. He was starved to death by parents who did not give him breast milk, soy-based infant formula or enough food of any kind".⁶⁸ In this article, the four authors argue against Planck's argument that a vegan diet killed Crown Shakur, but instead was killed from starvation; the child was only fed soy milk and apple juice. A diet of only soy milk and apple juice would jeopardize anyone's health, adult or child. Along with scientific research, the authors combine their experiences raising their own children to prove veganism is not harmful, and even beneficial throughout all stages of life. However, what is most important is that, just like any restricted diet, there needs to be planning and significant amounts of research done on nutrition. Placing the blame on veganism is not a fair assessment of the death of Crown Shakur. It is absolutely necessary that babies receive the proper nutrition, but this is not difficult to do on a vegan diet.⁶⁹

Veganism is growing in popularity, and has become increasingly trendy which can be seen as both positive and negative. It becomes negative when people's food choices

⁶⁸ Lanou, Amy Joy, et al. "The Vegans and Their Children." New York Times [New York], 23 May 2007. GALE, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO%3aedsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20070523&spage=22&pages=&title=The+New+York+Times&atitle=The+Vegans+and+Their+Children&aulast=&id=DOI%3a&site=fff-live.

⁶⁹ Lanou, Amy Joy, et al. "The Vegans and Their Children." New York Times [New York], 23 May 2007. GALE, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO%3aedsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20070523&spage=22&pages=&title=The+New+York+Times&atitle=The+Vegans+and+Their+Children&aulast=&id=DOI%3a&site=fff-live.

become limited by trends and fashion, however that is not veganism's fault, that is the fault of the media, and how veganism is represented. Veganism's popularity and growth is a positive thing because it gives these new found vegans an outlet to express their identity, beliefs and lifestyle, whether non-vegans like it or not. In "The Hippies Have Won" (Apr 4, 2017), Christine Muhlke describes veganism's growing popularity and the lifestyle surrounding it. Based on the title of the article, "The Hippies Have Won", Muhlke describes a metaphorical election that is being taken place between the counterculture (Vegans, Vegetarians, etc) and the mainstream. Moreover, the counterculture is moving into the mainstream, and while the author of this article remains very objective, the tone and voice is positive. Muhlke, for the most part, only provides positive information about how ideas and products surrounding health and well-being have moved into the mainstream. Some of these positive examples include quotes from Deborah Madison, an author of the cookbook, "Greens", who says "We were using wholesome foods in contrast to our mothers' new reliance on cake mixes, white flour, TV dinners and that sort of thing".⁷⁰ Madison was one of a growing number of people who cooked differently from their parents in the 1960s and 1970s. The food she cooked back then, which was seen as "stodgy", is now seen today as being interesting, healthy, and delicious. Another example of positive information comes from Gerardo Gonzalez, a chef and owner of his restaurant, Lalito, where he serves food that deviates from the normative American, meat heavy, diet. Growing up, Gonzalez would eat at chain restaurants, and reported living in a "mental fog" caused by the regular consumption of meat, dairy and

⁷⁰ Muhlke, Christine. "The Hippies Have Won." New York Times [New York], 4 Apr. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/04/04/dining/health-food-hippies-restaurants-vegetarian.html?action=click&contentCollection=Well&module=RelatedCoverage&ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article.

starch. This “mental fog” caused Gonzalez, who is 34 years old, to search for alternatives. Serving the kind of food that chef Gonzalez does comes with a promise that what you are eating will grant you a “healthier life, or a more enlightened meal”.⁷¹

The health and environmental reasons for transitioning into veganism are displayed in the articles: “Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed” by Deborah Blumenthal (Mar 26, 2006), Eric Asimov's, “It’s Easier To Be Green” (Apr 8, 2001), and Mark Bittman’s, “Why I’m Not A Vegan” (May 21, 2013). In each of these three articles, the benefits of veganism and consuming plant-based products, and not animal products, is emphasized. In the “Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed” a vegan diet helped significantly lower Specialist Rae’s cholesterol level.⁷² In Bittman’s “Why I’m Not A Vegan”, he states that a plant-based diet would greatly benefit American society both in a health and environment context.⁷³ According to Bittman, we as a society should eat less animal products which would both improve our health and our environment, “the industrial production of livestock is a major (if not leading) contributor to greenhouse gases, and the rampant and nearly unregulated use of antibiotics in that production is making those drugs less effective while encouraging the development of

⁷¹ Muhlke, Christine. "The Hippies Have Won." *New York Times* [New York], 4 Apr. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/04/04/dining/health-food-hippies-restaurants-vegetarian.html?action=click&contentCollection=Well&module=RelatedCoverage&ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article.

⁷² Blumenthal, Deborah. "Firefighters Gone Vegan? Even Austin Is Impressed." *New York Times* [New York], 26 Mar. 2006. GALE, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO%3aedsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20060326&spage=18&pages=&title=The+New+York+Times&atitle=Firefighters+Gone+Vegan%3f+Even+Austin+Is+Impressed&aulast=Blumenthal%2c+Deborah&id=DOI%3a&site=fff-live.

⁷³ Bittman, Mark. "Why I'm Not a Vegan." *New York Times* [New York], 21 May 2013, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/21/why-im-not-a-vegan/?searchResultPosition=1.

hardier disease-causing germs".⁷⁴ Furthermore, in Asimov's article, "It's Easier To Be Green", Asimov describes Mr Berry, a "rawfooder" who states that, only consuming raw foods has "increased his energy and freed him from cooking".⁷⁵ A "rawfooder" is a vegan that only consumes raw foods. Moreover, Mr Berry also described feeling that he was "making a small contribution to the planet's ecological health by not consuming fossil fuels for cooking".⁷⁶ Not only do these authors provide examples of positive attitudes and perceptions of veganism, but the authors themselves speak in positive language about veganism.

Neutral Views of Veganism and Articles

List of neutral articles:

- Jane Brody, "Good Vegan, Bad Vegan" (Oct 2, 2017)
- Anahad O'Connor, "Advice From A Vegan Cardiologist" (Aug 6, 2014)
- Tara Parker-Pope, "The Challenge of Going Vegan" (Apr 16, 2012)
- Catherine Saint Louis, "Can You Have A Healthy Vegetarian or Vegan Pregnancy?" (Jun 30, 2017)
- Anne Matthews, "Brave, New 'Cruelty Free' World: Zapped By Euphemisms" (Jul 7, 1991)
- Jodi Wilgoren, "All Species Welcome At Vegan Mixer" (Dec 6, 1998)

I have categorized these articles in the "Neutral Perception and Articles" section because their content does not explicitly provide any positive or negative language,

⁷⁴ Bittman, Mark. "Why I'm Not a Vegan." New York Times [New York], 21 May 2013, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/21/why-im-not-a-vegan/?searchResultPosition=1.

⁷⁵ Asimov, Eric. "It's Easier To Be Green." New York Times [New York], 8 Apr. 2001, search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/92101973/477199DA75204DE8PQ/2?accountid=31516.

⁷⁶ Asimov, Eric. "It's Easier To Be Green." New York Times [New York], 8 Apr. 2001, search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/92101973/477199DA75204DE8PQ/2?accountid=31516.

perceptions, or attitudes about veganism. For example in Anne Matthews article, "Brave, New 'Cruelty Free' World: Zapped by Euphemisms" (Jul 7, 1991), Matthews states that people perceive vegans like they come from another planet.⁷⁷ On the surface this is not an issue. Even today, veganism is a fairly new phenomenon, but it was especially not well known in 1991 when Matthews article was published. The fact that veganism is a fairly new phenomenon means that identifying as a vegan creates discriminatory feelings towards these vegans. For example in "All Species Welcome At Vegan Mixer", by Jodi Wilgoren, the language used to describe a vegan party seems condescending to the vegan philosophy, stating, "Welcome to the first singles mixer for vegans and their pets — um, "animal companions. Wouldn't want to imply any kind of hierarchy among the species".⁷⁸ While, at first glance, it is clear that this is a joke. However, is it not possible that some vegans would find this offensive to some extent. Anti-speciesism plays a crucial role in the vegan philosophy. Many are dedicated to this lifestyle, and while on the surface this article is fun and an enjoyable description of a vegan singles mixer, the language that is used may be seen as condescending to some dedicated vegans.

⁷⁷ Matthews, Anne. "Brave, New 'Cruelty Free' World: Zapped by euphemisms." New York Times [New York], July 1991. ProQuest, search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/108714196/A6997DBB07274DA8PQ/3?accountid=31516.

⁷⁸ Wilgoren, Jodi. "All Species Welcome at Vegan Mixer." New York Times [New York], 6 Dec. 1998. Gale, go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T004&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&startPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA150108422&docType=Article&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZGPN&prodId=ITOF&contentSet=GALE%7CA150108422&searchId=R1&userGroupName=nysl_se_bardcsi&inPS=true.

Among the other articles I have placed in this category, veganism is not expressly viewed as positively or negatively, and so I have categorized them as neutral. For example, in Catherine Saint Louis', "Can You Have A Healthy Vegetarian or Vegan Pregnancy?" (Jun 30, 2017), Saint Louis describes how it is entirely possible to have a healthy vegan pregnancy. However, according to Saint Louis, what is the most important is that you have to plan your diet, because if you do not, there could be major health consequences.⁷⁹

Furthermore, it is clear from these articles that people, specifically non-vegans, view vegans and veganism negatively. However, what are the reasons for this? In the next chapter, I provide a literature review that covers existing literature on vegan's and veganism's stigmatization, and the different theories for why the stigma exists.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

"Questioning the Concept of Vegan Privilege: A Commentary", Jessica Beth Greenebaum.

⁷⁹ Louis, Catherine Saint. "Is it Possible to Have a Healthy Vegetarian or Vegan Pregnancy?" New York Times [New York], 4 July 2017, resolver.ebscohost.com/openurl?sid=EBSCO:edsghw&genre=article&issn=03624331&ISBN=&volume=&issue=&date=20170704&spage=4&pages=&title=The%20New%20York%20Times&atitle=Is%20it%20Possible%20to%20Have%20a%20Healthy%20Vegetarian%20or%20Vegan%20Pregnancy%3F&aurlast=Louis%20%20Catherine%20Saint&id=DOI:.

In this article by Jessica Beth Greenebaum, Greenebaum explores the concept of the vegan privilege and its credibility. Greenebaum claims privilege does not come from being vegan but the ability to choose what to eat. Greenebaum uses the theory of intersectionality to break down the concept of the vegan privilege. Greenebaum states that intersectionality is a theory that recognizes individual forms of discrimination and oppression, like racism and sexism, as part of a larger structure of domination. The theory of intersectionality describes how minority groups, who are stereotyped and categorized in more ways than one, can experience forms of oppression together. Those forms of oppression and discrimination must then be deconstructed together and in the context of one another, instead of separately. Greenebaum uses this particular theory to show the readers how veganism incorporates many different forms of oppression. The idea that veganism is a privileged lifestyle should not be the focus of the critique of veganism, instead the focus should be on veganism expanding its compassion to all forms of life. Greenbaum states that allegations of the “vegan privilege” conceals and reinforces the cultural invisibility of speciesism and carnism. What is most important to Greenebaum is to expand vegans and non-vegans circles of compassion, to understand how our capitalistic food complex exploits workers, animals, and consumers. Instead of veganism being a movement that focuses solely on the exploitation of non-human animals, Greenebaum proposes that it should be a “movement that challenges normative mindless eating, which fosters the exploitation of non-human animals, poor and marginalized human animals, and the environment” (Greenebaum [358]).⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

“Vegan Killjoys at the Table—Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices”, Richard Twine.

In this article by Richard Twine, Twine places Sara Ahmed’s narrative on the “feminist killjoy” at the dinner table with Twine’s “vegan killjoy” for a discussion. Sara Ahmed’s narrative shows how the feminist killjoy disrupts the assumed shared sense of happiness at the dinner table which originates from the assumed patriarchal heteronormative family. Twine quotes Ahmed: “To be willing to go against a social order, which is protected as a moral order, a happiness order, is to be willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not your cause” (Twine [625]).⁸¹ This quote describes how activists are perceived by others and how activists perceive themselves. In comparison to the feminist killjoy at the table, the vegan killjoy is also viewed as disruptive at the dinner table, perhaps even more so than the feminist killjoy. The dinner table for the vegan killjoy is a place that is materially and symbolically centered around disrupting normative eating practices. Moreover, the dinner table invites more obvious social conflict for the vegan killjoy than the feminist killjoy. Twine states that “veganism constitutes a direct challenge to the dominant affective community that celebrates the pleasure of consuming animals. It questions the assumption of shared happiness around such consumption raising the prospect of a cruel commensality” (Twine [628]).⁸² Richard Twine conducts 40 interviews with UK based vegans to present examples of

⁸¹ Twine, Richard. "Vegan Killjoys at the Table--Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices." *Societies*, vol. 4, 5 Nov. 2014, pp. 623-39.

⁸² Twine, Richard. "Vegan Killjoys at the Table--Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices." *Societies*, vol. 4, 5 Nov. 2014, pp. 623-39.

“contestation” and “negotiation” between vegans and non-vegans. The vegan subject, like the feminist, constitutes “a potent further example of what she [Ahmed] terms an “affect alien” who must willfully struggle against a dominant affective order and community” (Twine [623]).⁸³

“It ain’t easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target”, Cara C. MacInnis and Gordon Hodson.

In this article by Cara C. MacInnis and Gordon Hodson, the authors presented three empirical studies that explored whether bias exists toward vegetarians and vegans. In the first study, the authors found that omnivores judge vegans and vegetarians equal or more negatively than other commonly oppressed target groups (e.g. African-Americans). Bias was increased from people who believe in right-wing ideologies, “explained by heightened perceptions of vegetarian/vegan threat” (MacInnis and Hodson [721]).⁸⁴ This increase in bias towards vegans and vegetarians, from those endorsing right-wing ideologies, is explained by the idea that they support the “status quo and resist social change” (MacInnis and Hodson [723]).⁸⁵ Vegan males were viewed more negatively when compared to vegan females, and vegans as a whole were viewed more negatively when compared to vegetarians (MacInnis and Hodson [721]).⁸⁶

⁸³ Twine, Richard. “Vegan Killjoys at the Table--Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices.” *Societies*, vol. 4, 5 Nov. 2014, pp. 623-39.

⁸⁴ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. “It ain’t easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

⁸⁵ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. “It ain’t easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

⁸⁶ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. “It ain’t easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

In MacInnis and Hodson's first study, there were 278 participants that completed a survey. It was important that all of the participants for this study were omnivores because the purpose of the study was to examine omnivores' perceptions of vegetarians and vegans. The data confirmed that vegans and vegetarians are targets of bias. In the second study, there were 280 participants that completed a survey. Like the first, it was crucial that the participants were all omnivores. However, the second study examined how vegans/vegetarians were judged in comparison to other non-normative nutritional groups, as well as other groups challenging social norms (e.g. feminists). Overall, second study provided further data that reinforced the idea that vegans and vegetarians are targets of bias, and specifically in the context of other non-normative nutritional groups and environmentalists. Vegans/vegetarians were judged equivalently to feminists and those following a gluten-free diet. Moreover, judgements of vegans/vegetarians differ based on their motivations to become vegetarian or vegan. The authors found that vegans/vegetarians motivated by animal rights were perceived most negatively. In their third study, the authors examined vegetarian and vegan experiences of bias. Through a Facebook online survey, the authors collected the necessary amount of participants: 371 vegans and vegetarians. Overall, a large amount of participants experienced negativity stemming from their vegetarianism/veganism.⁸⁷

MacInnis and Hodson use intergroup threat theory to explain bias towards vegans and vegetarians. Vegans and vegetarians represent symbolic threats to the status quo, given that the majority favors meat eating. Intergroup threat theory states that, "symbolic

⁸⁷ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

threats are intangible threats to an ingroups's beliefs, values, attitudes, or moral standards. These threats originate from the perception that an outgroups's beliefs, values, attitudes, or moral standards are in conflict with those of one's own group" (MacInnis and Hodson [722]).⁸⁸ Using intergroup theory, MacInnis and Hodson propose that vegans' and vegetarians' voluntary abstention of meat eating conflicts with the omnivore majority's values, and therefore "represents a symbolic threat in ways that contribute to negative attitudes toward these targets" (MacInnis and Hodson [722]).⁸⁹

"Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas", Jessica Beth Greenebaum.

In this article by Jessica Beth Greenebaum, Greenebaum presents a qualitative study that explores the role that race plays in the vegan movement. Greenebaum argues that because veganism is associated with white privilege it "alienates people of color and creates stigma toward vegans of color" (Greenebaum [680]).⁹⁰ Greenebaum conducted in-depth qualitative interviews using Facebook (and other outlets) to gather participants. Some of the interviews were done face to face, and others were collected over the phone. Greenebaum conducted qualitative interviews to gain an understanding of how vegans of color experienced their veganism in today's society, instead of presenting a representative sample. Greenebaum found that people of color experience veganism differently. Some felt that race was heavily intertwined with veganism, and others felt

⁸⁸ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

⁸⁹ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

⁹⁰ ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

that race was completely irrelevant. Greenebaum states that this difference in experiences is explained by one's social location of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic class, gender, and sexual identity. However, despite this difference in experiences, veganism is associated with whiteness and privilege in popular media, and Greenebaum found that the majority of her participant's reactions to veganism were influenced by the affiliation of veganism to whiteness.⁹¹

Greenebaum states that while the vegan movement portrays itself as post-racial, race is heavily intertwined with the image of vegans for people of color. Greenebaum uses Erving Goffman's theories of stigma to explain "why people of color are hesitant to adopt a vegan lifestyle and diet. While race and ethnicity are often visible social identities, veganism is an invisible and chosen social identity; thus, the resulting stigmas are both visible and invisible and change in relation to the social interaction" (Greenebaum [682]).⁹²

"Beyond Hippies and Rabbit Food: The Social Effects of Vegetarianism and Veganism", Anna Lindquist.

In "Beyond Hippies and Rabbit Food: The Social Effects of Vegetarianism and Veganism", a masters thesis, Lindquist focuses on the social benefits and obstacles that vegetarians and vegans receive in social situations. Lindquist uses an ethnographical research method to gather information about vegans and vegetarians social experiences and interactions. Lindquist hypothesizes that vegans and vegetarians are

⁹¹ ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

⁹² ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

either met with acceptance, tolerance, or hostility. Lindquist interviewed vegans and vegetarians in order to conceptualize their experiences in the social world. To conceptualize these experiences, Lindquist used deviance, Goffman's stigma theories, and identity theory. In the introduction, Lindquist uses a poll from 2013 that states that 49 percent of Americans view vegetarians in a positive light, while 22 percent view them negatively. For vegans, 38 percent of Americans view them in a positive light, while 30 percent do not.⁹³ This data is incredibly eyeopening because it gives a lot of insight into opinions about Vegans and Vegetarians. It is interesting how Americans are more opposed to Veganism than Vegetarianism.

Lindquist uses deviance, stigma, and identity theory to help explain the negative and positive interactions that vegans and vegetarians experience. Deviance theory is used because vegans and vegetarians are deviants, which means that they deviate from American dietary norms, and are thus stigmatized. In turn, this means that these deviants will be looked at differently than the rest of the population; though as the data above suggests this can be both positive and negative. In terms of Identity theory, a vegetarian's or vegan's identity becomes apparent and known by others when they are eating. Identity is therefore not inherent, but is created by others (Lindquist [4]).⁹⁴

Literature Review Discussion

⁹³ Lindquist, Anna. *Beyond Hippies and Rabbit Food: The Social Effects of Vegetarianism and Veganism*. 2013. University of Puget Sound, MA thesis.

⁹⁴ Lindquist, Anna. *Beyond Hippies and Rabbit Food: The Social Effects of Vegetarianism and Veganism*. 2013. University of Puget Sound, MA thesis.

In the provided existing literature, all of the researchers explore how vegans are situated in society. Jessica Beth Greenebaum, in comparison to the other researchers, focuses more on the specificities within veganism's existence: how vegans of color experience their vegan identity, and how the "concept of the vegan privilege is harmful and beneficial to the vegan movement" (Greenebaum [367]).⁹⁵ Greenebaum uses Erving Goffman's theories of stigma, to explain how vegans of color experience both visible and invisible stigmas, based on their vegan, racial, and ethnic identities. Relating to the notion of the vegan privilege, Greenebaum states that focusing on criticizing the idea that living a vegan lifestyle is a privilege that only the wealthy can afford, "rather than the ethic and ideology behind veganism, endorses speciesist privilege and the capitalist industrial system, which exploits and kills animals, workers, and the carnists themselves" (Greenebaum [358]).⁹⁶ Using the theory of intersectionality, Greenebaum breaks down the idea of the vegan privilege to highlight how human and non-human animal liberation are one struggle, "the interlocking of classicism, ableism, nationalism, gender norms, and racism contribute to the oppression of all animals, whether human or non-human" (Greenebaum [357]).⁹⁷ In comparison, the other researchers (Lindquist, MacInnis and Hodson, and Twine) focus on why vegans and veganism are received negatively by society more generally. Anna Lindquist uses deviance, Goffman's stigma theories, and identity theory to explain the social effects of vegetarianism and veganism

⁹⁵ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

⁹⁶ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

⁹⁷ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

stating that, “stigma is a reaction to a perceived deviation from the social norm; it is therefore not a trait, but is a perspective that is created in a social situation where an individual is perceived as deviant, and then is treated based on that perception” (Lindquist [5]).⁹⁸ Vegetarians and vegans carry social stigmas because they deviate from the dietary norm of meat eating. In the context of identity theory, veganism and vegetarianism can become a large part of one’s identity depending on the social situation— like at the dinner table.

Richard Twine, in “Vegan Killjoys at the Table—Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices”, states how vegans can be seen as a killjoys at the dinner table. Vegans can be seen as killjoys because they transgress “normative scripts of happiness in a dominant meat and dairy consuming culture”, and are thus treated negatively (Twine [623]).⁹⁹ In relation to transgressing cultural and dietary norms, vegans pose symbolic threats as outlined by intergroup threat theory in “It ain’t easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target”, by MacInnis and Hodson, where they propose, using intergroup threat theory, that “vegetarians’ and vegans’ voluntary abstention from meat-eating, which conflicts with the omnivore majority’s values, represents a symbolic threat in ways that contribute to negative attitudes toward these targets” (MacInnis and Hodson [722]).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Lindquist, Anna. *Beyond Hippies and Rabbit Food: The Social Effects of Vegetarianism and Veganism*. 2013. University of Puget Sound, MA thesis.

⁹⁹ Twine, Richard. "Vegan Killjoys at the Table--Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices." *Societies*, vol. 4, 5 Nov. 2014, pp. 623-39.

¹⁰⁰ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

Intergroup threat theory, described by MaInnis and Hodson, is similar to Emile Durkheim's sociology of deviance. Both theories provide explanations for why veganism carries social stigmas, and about the negative reactions that can occur from identifying as vegan. According to Emile Durkheim, deviance is present in all societies, and performs as a necessary function of all societies. Durkheim's sociology of deviance, specifically his "social facts", can explain how and why vegans carry social stigmas. Durkheim explains that social facts are the societal pressures that exist externally in a person's life, which controls the way an individual navigates around society. Social facts are usually completely invisible to human thought and go completely unnoticed, yet they are the reasons for how people navigate the world (Durkheim [51]).¹⁰¹ Social facts exert themselves when the individual tries to resist them, "None the less it is intrinsically a characteristic of these facts; the proof of this is that it asserts itself as soon as I try to resist" (Durkheim [51]).¹⁰² Social facts exert themselves in the form of punishments or sanctions, both formal and informal (Durkheim [51]).¹⁰³ An example of a formal punishment would be someone breaking the law and then receiving it's consequence in the form of prison time, fines, probation, etc. In the case of an informal punishment, the consequence would involve how a person is negatively treated in social circumstances, "If I do not conform to ordinary conventions, if in my mode of dress I pay no heed to what is customary in my country and in my social class, the laughter I provoke, the

¹⁰¹ Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls, edited by Steven Lukes, The Free Press, 1982.

¹⁰² Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls, edited by Steven Lukes, The Free Press, 1982.

¹⁰³ Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls, edited by Steven Lukes, The Free Press, 1982.

social distance at which I am kept, produce, although in a more mitigated form, the same results as any real penalty” (Durkheim [51]).¹⁰⁴

According to Durkheim, resisting or breaking these social facts is deviant behavior, and those who do it are known as deviants. He also states that deviant behavior is an integral part of all healthy societies. He argues that deviant behaviors help society by defining and publicizing social rules, increasing social cohesion by creating outsiders which people can collectively react against, and sometimes acting as a fore-bearer for social change (Little [11]).¹⁰⁵ Durkheim affirms that deviance is necessary in society, and that fluctuating rates of deviance is indicative of a sick society. Durkheim describes society as like an organism, and every part of the organism needs to remain stable in order for it to remain healthy.¹⁰⁶ Durkheim’s theory can be applied to social stigmatizations against veganism by identifying vegans as deviants for resisting social facts and practicing alternative views and lifestyles. The result is similar to Durkheim’s informal punishments, in which the social deviance exhibited by vegans causes society to react by imposing social stigmas. Durkheim’s theory would also suggest that these sanctions and informal punishments against veganism offers some positive social impact, because deviance is part of what makes society healthy. Deviance creates the necessary ‘us’ and ‘them’ roles that contribute to clearer social boundaries and helps society define its cultural norms. Deviating behavior creates social solidarity between

¹⁰⁴ Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls, edited by Steven Lukes, The Free Press, 1982.

¹⁰⁵ Little, Craig B. *Deviance & control: theory, research, and social policy*. F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1989.

¹⁰⁶ "Durkheim on Deviance." tutor2u, www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/durkheim-on-deviance.

groups that deviate from the cultural norm and those that do not.¹⁰⁷ Vegans are a minority group that “fail to engage in normative behavior. Thus, vegetarians and vegans may be viewed as threatening” (MacInnis and Hodson [723]).¹⁰⁸

Vegans make up about 2% of the people living in the U.S, which is on par with other minorities like homosexual and muslim populations. Because veganism is largely a relatively new occurrence in our society, it has not yet acquired the attention of many sociologists. Vegans are a minority that experience sanctions and informal punishments just like those who are homosexual or muslim, “although these represent small segments of society, these proportions match those of minority groups such as homosexuals in the Western world, making vegetarian/vegans similarly worthy of attention” (MacInnis and Hodson [721]).¹⁰⁹ In western society, in terms of the importance at which attention is paid to minorities, veganism ranks very low. It is not prioritized in the slightest, which is understandable because veganism is very contemporary, and it probably seems strange to pay attention to a minority that is discriminated against for their diet. However, the numbers of vegans are increasing, albeit slowly, each year. Moreover, veganism is growing in mainstream media throughout the west, which in turn makes examining and analyzing it increasingly important (MacInnis and Hodson [721]).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "Durkheim on Deviance." tutor2u, www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/durkheim-on-deviance.

¹⁰⁸ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

¹⁰⁹ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

¹¹⁰ MacInnis, Cara C., and Gordon Hodson. "It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of

At its core, deviance theory is quite intuitive. By definition, deviance means to go against the grain or to depart from an accepted standard. Naturally, if an individual or a group decides to depart from a culturally accepted norm, they would be treated differently, or at least perceived differently. There are plenty of examples of deviance in our society today, some visible and some invisible. Meaning, there are some who have made a conscious decision to deviate from what is considered the social norm, and there are some who are unable to not deviate. Deciding to go vegan is an example of invisible deviation, and vegans are only stigmatized in specific social circumstances (Greenebaum [682]).¹¹¹ In the U.S., a vegan person may not choose to deviate directly for the purpose of deviation, but by making the decision to go vegan they have consciously made a choice to go against their social grain. Moreover, this deviation comes at a cost; for example, a vegan might experience some social discomfort or exclusion by friends or family. In the studies conducted by Richard Twine, in “Vegan Killjoys at the Table—Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices”, the majority of Twine’s participants “reported negative reactions from friends and family in their decision to become vegan” (Twine [629]).¹¹² This is just one example of how the vegan might experience informal punishment in society.

bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2017, pp. 721-44.

¹¹¹ —. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

¹¹² Twine, Richard. "Vegan Killjoys at the Table--Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices." *Societies*, vol. 4, 5 Nov. 2014, pp. 623-39.

In relation with veganism and race, vegans of color face “visible and invisible” stigmas (Greenebaum [693]).¹¹³ The other type of deviance, visible, refers to individuals or groups who cannot help but deviate, or become stigmatized. For example, vegans of color deviate from the stereotyped white vegan, thus stigmatizing them for their race or ethnicities and their vegan identity. Deviance theory can be utilized to explain, in large part, why people and groups of people are perceived differently than those who don’t deviate from the social and cultural norm.

However, while deviance theory provides a clear and general sociological explanation for vegan’s stigmatization, it not only makes vegans victims of societal pressures, but it also overlooks the specific reasons for vegan’s stigmatization. In the following chapter, I conduct my own content analysis of eight social media posts, from Reddit, that gives insight into the vegan and non-vegan conflict. This digital conflict on Reddit provides visual and specific explanations for vegan’s stigmatization.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Findings

Reddit

Reddit is an online public forum, media aggregate, and social network where users share links to outside content and gather for discussion. Specific subjects of interest, hobbies and niche topics are contained on distinct sub-forums within Reddit,

¹¹³ ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

called “subreddits”, which together creates the network of content known as Reddit. Posts and content are curated through user votes, called ‘Upvotes’ or ‘Downvotes’, user engagement, and subreddit-specific moderation. Moderation is often preformed by a select few users of a subreddit who filter submissions against site and individualized sub-reddit rules. The net effect of this curation process leads to large scale discussion of highly relevant material on any subreddit where enough users are subscribed or frequent.¹¹⁴

Two subreddits of particular interest in the research of this study are www.reddit.com/r/vegan, referred to as “r/vegan”, and www.reddit.com/r/antivegan, referred to as “r/AntiVegan”. These subreddits are user communities that revolve around the discussion of veganism and anti-veganism respectively. The “r/vegan” subreddit is largely focused on the ethical treatment of animals. There are 317,000 members of the “r/vegan” subreddit.¹¹⁵ Posts predominantly consist of ethical discussions regarding animal welfare, vegan recipes, images of vegan food, veganism’s positive effects on human health and the environment, and posts that criticize the beliefs and values of non-vegans. The description of the forum reads:

“This is a place for people who are vegans or interested in veganism to share links, ideas, or recipes. "Veganism is a way of living that seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing and any other purpose.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ "Reddit." Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit.

¹¹⁵ Reddit: r/vegan, www.reddit.com/r/vegan/top/?t=all.

¹¹⁶ Reddit: r/vegan, www.reddit.com/r/vegan/top/?t=all.

“r/AntiVegan” is the antithesis of “r/vegan”; it is a subreddit dedicated to people who dislike vegans and veganism. There are 2700 members of the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit.¹¹⁷ The members of this subreddit discuss their problems with the lifestyle, ethics, and the people who ascribe to a vegan lifestyle. The heading of the “r/AntiVegan” forum is “Against the cult of veganism”, signifying that the majority of the posts found on “r/AntiVegan” regard veganism as more of a cult than a lifestyle choice. However, none of the posts with the most upvotes on the forum directly present any information referring to veganism as a cult. Posts within this forum typically speak to vegans themselves and not necessarily veganism. Veganism itself, does not seem to be the issue for the members of “r/AntiVegan”, the problem lies in how it is being represented and who is representing it. Predominantly, the members of this forum post about vegans who seem to be too radical, and try to impose their diet and lifestyle on others. The description of the “r/vegan” subreddit states:

“Carnivores unite! /r/AntiVegan is a place to share and discuss content that opposes the ideology of veganism. We also offer support to ex-vegans, vegetarians, and pescatarians. Food porn, recipes, news and nutrition articles, stories, rants, and humor are all welcome.”¹¹⁸

Both “subreddits” partake in digital warfare with one another. Posts on either side convey arguments, either through text, links, video, or images for and against vegans, veganism, and anti-vegans. This digital warfare consists of both sides posting content regarding the accused hypocrisies, and various other issues related to vegans and veganism. Members from both sides will often cross the digital border and downvote

¹¹⁷ Reddit: r/AntiVegan, www.reddit.com/r/AntiVegan/top/?t=all.

¹¹⁸ Reddit: r/AntiVegan, www.reddit.com/r/AntiVegan/top/?t=all.

posts in their opposing forums. Also, because there are moderators controlling what can be said in these forums, there is hardly ever direct discussion between vegans and anti-vegans. For example, a users comment or post would not only be immediately removed, but the user might be banned from entering the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit by the moderator if the post or comment preached veganism: “All pro-vegan content and comments will be removed as spam. This subreddit is not a soapbox for preachy vegangelicals”, if the purpose of the vegans comment or post was to troll: “Vegans who come here to post abusive comments will be banned”.¹¹⁹ The definition of what it means to troll or to be a troll is “to antagonize (others) online by deliberately posting inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments or other disruptive content”.¹²⁰ And finally, the “r/AntiVegan” moderators do not allow brigading: “Links to outside subreddits should use np.reddit.com. Do not participate in mass voting or commenting via shared links AKA brigading”.¹²¹ To explain further, and in the context of “r/AntiVegan” and “r/vegan”, brigading occurs when users from these two subreddits will enter their opposing forums and mass downvote comments and posts. To continue to clarify, hypothetically, a user from the “r/AntiVegan” posts a link on their subreddit from the targeted subreddit, “r/vegan”. And assuming that the users from “r/AntiVegan” dislike the post linked from “r/vegan”, and by extension dislike the entirety of “r/vegan”, members from “r/AntiVegan” will go to “r/vegan” and proceed to mass downvote posts and sometimes harass the members from “r/vegan”. While the moderator does not allow

¹¹⁹ Reddit: r/AntiVegan, www.reddit.com/r/AntiVegan/top/?t=all.

¹²⁰ "troll." Merriam Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/troll.

¹²¹ Reddit: r/AntiVegan, www.reddit.com/r/AntiVegan/top/?t=all.

brigading, there is no banning users, or removal of comments and posts because it would be quite tough to discern which user and post first caused the brigading to occur.

Based on the names of these two subreddits, conflict is clear and ideologies clash. The fact that there is a forum dedicated to those that dislike or even hate vegans, shows that veganism is a highly controversial and sensitive subject. As previously mentioned, it is not veganism that is the issue for the members of “r/AntiVegan”, it is the people that represent it. The “r/AntiVegan” subreddit is opposed to both vegans in reality, but also to the members of the “r/vegan” subreddit. Moreover, it is how the members of “r/vegan” represent themselves, and veganism, on reddit that irritate the members of “r/AntiVegan”.

For the “r/vegan” subreddit, many of the same rules apply: “No brigading from or to r/vegan”, “No more than 10% of posts to your own site(s)”, “Trolls and personal abuse are not welcome”, “Arguing against veganism”, “Posts must be about veganism”, “Post should not be an “Over Asked Question”.¹²² Just to clarify some of these rules, the “No more than 10% of posts to your own site(s)” means that no more than 10% of a users post submissions can link to their own website, blog, instagram, or any other site that is their own. In terms of the “Arguing against veganism” rule, the explanation on the “r/vegan” subreddit states: “Questions from curious omnivores are welcome. But if you have come here just to argue against veganism, you may find that our FAQ addresses your concerns”.¹²³ The FAQ page on the “r/vegan” subreddit covers just about

¹²² Reddit: r/vegan, www.reddit.com/r/vegan/top/?t=all.

¹²³ Reddit: r/vegan, www.reddit.com/r/vegan/top/?t=all.

everything you can think of related to veganism. The most frequently asked question on the “r/vegan” FAQ page is “What is veganism?”.¹²⁴ One of the key issues vegans have with non-vegans is their hypocrisies. From the research I have done on the r/vegan subreddit, many of the posts are directed to non-vegans who claim they love animals yet choose to eat them anyway. It is also worth noting that the members of “r/vegan” are not directing their posts directly toward the members of “r/AntiVegan”, but to everybody who is not vegan.

In the following chapter, I will present eight posts from “r/AntiVegan” and “r/vegan”. Four posts that speak to the problems that anti-vegans have with vegans, and four posts that remark on the issues that vegans have with anti-vegans and non-vegans. The members from “r/AntiVegan” are non-vegans, clearly, but have become anti-vegan due to the problems and issues that they have with vegans. Meaning, that the representation of veganism by vegans negatively impacted the non-vegans around them enough to the point where they became anti-vegan.

There are problems with both sides of the argument. There are problems with how veganism is represented in reality and on reddit. Not to say that all vegans are problematic, but there are social problems that arise from how some vegans act. Moreover, there are problems with how anti-vegans respond to vegans.

On reddit, you can filter the posts by “hot”, “new”, “controversial”, “top”, and “rising”. You can also filter the “controversial” and “top” by time: “past hour”, “past 24 hours”, “past week”, “past month”, “past year”, and “of all time”. For the purpose of my project, I

¹²⁴ Reddit: r/vegan, www.reddit.com/r/vegan/wiki/beginnersguide.

chose eight posts from the “top” “of all time”, four from the “r/vegan” subreddit and four from the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit. For the purpose of privacy, I have removed all of the user’s personal information in the posts. Moreover, I will not be citing the images because they are posts that a specific user made and posted on the subreddit. If I were to cite the image, the citation would lead back to the user, thus displaying all of the user’s personal information and real username.

“r/vegan” Post Analysis

“r/vegan” Key Words: Vegan, Kill (Killed), Animals, Food, Eat, Meat, Cruelty.

I chose these specific key words because I felt that each of these words are words that play a fundamental role in vegan and anti-vegan language. Due to the meaning of veganism and its philosophy, these words both play a fundamental role in the language of both vegans and anti-vegans because both of the subreddits are about veganism and vegans, it is just that one subreddit has a different view on the subject: “r/AntiVegan”. Furthermore, I will use the same key words for both the posts on the “r/vegan” and the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit.

For the “r/vegan” posts I have selected posts from the “Top of All Time” category, but have picked based on what I am looking for. I have done this because some of the posts found on the “r/vegan” subreddit vary substantially due to the variation of interests on the subreddit. Moreover, many of the posts that are on this subreddit have very little to do with my project, and while they are perceived as humorous and, thus, attract users to upvote them to the point where the post gets to the “Top of All Time” category, those

posts are not what I am looking for. Unlike the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit where the entirety of the posts have something to do with anti-veganism, the “r/vegan” subreddit contains posts that have nothing to do with the conflict between between vegans and anti-vegans. So, for this reason I have had to hand-select four posts from the “Top of All Time” category, just like I have done for the “r/AntiVegan” posts.



“r/vegan” Post #1

This post speaks to the accused hypocritical nature of non-vegans by stating that non-vegans will experience sadness when “deers and cats get hit by cars or when dogs get

eaten in other countries”, but won’t care or acknowledge the suffering of animals in factory farms. This post also highlights speciesism, and how we treat certain animals different than others. For example, how we care and love our dogs and cats but will eat farm animals without experiencing emotions toward the animals being eaten. This is a hard topic to touch upon because, while non-vegans do exhibit speciesist attitudes, those attitudes have been implanted over decades of meat eating and detachment from the animals themselves. By detachment I mean detaching oneself from the live animal. An example of this would be going to the supermarket to purchase packaged meat. Along with speciesism, this post also speaks to the carnism. The idea that it is ok to eat certain animals over others. While vegans can have speciesist tendencies, like deciding that their pets should eat vegan diets, carnism is the direct opposite of veganism. This accused hypocritical nature of non-vegans is related to Greenebaum’s “mindless eating”: “to not have to think about, feel, or observe the effect of your diet on animals...” (Greenebaum [360]).¹²⁵ Greenebaum uses the theory of intersectionality which “recognizes that racism, sexism, class exploitation, and oppression are part of a matrix of domination”, to explain how carnism reveals “mindless eating” as both a privilege, but also a detriment to the members of society. Moreover, by making “fun of vegetarians and vegans who care about animals being hung by their legs in an assembly line 24 hours a day on the way to get their throats slit”, non-vegans expose their “mindless eating” and carnist tendencies which ultimately exploits and harms the “most socioeconomically vulnerable individuals and communities” (Greenebaum [367]).¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

¹²⁶ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

“r/vegan” Post #2

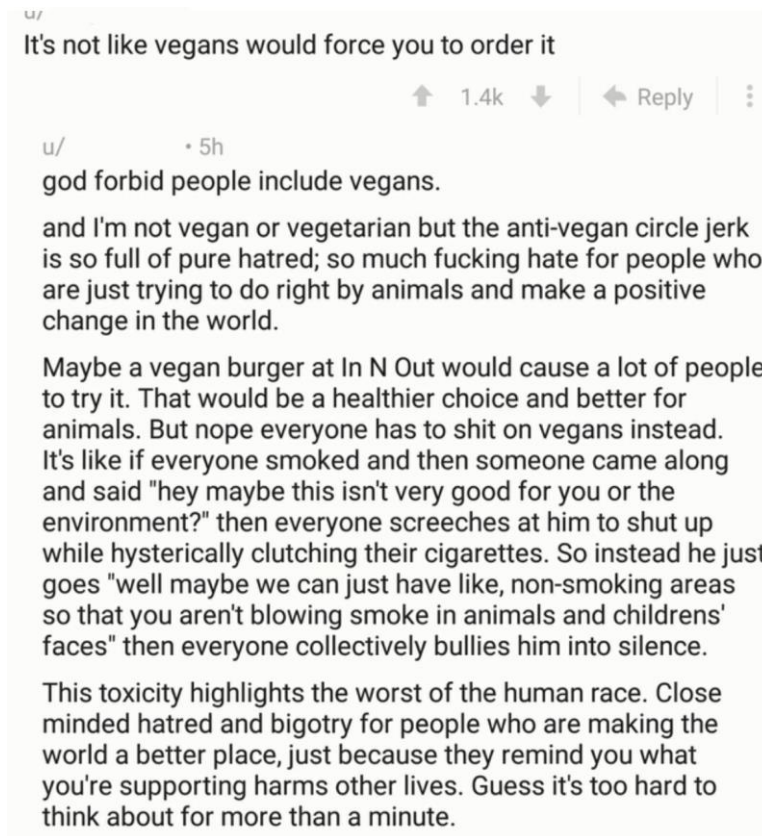


This post depicts a dinner made presumably by a vegan, where the user's family cancels on them last minute due to the existence of tofu in the dinner. Exclusion plays a fundamental role in this post's sociological analysis. The exclusion felt by the user, originating from their family, stems from their diet, and more specifically tofu. In today's society where veganism is not the norm, "there is so much pressure in a non-vegan world to eat animal products, particularly from friends and family" (Greenebaum [681]).¹²⁷ Exclusivity is apparent from both vegans and non-vegans, but is more clearly

¹²⁷ —. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

seen in the “r/vegan” and “r/AntiVegan” subreddit. The names of both of these subreddits implies exclusivity. The “r/AntiVegan” subreddit is meant for anti-vegans, and the “r/vegan” subreddit is meant for vegans. The social exclusion felt by this vegan is also a form of social sanctioning from Emile Durkheim’s deviance theory and social facts. This exclusion is an informal punishment felt by the vegan, due to the vegan’s breaking and fighting against the socially accepted norm of meat eating, “If I do not conform to ordinary conventions... the laughter I provoke, the social distance at which I am kept, produce, although in a more mitigated form, the same results as any real penalty” (Durkheim [51]).¹²⁸ While Durkheim’s social facts may be the cause for vegan’s to experience social exclusion and stigmatization, in the case of this particular post it is almost impossible to accurately discern why, specifically, this vegan experienced familial exclusion, other than because this vegan’s family “don’t do tofu”.

¹²⁸ Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls, edited by Steven Lukes, The Free Press, 1982



“r/vegan” Post #3

This post highlights an important topic of discussion regarding the conflict between vegans and anti-vegans on reddit: the inability for productive discussion. This user uses the rather inappropriate term, “circle jerk”, to describe how the users of the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit communicate amongst each other. With regards to the conflict between the two subreddits, anti-vegans posting content amongst themselves about the problems they have with vegans and veganism does not provide any solutions to the conflict.¹²⁹ Certainly, being “close minded” does not allow for productive discussion.

¹²⁹ "Circlejerk." Urban Dictionary, 16 June 2011, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Circlejerk.



@

if you think veganism is expensive
wait till you see how much money you
save after people stop inviting you out
with them

“r/vegan” Post #4

The vegan lifestyle is associated with expensiveness and privilege, and this post highlights that point. Furthermore, the post does not actually state that a vegan lifestyle is expensive, it is just perceived as so. It also hints at the reoccurring theme of exclusion between vegans and non-vegans. In “Questioning the Concept of Vegan Privilege: A Commentary”, Greenebaum states that being able to live a vegan lifestyle is not the privilege, having the ability to “understand what food they eat, has access to knowledge and information about how their food choices affects animals, nature, and other humans, and has the availability of multiple food options is privileged” (Greenebaum [359]).¹³⁰ Wealthy people will always have the ability to dine on expensive food, regardless of dietary preference (Greenebaum [359]).¹³¹ In relation to exclusivity and the stigmatization of vegans, to be privileged “is to be allowed to move through your life without being marked in ways that identify you as an outsider, as exceptional or ‘other’

¹³⁰ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

¹³¹ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

to be excluded, or to be included but always with conditions” (Greenebaum [363]).¹³²

The belief that vegans are privileged and being able to live a vegan lifestyle is a privilege not everybody can afford is founded upon the stereotyping of vegans as being arrogant, judgmental, wealthy, and white (Greenebaum [367]).¹³³

“r/Anti-Vegan” Post Analysis

“r/AntiVegan” Key Words: Vegan, Kill (Killed), Animals, Food, Eat, Meat, Cruelty.

In this chapter, I am looking at only anti-vegan posts. I will examine four posts that relate to topics of why anti-vegans are anti-vegan. Within a subreddit, there are tools to sort the posts into different categories. For the purpose my research, I analyzed the highest voted posts due to their popularity and self-evident, high, interaction among the users. However, because reddit is a social networking platform that allows for all types of media to be posted, many of the “Top of All Time” posts do not contain relevant information to the conflict between vegans and anti-vegans. An example of a post that is not helpful for the purposes of my study are pictures of food, of which there are many on the “r/vegan” subreddit. However, on the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit, the majority of the posts have something to do with anti-veganism. Some posts are more helpful than others sociologically. For example, a picture of a steak, or bacon does not necessarily help me with my project in terms of sociology, but the users are posting these pictures to make a point about how tasty and aesthetically pleasing the steak looks, compared to

¹³² Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

¹³³ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

food that is vegan. Some of the users will also post pictures of meat they are cooking in nature, making the point that the only thing plants are good for is cooking meat. So for these reasons, I hand-selected four separate posts from the “Top of All Time” category. Comparing the posts from the “r/vegan” and the posts from the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit, it is clear to me that the posts from the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit are mainly directed towards their opposing audience: vegans. However, the posts act as a talking point about the problems surrounding veganism. Comparatively, there is a larger variety of the types of posts on the “r/vegan” subreddit. Many of the posts are perceived as humorous, and do not speak to the conflict between the two opposing sides. However, in terms of “r/AntiVegan” posts, there are precisely four different posts that each speak to different issues. The first topic that comes out of this involves demography and stereotypes. The second post speaks to the accused imposing nature of vegans, as well as their potential speciesist, and hypocritical viewpoints. The third posts speaks to the exclusionist aspect of the conflict between the two opposing sides. And finally, the fourth post is a personal piece about the harsh and unwelcoming vegan community.

“r/AntiVegan” Post #1

[/r/vegan finds this infuriating.](#) (i.redd.it)
 submitted months ago by
 comments share save hide give award report crosspost



This post from the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit displays a white, thin, woman atop a group of workers depicted in brown. The user that posted this pointed out that the “r/vegan” subreddit finds this post infuriating. This post contains a lot of sociological aspects including socioeconomic status and race. The user posted this to make the point that while vegans may think that their lives are cruelty free, and have a philosophy of not harming other sentient life, they are actually causing harm to those that are depicted underneath the stereotyped vegan in the post. In “Questioning the Concept of Vegan Privilege: A Commentary”, Greenebaum states that vegans must expand their circle of compassion to include human animals, “the vegan ethic must move beyond a limited

focus on equality and justice for animals and broaden its circle of compassion to people, particularly those who are disenfranchised by the industrialized food complex”

(Greenebaum [366]).¹³⁴ Using the theory of intersectionality, Greenebaum breaks down the idea of the vegan privilege to show how animal rights must be combined with human rights.

This post is attacking the idea that living a vegan lifestyle is a privilege only wealthy people can afford. Also to reiterate the point, the people that are under the white, skinny vegan, are people of color. While the vegan movement “portrays itself as post-racial, race is very much connected to the image of vegans for people of color” (Greenebaum [693]).¹³⁵ The post creator wanted to strengthen their attack by doing this. This whole post screams not only white superiority, but also vegan superiority. The facial expressions of the people below the white, presumably vegan, female express sadness and painfulness. A child is drawn to make the viewer consider the effects of child labor and the privilege we have in our choices. The color contrast in this post really makes the white female stand out and shine like the sun that is depicted behind her. The people that are shown below her blend in with one another, they all have the same color hair, skin color and are veiled in shadow so that they do not appear as individuals but an entire race working tirelessly and painfully for this one vegan lady and her tomato. The post also depicts a man in the bottom right corner of the post using a stick to prod the workers, implying that the labor is forced and those who do it have no say in the matter.

¹³⁴ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

¹³⁵ ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.

This post touches on many aspects of why it is that people are opposed to vegans. Veganism is “associated with whiteness and privilege in the popular media”, it can exclude people of color from becoming vegan (Greenebaum [693]).¹³⁶ Due to how veganism is represented in the media may be one cause for vegan’s stigmatization. Another possible cause for vegan’s stigmatization is moral superiority. This notion of morality plays a large role in the vegan and anti-vegan controversy. Many vegans believe that their choice to become vegan improves the lives of animals and the environment, but, as the post implies, many can be blind to the damage they are doing to other humans.

“r/AntiVegan” Post #2

¹³⁶ ---. "Vegans of color: managing visible and invisible stigmas." *Food, Culture, & Society*, vol. 21, no. 5, Nov. 2018, pp. 680-97.



At first glance, this post does not seem to look like much, and may appear quite bland. Also the argument or point that is being made may seem quite obvious, there are six skulls, one of the skulls is a skull of a Neanderthal, underneath this skull is a caption that reads: “People who insist on feeding their pets a vegan diet”. Put simply, the user is making the case that vegans who feed their pets vegan diets are Neanderthal-like. However, the user is also making the larger point that vegans are so self-righteous that they feel the need to force their animals to eat the same diet that the owner does. While, vegans are against the notion of speciesism, this post highlights the idea that vegans try impose their lifestyle and diet on others, including non-human animals that rely on their owner for food. This self-righteousness displayed by vegans is one of the key reasons

why non-vegans become anti-vegans. According to posts on the “r/AntiVegan” subreddit, vegans have a tendency to impose their diet on others, and ultimately decide what people should eat. One user commented: “I’m in agreement with this even though I’m a vegetarian, a diet shouldn’t be forced on anyone, it is a choice”. Another user commented: “That’s not exactly fair. Even primitive man was smart enough to know that their dogs want/need meat”. These quotes are comments that were made in response to this post. The idea that vegans force their diets and lifestyles on others is concerning, especially those that rely on humans for food. It is concerning because vegans are supposed to be against the notion of speciesism. Being imposed upon and judging those based on what they eat is discriminatory. This is a common theme between both sides: vegan and anti-vegan. Vegans judge non-vegans based on their diet, and non-vegans judge vegans by creating negative social stigmas around vegans based on their supposed moral superiority.

The ideas of having pets in the first place is not in line with vegan theory. Vegans are against the notion of speciesism, a speciesist is someone who believes in human superiority. Having a pet and deciding what it should eat based on your own beliefs is inherently speciesist because you are putting this animal below you. Of course there are exceptions, there are some animals that do rely on humans for just about everything. However, deciding what your pet should eat based on your own personal beliefs is speciesist. You cannot ask your pet what it would like to have for dinner, but making a dietary decision that could have a detrimental impact on the health of the animal is one that should be thought about carefully. For example, it is clear that a dog would much

rather eat a piece of steak over a handful of spinach. Having this basic knowledge, but refusing to acknowledge this fact and still feed your pet a vegan diet is speciesist.



"r/AntiVegan" Post #3

It is important to note that this text may be fake, however, it was posted to the r/AntiVegan subreddit to reinforce the divide between vegans and non-vegans. The posted text shows that a group chat was created with the title "barbecue", and from there, an invite is sent out to all the members of the group. One of those members enthusiastically comments that they look forward to a "fat steak and a pair of ribs". The creator of the group chat then asks if there are any vegans in the group. One of the members replies that they are, after-which they are kicked out of the group and it is implied that they are uninvited from the barbecue. The immediate response to the vegan diet was group exclusion. This post is supposed to be humorous due to the

rejection faced by the vegan individual, an act of bullying that is supported by the echo chamber that dominates in these types of web based communities, especially in ones that focus on belief systems. Excluding a person from a group helps to foster relationships with others within the group. The group strengthens its core beliefs, increasing its understanding of what is right and what is other, and are assured in the idea that they still belong.¹³⁷

Personal story: **I'm a vegan, I feel isolated** (self.AntiVegan)
submitted month ago * by

Hey all. I don't even know if I'd be welcome on this subreddit, but I honestly don't know who else to talk to. I hope you hear me out. I recently became a vegan because a) I'm a big softy for animals and b) I'm anxious about the environment. To be truthful, I've dealt with bad anxiety for a while, and I'm sure this contributed to my decision to become a vegan. I worry a lot and lose sleep over a lot of things, especially if they are a moral or ethical dilemma. Not that the vegan community (at least from what I've seen online) would care. After researching into it though, the online community has only worsened my feeling of anxiety. So much so that I feel like abandoning veganism all together. Here are the things I've noticed, and just absolutely cannot stand:

1. Racism/Cultural Insensitivity - I've seen multiple comments made by seemingly "rational" vegan people that compare being a meat eater to being a racist. I remember a comment that was along the lines of "I feel like dating a meat-eater is today's version of dating a racist in the 1950's. Everyone thinks it's socially acceptable." Which I thought was so incomparable and ignorant to say. And of course, the ever infamous and ever common comparison of factory farming to the literal Holocaust and slavery. Awful. Period. I also feel like there is a willful ignorance of the differences between cultures. It's easy for American vegans, who live in a culture where pro-animal sentiment is very commonplace and plant-based food items and commodities are more widely available than ever before, to quickly disregard and act unsympathetically towards those with cultures who live in food deserts and may not share the same type of emotional ties towards animals. But that's just a reality of life and of people. People are different and don't all think the same way. That does not mean that they are inherently "bad" people, and it disgusts me that some people think this way. And on that note:
2. Letting relationships be negatively affected in the name of veganism - I've seen posts where people will cut contact with family, lose friendships, and refuse to date omnivorous people. And what more, they almost make it seem like it's reasonable and encouraged to start hating or resenting loved ones who are not vegan. That doing so is almost like a necessary part of making a moral difference, and if you don't do it, you're allowing people to think animal abuse is okay. I was fine with just making my own lifestyle changes and keeping them mostly to myself, but suddenly that wasn't good enough anymore? I'm not giving up my family, friends, and partner. I love them more than anything ever. Yet I'm "too passive" for it?
3. Complete and utter nastiness towards other vegans and vegetarians - I don't understand this one. Aren't you supposed to support others with a like-minded goal? I've seen countless examples of vegans being unreasonably harsh and bitchy towards other vegans, and for the smallest things. I saw a new vegan get berated and called fake for not knowing that white sugar isn't vegan. Another girl received a bitchy comment when she admitted to not feeding her dog vegan kibble. And of course, the hatred towards vegetarians is ridiculous and embarrassing to me.

"r/AntiVegan" Post #4

This reddit user recounts their personal experience with the vegan community.

Unfortunately, I was unable to collect the entire story in one image because of its length.

¹³⁷Williams, Kipling D., et al. *The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection, and Bullying*. Psychology Press, 2005. Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology.

This user details racial and culturally insensitive nature of the vegan community, stating, “I’ve seen multiple comments made by seemingly “rational” vegan people that compare being a meat eater to being a racist” (“r/AntiVegan” Post #4). The user describes how the vegan community lets and encourages relationships to be negatively affected in the name of veganism, “I’ve seen posts where people will cut contact with family, lose friendships, and refuse to date omnivorous people” (“r/AntiVegan” Post #4). How the vegan community can be unpleasant to others who identify as vegan or vegetarian, “I saw a new vegan get berated and called fake for not knowing that white sugar isn’t vegan” (“r/AntiVegan” Post #4). How the vegan community can have an “all or nothing attitude”, “Being a vegetarian, or wanting to reduce meat and animal product consumption, or even just having a meatless Monday, should not be discredited” (“r/AntiVegan” Post #4). This reddit user displays through their story how harsh and unpleasant the vegan community can be. This user is reinforcing the stereotype that vegans are “arrogant, judgmental, wealthy, and white” (Greenebaum [367]).¹³⁸ However, these characteristics are not specific to just vegans. But, by the user posting this about the apparent unwelcoming nature of the vegan community, it provides explanations for vegan’s stigmatization.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What does being vegan actually mean? On the surface it is a diet that abstains from consuming and using all animal products and by-products. However, being vegan

¹³⁸ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

means much more than a mere diet, it is a way of life and an identity. Vegans are vegan for four main reasons: ethics, the environment, health/well-being, and religion. However, while vegans may enjoy their way of life and form of identity, my research showed the depths to which there are many others who are opposed to it and the reasons why. I have explored vegan's stigmatization using several different sociological theories—deviance theory, theory of intersectionality, MacInnis and Hodson's "vegan killjoy", and intergroup theory—to find out why vegans carry social stigmas. Using Reddit, I hoped to gather data that would provide me with specific reasons for vegan's stigmatization. I was presented with posts that left me analyzing and breaking down posts which indicated American dietary norms were being deviated. Some argued that veganism was a site for discrimination and social exclusion based on socio-economic status.

What is so bad about veganism? Based on my research, it is bad because some vegans are poor ambassadors and due to poor representation by popular media. It is bad because it is a philosophy that needs to be altered in a way to include human animals more wholly into its philosophy. Moreover, it is crucial to the vegan cause that "vegan organizations reject the notion of a universal vegan and include diverse leadership so that the bodies of women are not exploited and the needs of people of color are not neglected to sell a movement" (Greenebaum [367]).¹³⁹ By making the vegan movement more inclusive, and not so exclusive, I believe the stigmas that vegans experience will decrease.

¹³⁹ Greenebaum, Jessica Beth. "Questioning the Concept of Veganism Privilege: A Commentary." *Humanity and Society*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 355-72.

In my research, I found that there needs to be a change in the way that veganism is discussed to include non-vegans and vegans. The way that veganism is discussed currently on Reddit is incredibly counter-productive and frustrating for all parties. Users from their respective subreddits (“r/vegan” and “r/AntiVegan”) talk about veganism amongst themselves, and exclude the other subreddit in the discussion. Being that social media platforms provide the tools to discuss any topic with anyone who has access to the internet, the way Reddit separates anti-vegans from vegans should be altered to allow for more productive conversation. I propose creating a new subreddit dedicated to vegans, non-vegans, and anti-vegans that is moderated strictly to allow only sincere and non-combative discussions to take place.

If I were to alter my project, I would have chosen larger sample size of posts to analyze from Reddit. I do not regret using and analyzing the posts I chose, however I would be curious to see how a larger sample size would change, in terms of the attitudes toward vegans, veganism, and non-vegans shown in my research. I do not imagine that a larger sample size would provide differing opinions of vegans and anti-vegans, however, it may include other reasons for the hostility between the two subreddits.

Combining all of my research, the existing literature, and other information regarding vegan’s stigmatization, I found that finding a single explanation is impossible. Thinking back to my mother’s reaction of my transition to eating a vegan diet, her negative reaction stemmed from the inability to cook the way she enjoyed, and was not founded upon the idea that I was privileged or morally superior. Through my research, I have concluded that there are too many reasons behind why vegans carry social stigmas,

that it felt misleading trying to provide one theoretical explanation. Further studies should focus on first gathering participants biased towards vegans, and follow up with them on why that is. In terms of this project, I hope I provided you with some insight into why vegans carry social stigmas.

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