

Vegaphobia: derogatory discourses of veganism and the reproduction of speciesism in UK national newspapers¹

1. Matthew Cole^{1,*},
2. Karen Morgan^{2,*}

Article first published online: 1 MAR 2011

DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01348.x

© London School of Economics and Political Science 2011



The British Journal of Sociology

[Volume 62, Issue 1](#), pages 134–153, March 2011

Abstract

This paper critically examines discourses of veganism in UK national newspapers in 2007. In setting parameters for what can and cannot easily be discussed, dominant discourses also help frame understanding. Discourses relating to veganism are therefore presented as contravening commonsense, because they fall outside readily understood meat-eating discourses. Newspapers tend to discredit veganism through ridicule, or as being difficult or impossible to maintain in practice. Vegans are variously stereotyped as ascetics, faddists, sentimentalists, or in some cases, hostile extremists. The overall effect is of a derogatory portrayal of vegans and veganism that we interpret as ‘vegaphobia’. We interpret derogatory discourses of veganism in UK national newspapers as evidence of the cultural reproduction of speciesism, through which veganism is dissociated from its connection with debates concerning nonhuman animals’ rights or liberation. This is problematic in three, interrelated, respects. First, it empirically misrepresents the experience of veganism, and thereby marginalizes vegans. Second, it perpetuates a moral injury to omnivorous readers who are not presented with the opportunity to understand veganism and the challenge to speciesism that it contains. Third, and most seriously, it obscures and thereby reproduces exploitative and violent relations between human and nonhuman animals.