

Accommodating the Target: Veganism, Healthfulness, and Hegemonic Masculinities

Corey Waters
Temple University

This paper considers what motivates people to reduce their consumption of other animals. Utilizing nationally representative survey data from the 2007 Humane Research Council study, "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S.," I find that individuals who desire a healthier diet are more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their meat consumption; and that, among respondents who reduce their meat consumption, the ratio of men who desire a healthier diet to men who do not is larger than that of women. These findings suggest that a discourse of veganism as healthful could enhance the capacity of advocates of veganism to connect with, accommodate, and influence a broad population of advocacy targets, including a particular population, men, who are less likely to practice veganism. These findings also suggest that a discourse of healthfulness could deconstruct the persistent relationship between meat consumption and hegemonic masculinities.

The vast majority of the United States population consumes other animals as food (Newport 2012; Stahler 2012). The Vegetarian Resource Group finds that a mere 4 percent of the adult population, defined as 18 years old and older, practices vegetarianism, defined as "never eat[ing] meat, fish, seafood, or poultry"; and that 1 percent of the population, included in this vegetarian category, practices veganism, defined as "never eat[ing] meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs" (Stahler 2012). That the Vegetarian Resource Group excludes honey, a non-vegan product, from this definition suggests that this 1 percent figure for veganism may be too high. Gallup's Consumption Habits survey, which does not impose definitions of vegetarianism and veganism, finds that 5 percent of the population practices vegetarianism, while an additional 2 percent practices veganism (Newport 2012). With more than 90 percent of the population consuming other animals as food, advocates of reducing and eliminating the consumption of other animals must confront a behavior that the majority of the population perceives as an acceptable cultural norm. That the relative size of the vegetarian population

has not grown since 1999, when Gallup found that 6 percent of the population practiced vegetarianism, suggests that such advocacy has been unsuccessful in this century.

Advocates of reducing and eliminating the consumption of other animals as food could benefit from an analysis of why people embrace vegetarianism and veganism and why people do not. Scholarship on social movements and cultural movements has found a positive effect of supportive social networks on the capacity and willingness of individuals to embrace behaviors such as vegetarianism and veganism (McAdam 1986; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Melucci 1996; MacNair 1998; Cialdini 2003; Cherry 2006; Christakis and Fowler 2008; 2009; Haverstock and Forgays 2012). For example, vegan pledge campaigns, through which people pledge to practice veganism for a particular number of days, provide resources, mentorship, and moral support while perpetuating discourses that frame veganism as ethical, healthful, normal, and feasible. A subject of my ongoing qualitative research, these vegan pledge campaigns effectively pull advocacy targets into advocacy networks and into practicing veganism. While the effect of such networks is compelling, targets of these networks are simultaneously embedded in other networks and guided by identifications that may, for example, demand non-vegan behaviors and thus a rejection of the recruiting network. Such networks, which can include kinship, friendship, workplace, and sports networks, communicate discourses that frame veganism as undesirable. Thus, whether targets come to practice veganism is in large part contingent on the capacity of vegan advocacy networks to not only maintain themselves, but to construct and employ discourses that can contend with those of antagonistic networks. How such discourses and the networks that perpetuate them resonate with the particular lived experiences, identifications, and desires of targets is likely to determine whether they practice veganism.

Utilizing quantitative survey data from the 2007 Humane Research Council study, "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S.," I seek to identify a discourse that resonates with people who reduce their consumption of other animals. Previous research has found that a discourse of healthfulness is prominent among the discourses that have motivated people to practice veganism (MacNair 1998; Haverstock and Forgays 2012; Latvala et al. 2012). Drawing on this common finding, I seek to analyze the relationship between the desire for a healthier diet and whether and how subjects have altered their consumption of other animals in the previous year. The Humane Research Council survey data find that respondents who desire a healthier diet are more likely than respondents who do not desire a healthier diet to have reduced their meat consumption in the previous year. This result suggests that vegan advocates could more effectively pull targets into their networks and into practicing veganism by constructing and prioritizing a discourse of veganism as conducive to a healthier diet. The survey data also find that among respondents who have reduced their meat consumption, the ratio of men who desire a healthier diet to men who do not is larger than that of women. This result is meaningful because it suggests that a discourse of veganism as conducive to a healthier diet could be especially appealing for men, who, according to the survey data, are less likely than women to have reduced their meat consumption.

Previous Research

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) claim that in constructing and espousing particular discourses, social movement advocates strategically, perhaps necessarily, tap a floating signifier, which is a "signifier that is overflowed with meaning because it is articulated differently within different discourses" (Torfing 1999:301). For example, how animal rights activists articulate rights likely contrasts with how hunters articulate rights, yet both

populations employ the signifier, which floats from discourse to discourse. Vegan advocates employ floating signifiers such as feasibility, healthfulness, and rights. They attempt to construct a "nodal point" at which veganism and feasibility, for example, are interlaced, with the intention of "partially fixing" complementary meanings of veganism and feasibility and of constructing veganism as feasible (p. 98). To construct an effective discourse that can contend with and perhaps dislocate an antagonistic discourse that promotes the consumption of other animals, advocates necessarily employ floating signifiers for intelligibility; that is, they employ floating signifiers that are understandable in the language of their advocacy targets as a means of accommodating these targets. The Humane Research Council survey data suggest that notions of feasibility, healthfulness, and rights are known by, and thus intelligible for, a broad population of targets. Whether notions of veganism as feasible, healthful, and conducive to rights are appealing to targets is another question, however.

Veganism as Healthful

A discourse of veganism as healthful is legitimated by research that "demonstrates the health benefits" of plant-based diets, which have been "associated with a reduced risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer as well as increased longevity" (Marsh, Zeuschner, and Saunders 2012:250). Vegans are 26 percent less likely than meat eaters to die from ischemic heart disease (Key et al. 1999); are one-third as likely as non-vegetarians to experience diabetes (Tonstad et al. 2009); maintain a lower body mass index than meat eaters, fish eaters, and vegetarians (Spencer et al. 2003); and are less likely to experience hypertension (Berkow and Barnard 2005). The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, formerly known as the American Dietetic Association, posits that "appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally

adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases" (Craig and Mangels 2009:1266). Thus, the health argument for veganism is a compelling and useful discursive frame for vegan advocates and their networks.

Rachel M. MacNair (1998), Terhi Latvala et al. (2012), and Katie Haverstock and Deborah Kirby Forgays (2012) have documented the prominence of healthfulness as a factor in the reduction of consumption of other animals. In her survey of vegetarian activists, MacNair (1998:98) finds that healthfulness is the most selected explanation for why they "first became vegetarian," edging "compassion to animals" by a margin of 33.8 percent to 30.4 percent. An additional 10.6 percent identify healthfulness as one of two explanations. In their online survey of Finnish subjects, Latvala et al. (2012:71) find that healthfulness is the "most salient stated reason for changing consumption habits." This finding broadly encompasses the whole sample, but also specifically applies to the particular cluster that has decreased its meat consumption and increased its consumption of vegetables. In their online survey comparison of current and former pescatarians, vegetarians, and vegans, Haverstock and Forgays (2012:1033) find that healthfulness is "more important among current animal product limiters than former animal product limiters." This comparison suggests that a discourse of veganism as healthful could be effective not only in attracting advocacy targets, but also in producing endurance and thereby retaining targets.

Veganism as Healthful and Gender

Because women are more likely than men to reduce their consumption of other animals (Imaner Consultants 2003; Newport 2012; Stahler 2012), identifying discourses that motivate men to reduce demands particular attention. About 5 to 7 percent of the female population in the United States practices vegetarianism or veganism, while a mere 3 to 4 percent of the male

population practices vegetarianism or veganism (Newport 2012; Stahler 2012). Imaner Consultants (2003) has recorded a wider gender gap among the vegan population in the United States, with women composing 78 percent. On average, men are more likely than women to suppress compassion for other animals (Herzog 2007). Men compose the majority of recreational hunters in the United States, while women compose the majority of animal rights activists in the United States and the United Kingdom. Carol J. Adams ([1990] 2010) attributes such disparities to gender ideologies embedded in the act of consuming other animals. Surveying social science research, images, language, literature, popular media, and cookbooks, Adams links power and masculine status to the consumption of other animals and to the exploitation of women and other men.

People with power have always eaten meat. The aristocracy of Europe consumed large courses filled with every kind of meat while the laborer consumed the complex carbohydrates. Dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity. (P. 48)

Thus, because men exercise power via the consumption of other animals, "[m]en who decide to eschew meat eating are deemed effeminate; failure of men to eat meat announces that they are not masculine" (p. 57).

Adams' claim was confirmed in July 2012, when Arian Foster of the National Football League's Houston Texans declared that he had begun practicing veganism. While some online reaction approved of Foster's decision, other online reaction policed his gender and even questioned his sexuality. Online comments declared, "REAL FBALL PLAYERS EAT MEAT!!!" (Robertson 2012); "Heard he is also going to try wearing woman's thongs under his jeans" (ESPN 2012); "What a big pussy"; "Dude will be in an estrogen coma"; and "I heard he

is replacing regular steak with tubesteak," which is slang for penis (Urban Dictionary 2002). Reactions to Foster's decision to practice veganism reveal that men practicing veganism is not perceived as a cultural norm in the context of football and perhaps in the context of athletics; and that vegan advocacy networks must contend with an antagonistic discourse of veganism being a feminine behavior.

Accommodating the Target

Previous research on motivations for reducing consumption of other animals suggests that, relative to other motivations, the healthfulness of veganism is appealing (MacNair 1998; Haverstock and Forgays 2012; Latvala et al. 2012). Previous research on gender and meat consumption suggests that, while most men and most women consume other animals, women are more likely than men to reduce this consumption (Adams [1990] 2000; Imaner Consultants 2003; Herzog 2007; Newport 2012; Stahler 2012). What this literature has either not accounted for or not explicitly recognized is how a particular motivation, such as the desire for a healthier diet, could mobilize men. Considering the gap between men and women in their likelihood to reduce meat consumption, and considering the relationship between meat consumption and hegemonic masculinities, constructing and employing discourses that resonate with men is necessary for advancing veganism and for simultaneously resisting speciesism and sexism.

Hypotheses

My key concepts here are the consumption of other animals, discourses of vegan advocacy, healthfulness, and gender. Employing survey data from the "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S." study, I measure the effect of the desire for a healthier diet on whether and how respondents have altered their consumption of other

animals in the previous year; and I consider how gender interacts with this effect. Thus, I measure the potential effect of a discourse of veganism as healthful with a particular focus on how this discourse could mobilize men, who have been less likely than women to reduce their meat consumption. I first hypothesize that individuals who desire a healthier diet are more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their meat consumption. I then hypothesize that the desire for a healthier diet affects the meat reduction rates of men more than the meat reduction rates of women.

H_{A1}: Individuals who desire a healthier diet are more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their meat consumption.

H_{A0}: Individuals who desire a healthier diet are not more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their meat consumption.

H_{B1}: The desire for a healthier diet affects the meat reduction rates of men more than the meat reduction rates of women.

H_{B0}: The desire for a healthier diet does not affect the meat reduction rates of men more than the meat reduction rates of women.

Methodology

All data analyzed here were produced by the Humane Research Council and Survey Sampling, Inc. for the "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S." study, which includes a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase. I employ data only from the quantitative phase. Conducted online in February 2005, the study's quantitative survey is representative of the United States adult population, defined as 18 years old and older. The online venue may underrepresent non-white, lower-income, and elderly individuals. The Humane Research Council and Survey Sampling, Inc. attempt to compensate for this shortcoming by employing census-balanced sampling techniques. More than 3,200 adults completed the survey.

My dependent variable is whether and how survey respondents have altered their consumption of other animals in the previous year; my independent variable is whether they desire a healthier diet; and my interactive variable is gender. I measure whether and how respondents have altered their meat consumption according to their response to the question, "Overall, do you currently eat more or less meat compared to one year ago, including chicken, turkey, fish/shellfish, beef, pork, veal, or lamb?" Respondents can report that they consume "significantly less meat," "somewhat less meat," "about the same amount of meat," "somewhat more meat," or "significantly more meat." They can also report, "I'm not sure." I collapse these six categories into three: less, same, and more. I eliminate respondents who report, "I'm not sure." I measure respondents' desire for a healthier diet according to their agreement with the statement, "I would like to eat a healthier diet." Respondents can report that they "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "neither agree/disagree," "somewhat disagree," or "strongly disagree." I collapse these five categories into two: agree and do not agree, which includes "neither agree/disagree" as well as "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree." I measure respondents' gender according to their self-identified gender, female or male. I engage these variables in univariate and multivariate analyses.

Results

Of the 3,111 eligible respondents, 26.81 percent report that they have decreased their consumption of other animals in the previous year, compared to 9.48 percent who have increased their consumption and 63.71 percent who have consumed about the same amount. That respondents are almost three times more likely to have decreased than to have increased their meat consumption is encouraging for vegan advocates. Of the eligible respondents, 77.63 percent report that they desire a healthier diet. This large proportion, along with the finding

that the most selected motivation for reducing meat consumption is "to eat a healthier diet in general," underscore the potential appeal of healthfulness as a vegan advocacy discourse for a broad population. The gender composition of eligible respondents is 54.13 percent female.

Table 1

	Percent
<i>Do you currently eat more or less meat compared to one year ago?</i>	
Less	26.81
Same	63.71
More	9.48
<i>I would like to eat a healthier diet than I do now.</i>	
Agree	77.63
Do Not Agree	22.37
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	54.13
Male	45.87
<i>Which of the reasons below contributed to you eating less meat compared to one year ago?</i>	
To eat a healthier diet in general	70
To reduce my intake of fat and cholesterol	58
To lose weight	44
To eat less expensively	29
To reduce my risk of cancer or diabetes	22
To avoid antibiotics and/or other additives in meat	14
To reduce suffering of animals on farms	9
To eat preferred foods (i.e., don't like meat's taste)	9

To reduce impact on the planet/environment	6
To reflect my spiritual or religious beliefs	3

Multivariate Analysis

Table 2

	<i>Meat Consumption in the Previous Year (Percent)</i>		
	Less	Same	More
<i>I would like to eat a healthier diet than I do now.</i>			
Pr = .000			
Agree	28.70	61.61	9.69
Do Not Agree	20.26	70.98	8.76
<i>Gender</i>			
Pr = .000			
Female	30.11	60.45	9.44
Male	22.92	67.55	9.53
<i>Women: I would like to eat a healthier diet than I do now.</i>			
Pr = .005			
Agree	30.95	58.80	10.25
Do Not Agree	26.17	68.12	5.70
<i>Men: I would like to eat a healthier diet than I do now.</i>			
Pr = .000			
Agree	25.66	65.40	8.94
Do Not Agree	15.83	73.12	11.06

By a margin of 8.44 percentage points (28.70-20.26), respondents who desire a healthier diet are more likely than respondents who do not desire a healthier diet to have reduced their consumption of other animals in the previous year. By a margin of 9.37 percentage points (70.98-61.61), respondents who do not desire a healthier diet are more likely than respondents who desire a healthier diet to have consumed about the same amount of meat.

These differences suggest that the desire for a healthier diet increases the possibility of change and the possibility of meat reduction. With statistically significant variation, these results support my first hypothesis that individuals who desire a healthier diet are more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their meat consumption.

Consistent with findings on the gender composition of populations that reduce or eliminate their meat consumption (Imaner Consultants 2003; Newport 2012; Stahler 2012), female respondents are 7.19 percentage points (30.11-22.92) more likely than male respondents to have reduced their meat consumption. Male respondents are 7.10 percentage points (67.55-60.45) more likely than female respondents to have consumed about the same amount of meat. These differences underscore the need for vegan advocates to strategically construct and employ discourses more capable of resonating with men. Employing gender as an interactive variable reveals in at least two ways the potential power of a discourse of veganism as healthful. First, female respondents who have reduced their meat consumption are 4.78 percentage points (30.95-26.17) more likely to desire a healthier diet than to not desire a healthier diet, while male respondents who have reduced their meat consumption are 9.83 percentage points (25.66-15.83) more likely to desire a healthier diet than to not desire a healthier diet. The male disparity in percentage points (9.83) more than doubles the female figure (4.78). Second, the percentage of female respondents who have reduced their meat consumption rises 0.84 of a point (30.11-30.95) from all female respondents to female respondents who desire a healthier diet, while the percentage of male respondents who have reduced their meat consumption rises 2.74 points (22.92-25.66) from all male respondents to male respondents who desire a healthier diet. The male disparity in percentage points (2.74) more than triples the female figure (0.84). With statistically significant variation, these two

results support my second hypothesis that the desire for a healthier diet affects the meat reduction rates of men more than the meat reduction rates of women.

Discussion

The results of the "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S." study confirm with statistical significance my first hypothesis that individuals who desire a healthier diet are more likely than individuals who do not desire a healthier diet to reduce their consumption of other animals. This finding is consistent with those of MacNair, Latvala et al., and Haverstock and Forgays in that it reveals the prominence of healthfulness as a motivation for reducing meat consumption. It informs vegan advocacy by revealing the potential of employing a discourse of veganism as conducive to a healthier diet.

The results also confirm with statistical significance my second hypothesis that the desire for a healthier diet affects the meat reduction rates of men more than the meat reduction rates of women. This result suggests that a discourse of veganism as healthful could produce greater reduction rates among men. While previous research has established that men are less likely than women to reduce or eliminate their meat consumption, and that healthfulness is a prominent motivation to reduce or eliminate meat consumption, my findings connect these two domains by suggesting that the desire for a healthier diet could enhance the capacity of vegan advocates to mobilize male advocacy targets and deconstruct the link between meat consumption and hegemonic masculinities.

Accommodating the Target: Risks

While a discourse of veganism as healthful could enhance vegan advocacy by accommodating advocacy targets, it could also compromise veganism as a social justice project. Subsuming an agenda of rights and compassion for other animals while prioritizing a

discourse of veganism as healthful may not discourage targets from practicing selective veganism, meaning, for example, practicing only dietary veganism. According to Kimberly, a vegan advocate I have encountered in my qualitative research,

Concern for animals is the only factor which will convince someone to go full-on vegan. Arguments for health, the environment, etc.[,] will only convince people to be mostly vegan, and from the dietary angle only. [...] You're also not going to develop heart disease from eating Jell-O or other foods that contain trace animal ingredients, or even the very occasional ice cream sundae or small piece of steak as a treat.

The narrative of Amy, one of my qualitative research participants who participated in a vegan pledge campaign, reveals her concern for other animals, but it also reveals that her primary motivation for practicing veganism is its health benefits.

I'm recognizing how much it's changed my life, how much it like allowed me to like have the energy that I want. [...] I have more energy than I ever had. [...] I'm not sluggish anymore, my skin feels better, I'm not wearing any makeup right now. You know, [...] I look good.

Amy embraces veganism only in the context of diet.

For me I think [veganism is just] [...] like food. Like I know there's different things for clothes. But I think that's [...] on a whole other level.

She also rhetorically questions if fish feel pain as a means of potentially justifying her consumption of fish again.

What's so bad about [consuming] fish? [...] You know, they're fish! [...] We had that speaker the one time [at one of the Vegan Pledge gatherings]. [...] He said something about how fish feel pain, and I'm like, do they really?

Amy's narrative reveals that a discourse of veganism as healthful does not necessarily account for how particular animals have an interest in their own lives, and how wearing other animals, as with eating other animals, violates their rights as sentient beings. As Kimberly may ask, is occasionally eating other animals unhealthy? Is wearing leather unhealthy?

A discourse of veganism as healthful does not necessarily expose social structures that marginalize other animals, a significant shortcoming if we consider veganism to be a social justice project. Adams ([1990] 2010:66) claims that human beings avert any feelings for the animals they consume by rendering these animals "absent." Most human beings do not kill the animals they consume, thus conveniently ignoring any suffering endured by the murdered animal; and human beings even alter the names of the animals they consume, replacing cow with roast beef and pig with pork. "Live animals are thus the absent referents in the concept of meat" – the absent referent that "permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity" and that "enables us to resist efforts to make animals present." Because the absent referent prevails through "concealment," its deconstruction requires its exposure (p. 97). A discourse of veganism as healthful does not necessarily prompt targets to acknowledge the presence of the animals they consume, and therefore does not necessarily answer Adams' (p. 90) call "to eliminate the structure that creates absent referents" and that naturalizes speciesism.

Furthermore, a discourse of veganism as healthful does not necessarily confront hegemonic masculinities, which, according to Adams, are in direct conflict with male exhibition of compassion for other animals. Perhaps critics, especially male critics, of a football player embracing veganism would be more likely to accept and even embrace veganism if it were discursively presented as an opportunity for them to improve their physical health and athleticism. Such a discourse, however, would not necessarily challenge gender ideologies, including a discourse of manhood as desirable and worthy of preservation. Steve Martindale (2010), a columnist and an activist for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), attempts to appeal to a male audience by framing veganism as both healthful and masculine. He declares that "[v]egans are the new macho men" and that "[e]ating helpless

animals is just not that manly." He cites professional male athletes who boast extraordinary "muscle mass" and who have set strength and conditioning records while practicing veganism. Significantly, Martindale does not address the rights of and the suffering endured by other animals. He employs a language of masculinity and health rather than a language of social justice, attempting to motivate male targets by threatening their manhood. If, as Adams argues, a discourse disciplining men to embrace and to preserve their manhood is entangled with the exploitation of other animals and other human beings, Martindale's advocacy would be counterproductive in that it would fail to challenge hegemonic masculinities that reinforce speciesism as well as sexism. If an antagonistic discourse such as veganism as healthful subsumes gender, it cannot expose and deconstruct the concealed link between speciesism and sexism.

Accommodating the Target: Rewards

A discourse of veganism as healthful risks providing justification for selective veganism, but because targets of vegan advocacy tend to reduce or eliminate their consumption of other animals via a "gradual rather than abrupt transition," selective veganism can be valorized as a mere step or shift toward veganism (Haverstock and Forgays 2012:1030; Green 2012). The Haverstock and Forgays (2012:1033) comparison between current and former animal product limiters reveals that current limiters are more likely than former limiters "to have changed their diet gradually." This finding behooves vegan advocates to embrace "incremental advocacy," a notion that "we can achieve more through gradual change than by seeking overnight success" (Green 2012). According to this notion, Amy's selective veganism could be considered progress. It would be considered a compromise or a failure only if it were to become static, which could result from Amy's lack of initiative or her lack of access to

network resources, mentorship, and moral support. Advocates could activate a gradual transition by facilitating vegan pledge campaigns and other vegan advocacy networks that provide resources, mentorship, and moral support.

Such activation requires that advocates first establish a connection with targets of their advocacy. My results suggest that a discourse of veganism as healthful could enhance the capacity of advocates to forge connections with a broad population of targets, including male targets, who are less likely than female targets to reduce their meat consumption. Targets are not passively pulled into networks. They assert particular lived experiences, identifications, and desires, and advocates risk alienating these targets if they do not account for these experiences, identifications, and desires. Particular desires are revealed in particular narratives, but commonly shared desires of a broad population of targets can be found in nationally representative survey data. As Table 1 reveals, the majority of respondents desire a healthier diet. Thus, advocates could enhance their capacity to establish a connection with a broad population of targets and to activate a gradual transition to veganism by promoting veganism as healthful.

Establishing a connection is also crucial because through this connection and through networks, targets could gradually recognize multiple reasons for practicing veganism. The narrative of blog writer Alexandra Beane (2013) reveals that she initially embraced veganism for its healthfulness, but that she continued to practice veganism for another reason.

When I went vegan, I [...] did it more with my own health in mind, rather than the animals. When I started to learn more about the horrors of the dairy industry, my own health slid to the side and I realized that I would be vegan for the rest of my life – not for myself, but for the animals. Whether I liked it or not, I pledged to stay vegan.

Beane pledges to practice veganism for the "rest of [her] life" upon recognizing the plight of other animals in the dairy industry, thereby revealing that her concern for other animals spawns a stronger commitment to veganism than healthfulness. However, this concern for other animals may not have surfaced had she not been initially engaged by a discourse of healthfulness. Beane's narrative underscores the significance of employing discourses that accommodate and thus pull targets into cultural movements. Some targets gradually become "full-on vegan" because they have been motivated by a reason other than social justice to engage with a vegan advocacy network; and because that network has then communicated veganism as a social justice project. Without subsuming perhaps the more accommodating discourses that attracted targets to vegan advocacy networks and to veganism, advocates could utilize the network venue to communicate veganism as an act of resistance against hegemonic discourses and social structures that reproduce speciesism, sexism, and other entangled forms of oppression. Thus, while prioritizing a discourse of veganism as healthful risks reconstructing the absent referent and reinforcing speciesism and sexism, it could also result in exposing the absent referent and deconstructing speciesism and sexism.

Limitations

While the survey data of the "Advocating Meat Reduction and Vegetarianism to Adults in the U.S." study reveal the relevance of signifiers such as healthfulness, the data inevitably do not account for others that are worthy of analysis. For example, Matthew B. Ruby and Steven J. Heine (2012:47) find that "perceived animal intelligence," a variable not included in the Humane Research Council survey data, is a strong predictor of "disgust at the thought of eating [other animals]." This finding suggests that a discourse of other animals as intelligent, as with a discourse of veganism as healthful, could enhance the capacity of vegan advocates to connect

with advocacy targets. The Humane Research Council survey data and the Ruby and Heine survey data capture the significance of healthfulness and perceived animal intelligence, but they do not capture other pertinent signifiers embedded in the narratives of my qualitative research participants, who also communicate and are influenced by discourses of veganism as normal and feasible, for example. Narrative construction provides space for the particular lived experiences, identifications, and desires of research participants, thereby providing to participants the opportunity to actively and originally identify particular narrative plots and assess their relevance to their experiences. In this study, I seek to identify a signifier, in this case, healthfulness, that is meaningful and desirable for a broad population of targets. For this particular task, survey data are useful. However, accounting for targets' narratives will produce a better understanding of how and why they respond to particular advocacy discourses.

Implications

The findings of this study do not suggest that vegan advocacy networks should prioritize healthfulness above all other reasons to practice veganism; they merely suggest that healthfulness be included among the multiple reasons such networks communicate. Healthfulness permeates the language of and is appealing to a nationally representative sample of potential advocacy targets, including a particular population of potential targets, men, who are especially resistant to reducing their consumption of other animals. Advocates could therefore tap healthfulness as a vehicle to increase the population that practices veganism and to initiate an intersectional social justice project that resists speciesism, sexism, and all forms of domination. Accommodating targets who embrace veganism for its healthfulness may risk the practice of selective veganism or recidivism, but advocates could contend with such risks by establishing and maintaining networks that expose targets to reasons more likely to spawn a

"full-on" commitment to veganism; and that resourcefully support targets as they gradually go
"full-on" vegan.

References

- Adams, Carol J. [1990] 2010. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum.
- Beane, Alexandra. 2013. "Why being vegan rocks." *This Dish is Veg*, April 26. Retrieved April 2013
(<http://www.thisdishisvegetarian.com/2013/04/why-being-vegan-rocks.html>).
- Berkow, Susan E. and Neal D. Barnard. 2005. "Blood Pressure Regulation and Vegetarian Diets." *Nutrition Reviews* 63(1):1-8.
- Cherry, Elizabeth. 2006. "Veganism as a Cultural Movement: A Relational Approach." *Social Movement Studies* 5(2):155-70.
- Christakis, Nicholas A. and James H. Fowler. 2008. "The Collective Dynamics of Smoking in a Large Social Network." *New England Journal of Medicine* 358(21):2249-58.
- , 2009. *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Cialdini, Robert B. 2003. "Crafting Normative Messages to Protect the Environment." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12(4):105-09.
- Craig, Winston J. and Ann Reed Mangels. 2009. "Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 109(7):1266-82.
- ESPN. 2012. "Arian Foster says he's a vegan." *ESPN*, July 10. Retrieved July 2012
(http://espn.go.com/nfl/story/_/id/8143634/arian-foster-houston-texans-says-going-vegan).

- Green, Che. 2012. "How Research Predicted the Popularity of Meatless Mondays." *Humane Research Council*, October 2. Retrieved October 2012
(<http://www.humanespot.org/content/research-popularity-meatless-mondays>).
- Haverstock, Katie and Deborah Kirby Forgays. 2012. "To Eat or Not to Eat: A Comparison of Current and Former Animal Product Limiters." *Appetite* 58(3):1030-36.
- Herzog, Harold A. 2007. "Gender Differences in Human-Animal Interactions: A Review." *Anthrozoos* 20(1):7-21.
- Imaner Consultants. 2003. "Vegan profile." Retrieved February 2011
(<http://www.imaner.net/panel/profile.htm>).
- Key, Timothy J., Gary E. Fraser, Margaret Thorogood, Paul N. Appleby, Valerie Beral, Gillian Reeves, Michael L. Burr, Jenny Chang-Claude, Rainer Frentzel-Beyme, Jan W. Kuzma, Jim Mann, and Klim McPherson. 1999. "Mortality in Vegetarians and Nonvegetarians: Detailed Findings from a Collaborative Analysis of 5 Prospective Studies." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 70(3):516s-24s.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London, United Kingdom: Verso.
- Latvala, Terhi, Mari Niva, Johanna Makela, Eija Pouta, Jaako Heikkila, Jaana Kotro, and Sari Forsman-Hugg. 2012. "Diversifying Meat Consumption Patterns: Consumers' Self-Reported Past Behaviour and Intentions for Change." *Meat Science* 92(1):71-77.
- MacNair, Rachel M. 1998. "The Psychology of Becoming a Vegetarian." *Vegetarian Nutrition: An International Journal* 2(3):96-102.

- Marsh, Kate, Carol Zeuschner, and Angela Saunders. 2012. "Health Implications of a Vegetarian Diet: A Review." *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 6(3):250-67.
- Martindale, Steve. 2010. "Real Men Eat Tofu!" *PETA Prime*, June 10. Retrieved June 2010 (<http://prime.peta.org/2010/06/real-men-eat-tofu>).
- McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1):64-90.
- McAdam, Doug and Ronnelle Paulsen. 1993. "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism." *American Journal of Sociology* 99(3):640-67.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Newport, Frank. 2012. "In U.S., 5% Consider Themselves Vegetarians." *Gallup*, July 26. Retrieved September 2012 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/156215/consider-themselves-vegetarians.aspx>).
- Robertson, Dale. 2012. "Arian Foster's veganism is food for thought for Texans." *Ultimate Texans*, August 7. Retrieved August 2012 (<http://blog.chron.com/ultimatetexans/2012/08/arian-fosters-veganism-is-food-for-thought-for-texans/>).
- Ruby, Matthew B. and Steven J. Heine. 2012. "Too Close to Home: Factors Predicting Meat Avoidance." *Appetite* 59(1):47-52.
- Spencer, E.A., P.N. Appleby, G.K. Davey, and T.J. Key. 2003. "Diet and Body Mass Index in 38 000 EPIC-Oxford Meat-Eaters, Fish-Eaters, Vegetarians and Vegans." *International Journal of Obesity* 27(6):728-34.

Stahler, Charles. 2012. "How Often Do Americans Eat Vegetarian Meals? And How Many Adults in the U.S. Are Vegetarian?" *The Vegetarian Resource Group*, May 18.

Retrieved September 2012

(<http://www.vrg.org/blog/2012/05/18/how-often-do-americans-eat-vegetarian-meals-and-how-many-adults-in-the-u-s-are-vegetarian/>).

Tonstad, Serena, Terry Butler, Ru Yan, and Gary E. Fraser. 2009. "Type of Vegetarian Diet, Body Weight, and Prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes." *Diabetes Care* 32(5):791-96.

Torring, Jacob. 1999. *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Urban Dictionary. 2002. "tubesteak." *Urban Dictionary*, November 5. Retrieved September 2012

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Tubesteak&defid=3971296>).