Diffusion Communications in Animal Advocacy

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In 1971, the first US municipal spay-neuter clinic opened in Los Angeles (Rowan, 2009), bringing with it a public discourse about controlling pet populations and mitigating the rates of euthanasia via prevention of unwanted litters. While pet ownership throughout the country was becoming increasingly popular following World War II, general understanding of the pet overpopulation crisis was still a largely unseen issue. According to Andrew Rowan, writing for the Humane Society of the United States, pet euthanasia dropped by sixty percent between 1973 and 2007 (2009).

The spread of public awareness campaigns from animal advocacy groups like HSUS and the ASPCA, celebrity endorsements for the cause by the likes of TV personality Bob Barker, as well as the early adoption of low-cost pet sterilization programs like that in Los Angeles, have all facilitated a shift in what is now widely regarded as responsible pet ownership. Modern sterilization advocacy focuses on developing clear, marketable messages targeted at communities where awareness of the problems inherent in pet overpopulation is low. Alongside traditional and new media messaging via posters, online ads, and leaflets, advocacy initiatives even include involving influential members of the aforementioned communities.

While the drive by animal advocates and public health officials to control pet populations through sterilization is still an ongoing one, it has gained incredible traction over just 40 years, with recent estimates putting sterilized cats at around 90% and dogs at about 80% (ASPCA, n.d.). The literally life-saving success of this campaign is exemplary of the diffusion of innovations, as well as a model for the broader animal advocacy movement's future endeavors.

Introduction

This paper will focus on exactly the aforementioned premise: that an understanding and strategic utilization of diffusion can be a powerful tool for crafting the most effective messages in specific campaigns, persuading individuals to adopt a new framework for thinking and interacting with non-human animals, recruiting new activists, and eventually coercing corporations and institutions to change their own practices wherein animals are involved. To that end, the scope of possible applications of diffusion on animal advocacy is wide-ranging, but necessarily so as these points exist on a continuum that parallels the diffusion process. This paper will attempt to succinctly outline each of those steps and major components of diffusion as they can be or have been applied in animal advocacy work. (Note that this will pertain specifically to observations within the United States and that some of the information herein has been gathered through personal experience.) Throughout, there will be a thematic acknowledgement of

the different roles new and social media play for expediting and enhancing the diffusion process (Rice & Webster, 2002).

While academic literature pertaining only to diffusion of innovations within animal activism is nonexistent, examination of research on diffusion within institutional organizations and other social justice movements will inform the analysis herein. Observable links between the conclusions of the aforementioned research and communications outcomes found in historic and ongoing animal rights campaigns will allow for extrapolating what is known to what can be reasonably inferred, as well as what could be studied going forward.

Diffusion of Innovations: The Basic Assumptions

A theory synthesized by Everett Rogers from decades of previous research on corresponding communications topics, the diffusion of innovations asserts that new ideas and practices are disseminated throughout social networks and adopted over a series of stages by individuals within those networks. The theory is particularly concerned with the rate of time at which these innovations spread throughout networks, a focus from which the delineation of adopter categories is formed (1995).

Diffusion is unique to communications studies in that it evaluates both mass media effects and interpersonal communication effects in order to illuminate a sort of chain reaction of individual and social events, from awareness to adoption—and even possible advocacy—of innovations. Rogers' work expands upon Katz and Lazarsfeld's two-step flow model of communication (1955/2005) and implicates elements of persuasion and social cognitive theory (see Bandura, 2001) in explaining how practices as diverse as prescribing drugs (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1957) to implementing new farming methods (Ryan & Gross, 1943) typically take hold within the communities where they are relevant.

From the diffusion model, we know that the individuals or other decision-makers who communicate about an innovation will bear on its rate of acceptance within a community. Furthermore, facets of the innovation itself, as well the way in which those change agents present it, will have impact on the rate at which it is adopted or rejected (Rogers, 1995).

The Process: Making the Decision to Adopt Veganism and Animal Rights Ideology

Understanding the macro-level societal effects of diffusion starts with identifying the micro-level process through

which an innovation is undertaken by individuals or organizations. While the general trajectory is outlined below, it is important to note that these phases do not necessarily need to occur in sequence, and in fact oftentimes do not because "decisions and experiences in one phase may require returning to an earlier phase" (Rice, 2009, p. 495). For illumination of how the decision-making process can apply to animal advocacy campaigns, we will look at it in context of the observable and most typical route people take in adopting a vegan lifestyle, eventually becoming advocates of the practice itself and the broader ideological framework veganism entails for many individuals: animal rights, or "a liberation framework" as it will sometimes be referred to throughout this paper.

Knowledge Stage

In *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (1995) explains this initial stage of decision-making as the time at which people or organizations are introduced to the existence of an innovation, as well as the basics of its practical applications and how it works. He goes on that there are two schools of thought regarding people's roles in their exposure to innovations: some argue that this is a passive process "since the individual cannot actively seek an innovation until he/she knows that it exists" (p. 162, 164) while others believe a need for the innovation must be present in individuals before they can actually process the awareness-knowledge (Rogers, 1995).

Regardless of which understanding of building awareness-knowledge is correct, both approaches are covered when making the innovation of veganism known. Through mass media outlets such as vegan cooking TV shows, social media opportunities like paid Facebook PSAs on animal agriculture issues, opinion leadership on vegan lifestyle trends from celebrities, and interpersonal outreach in the form of leafleting, veganism is permeating modern culture. Naturally, we can assume this means some people are taking note of the innovation.

Furthermore, advocacy efforts for the adoption of animal-free consumption are often tailored towards addressing different needs that can be addressed and remedied with the personal or commercial introduction of veganism into one's life or business practices. For individuals, these needs may be anything from improving physical health (Campbell, 2005) to wanting to help end animal suffering. For corporations and institutions, adopting vegan products or practices can suit certain public relations needs, open up new market opportunities, and simply meet the existing demands of consumers.

Addressing what Rogers calls "how-to knowledge" and "principles knowledge" (1995, p. 164, 166), which explain the use of the innovation and its functional principles respectively, myriad on and offline materials exist to

educate individuals on how to implement veganism in shopping and cooking, as well as why it is encouraged (e.g., for health or ethical reasons). Many change agents have also become experts in explaining these concepts to the newly introduced, as evidenced by increasingly more professionalized and wide-reaching communications campaigns undertaken by national non-profit groups like PETA and Mercy for Animals.

While steadily building individual awareness of veganism and its animal rights tenets is well underway, another area of investment for the advocacy movement may be to create marketing campaigns and readily available resources focused on how and why commercial institutions could adopt vegan products or practices throughout their businesses.

Persuasion Stage

According to Rogers, whereas the knowledge-awareness stage of the decision timeline deals with the cognitive processing of an innovation, the persuasion stage is marked by its affective nature. Individuals begin to form subjective opinions of an innovation based especially upon its perceived relative advantages, compatibility with their values, and the complexity or simplicity of its use (1995).

Also important to note in the persuasion stage of the process is that this is when people seek more information about an innovation in order to reduce uncertainty they may have, often specifically about the innovation's aforementioned qualities. Because diffusion of innovations is a fundamentally social phenomenon, it makes sense that people turn to their peers for what Rogers calls "innovation-evaluation information" (1995, p. 168). In assessing the experiences their network contacts have had with the innovation, individuals and even organizations take cues from others, or employ social learning (see Bandura, 2001).

To that end, strategic support through this process is vital for moving decision-makers to a favorable attitude toward the innovation. In vegan advocacy, some noticeable measures are already in place, such as using college-aged volunteers for leafleting on college campuses, which can encourage students to ask questions and get more information from these change agents they hopefully see as peers. Fortunately, the Internet's myriad social network sites, geo-targeting apps, and meet-up groups are easy resources for most to tap when they are looking for more information or connectivity during any stage of the decision-making process. Helping connect people to these resources and directly to vegans within their networks (socially, geographically, demographically, etc.) could speed along the decision-making process, particularly when those connections are made with knowledgeable and socially

respected peers (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993).

Decision Stage

The decision stage, as Rogers explains, is the point at which decision-makers undertake activities that lead to the adoption or rejection of an innovation (1995). One aspect of this stage is the trail period most people will engage in before choosing adoption or rejection of a new concept like veganism. Indeed, vegan advocacy organizations have clearly identified the importance of facilitating some trial period when designing campaigns, as we see in initiatives like Meatless Mondays and the 21-Day Vegan Kickstart.

Again in relation to Bandura's model of social cognition (2001), Magill and Rogers (1981) note that one method for change-agents to possibly increase the rate of diffusion is to co-opt the social learning process by getting opinion leaders within a network to try an innovation first. In this way, others may (at least partially) substitute their peer's trial period for their own. With this knowledge, vegan advocates could focus resources on seeking out, communicating with, and even sponsoring opinion leaders within targeted demographics. Such an approach could entail traditional marketing tactics like using focus groups, surveys, and strategic word-of-mouth campaigns for finding people who meet pre-determined criteria of social-connectedness and respectability; then either organically or by way of incentives, employing them in the task of trying veganism, communicating about it with their contacts, and documenting the resulting feedback they receive over a period of time.

While this section has focused entirely on a decision-maker's adoption of an innovation, of course, at the decision stage—as with all others in the model—rejection is the other possible outcome (Rogers, 1995). It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss ways to reroute a vegan or animal advocacy-specific communications strategy after an individual or organization has rejected it, but this is a topic that merits more consideration and research within the animal advocacy movement.

Implementation Stage

At the implementation stage, Rogers explains that decision-makers are putting an adopted innovation into practice, transitioning from hypothetical exercise to actual experience. And even though it may appear as though people have taken all the necessary steps to arrive at a sound conclusion and commitment to the innovation, it is at this point that certain quirks and problems of execution can arise (1995).

First, lingering questions about the implementation of an innovation, or doubt about its relative advantages, are likely if the innovation is very dissimilar to previously held customs. As such, the need for further uncertainty reduction is necessary and could be actively undertaken by the change-agent in order to help make people more comfortable with the innovation and move them into the confirmation stage (Rogers, 1995). For many, the adoption of veganism, its practices and ideologies, creates a distinct period of uncertainty precisely because it is contrary to embedded intrapersonal and societal norms. Again, helping to link new adopters into networks of other vegans and animal advocates could prove crucial for getting them the knowledge and support necessary for reifying their decision. While vegan communities certainly exist (offline and especially online), advocates can probably foster this even more by helping facilitate the growth of micro-communities, for instance in rural settings, on college campuses, and so on.

Second is the issue of reinvention, which Rogers defines as "the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption an implementation" (1995, p. 174). This occurs for a number of reasons, such as when adopters still lack full understanding of the innovation or its use, or when they need to simplify the innovation. Regarding veganism in particular, some feel the need to modify the practice to suit personal preferences or changing ideologies, and advocates often encounter the argument that a lifestyle void of animal products feels too extreme to some considering veganism. Aside from matters of practicality, arguably these people have not fully grasped—or do not wish to embrace—the complexity of a full "animal liberation" framework and what they perceive it would entail as it relates to veganism. This can lead to vegetarianism, a reinvention of veganism in a sense, but one that Cooney points out is also oftentimes a first step toward a fully animal-free diet and lifestyle—and a reinvention that creates reduction in animal exploitation nonetheless (2010).

Confirmation Stage

At this final stage in the decision trajectory, individuals recognize the benefits of the innovation, integrate it into existing routines, and may even promote the idea to others (thus becoming change-agents themselves). Throughout this process, Rogers notes "the individual (or some other decision-making unit) seeks reinforcement of the innovation-decision […] to avoid a state of dissonance or reduce it if it occurs" (1995, p. 181). Particularly for issues perceived as contentious and socially abnormal as veganism and the philosophy of animal liberation, many

individuals spend months if not years reaffirming their beliefs.

Certainly there is no lack of information available (particularly in digital format) that is designed to help people bolster their decisions to embrace the principles of veganism. And in a new media age in which people are use online social networks, blogs, etc. as sounding boards for their own internal monologues, the inadvertent effect of this confirmation stage could be the creation of new adopters into change agents and opinion makers, helping to diffuse the ideas further. For instance, when a young woman takes to Facebook to share video of undercover slaughterhouse footage with a message stating "This is why I'm vegan," she is not only confirming the decision in her own mind, but beginning the process of innovation-decision in others by disseminating knowledge-awareness (Rogers, 1995).

The Players: Adopters of Animal Liberation Ideology, Their Networks, & Their Influence

To explicate the role of the social network within diffusion theory, Rogers quotes Elihu Katz (1961): "It is as unthinkable to study diffusion without some knowledge of the social structures in which potential adopters are located as it is to study blood circulation without adequate knowledge of the veins and arteries" (1995, p. 25).

Again, because no known scholarly literature exists identifying and analyzing diffusion of animal liberation rhetoric and practices, a tremendous opportunity for research and strategic targeting on the part of advocacy organizations and grassroots activists remains open. What we do know about how ideas and innovations diffuse throughout populations in a more general context is outlined below, along with observable parallels in the history and current state of animal activism. Organized by adopter categories laid out by Rogers (1995), this section will discuss who adopts innovations, when, and with the help of which network influences.

Innovators

Rogers defines them as the first in their networks to adopt a novel technology or idea, and are marked by characteristics such as willingness to take risks and ties to scientific and other innovator groups. Because they are a minority at only 2.5% of the population on the diffusion S-curve, and because their ideas are untested socially, innovators tend to be seen as radical or eccentric. To that end, while they are groundbreakers in introducing new ideas to their communities, innovators do not have a high level influence on the majority of the population (1995).

In certain social networks, even now, the idea of giving up meat or trying to introduce animal protection

legislation, for instance, is still seen as extreme and foreign. Especially within rural communities where awareness-knowledge of the innovation is low and traditions are steeped in animal use and consumption, vegan or animal activist innovators are often seen as out of touch or not a true part of their communities. This occurrence is exemplified in the Gross and Ryan's landmark study of the diffusion of hybrid corn in Iowa (1943). The innovators in this study were identified as being more cosmopolite (i.e., had ties to Des Moines, the nearest city) and not particularly well respected by their peers (Rogers, 1995).

Early Adopters

While early adopters still exhibit some levels of uncertainty in adopting an innovation, according to Rogers they are—like the innovators with whom they affiliate—more willing than the majority to take risks, and adopt innovations more quickly as a result. What is most notable and useful to change-agents is that early adopters enjoy a position of opinion authority within their communities, helping spread innovations more rapidly by reducing uncertainty for others. They are demonstrably adept at communicating an innovation's advantages and implementation, and are more socially connected than those in most other adoption categories (1995).

On Rogers's diffusion S-curve, early adopters are 13.5% of the population (1995). Unfortunately, we have no statistical data to show how many people in total identify as animal advocates, activists, vegans, and the like. However, in the broadest social and historical sense, those within the collective animal advocacy movement at present could reasonably be considered early adopters because the ideas and impetus behind animal advocacy are not new to society, but most practices associated with it have not yet been widely adopted. Both in regard to the liberation ideology and to specific issue campaigns, modern movement predecessors established the innovation of considering animals' freedom, preservation, and wellbeing. We can trace roots back to the 1990s for anti-fur activism, the 1970s for pet sterilization initiatives, the 1800s for anti-vivisection campaigning—even into antiquity for vegetarian advocacy and philosophies of nonviolence towards animals.

With this assessment in mind, the modern animal rights movement may well be in a position to affect substantial change relatively quickly by modeling the attributes of effective opinion leaders, as well as strategically targeting those with social influence who have not yet adopted the cause or practice being advocated.

Early Majority Adopters

Next on Rogers's curve of innovation adoption is the early majority, a group that brings with it the beginning of the tipping point towards mass adoption. This demographic makes up 34% of the population and decides to adopt an innovation with some hesitance, looking to early adopters for more information. These people are identified as being socially well-connected, but not necessarily in leadership roles (Rogers, 1995).

One specific example we can use for guidance in the animal advocacy movement is the following: high school to college-aged females have been identified as comprising the majority demographic of vegetarians in this country, as well as the demographic most likely to adopt a vegetarian diet (Cooney, 2010). To that end, they will likely make up most of the early adopter and early majority adopter categories in the diffusion of vegetarianism. It follows that these women's network contacts (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, and classmates) could help make up a bulk of the early majority. Because they have proved most receptive to the innovations of vegetarianism (and veganism), as well as its accompanying animal rights rhetoric, certain animal advocacy organizations have already begun strategically messaging these young women. Campaign activists for other causes within the movement would do well to emulate this targeted approach.

Late Majority Adopters

At 34% of the population on the diffusion curve and marked by a higher degree of skepticism than earlier adopters, Rogers tells us the late majority adopters display a much slower awareness-to-adoption rate than their peers. They are somewhat socially isolated and possesses next to no opinion leadership within their networks (1995). In the seminal study of the diffusion of gammanym among physicians, Katz et al. (1957) point out that the more isolated a doctor was from his colleagues, the longer it took him to adopt the new drug innovation; furthermore, the innovation-decision process began later after the introduction of the gammanym than that process began for his more integrated peers.

So what implications do these attributes of the late majority category have for the animal activist community still struggling to reach an early majority? According to the Humane Research Council's Animal Tracker poll (2013), in the U.S. we actually see a late majority have adopted the *opinion* that protecting animals is important when considering all of the survey's touch-point issues:

- circuses or rodeos (58.7%)
- buying clothing (55.7%)

- buying food (70.8%)
- hunting and fishing (62.5)
- dog and horse racing (55.1%)
- voting for a political candidate (56.2%)

Even more interestingly, 68.4% of those polled said they "support the animal protection movement's goal to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and suffering" (2013, p. 11).

Based on this information, we can reasonably assume these people are anywhere from the persuasion stage (contemplation) to the confirmation stage (maintenance and/or advocacy) on the spectrum of actual *practice* adoption (i.e., taking these opinions out to an ideal conclusion of discontinuing consumption or use of animals and then advocating on behalf of animals). But because the poll shows much lower instances of people assessing themselves as "somewhat or very knowledgeable" about the aforementioned issues (2013, p. 9), it also indicates a need for more awareness building. Ideally this knowledge and innovation modeling will come from trusted sources such as advocate opinion-leaders within individual communities. But effectively shifting this late majority of opinion-holders into a late majority of innovation-adopters may also be accomplished by focusing on more comprehensive issues education by way of mass media messaging and strategic outreach, efforts which can be emphasized and more targeted when undertaken by animal activists and advocacy groups.

Laggards

Marked by the longest innovation-decision time, these people are the most socially isolated, hold no opinion leadership, adhere to traditional values, and are often outright resistant to change agents and innovations (Rogers, 1995). In fact, these people may only adopt an innovation out of pressure to conform to societal norms or because of a lack of other options.

For animal activists, laggards represent the group on which the least amount of attention or resources should be spent, as they make up a minority (16%) of the population—and because animal advocacy simply has not reached this phase with regard to any major campaign.

Packaging the Practice: Innovation Attributes for Successful Animal Advocacy Diffusion

Rogers synthesizes the five attributes found to be characteristic of diffusion innovations: relative advantage,

compatibility with existing values and practices, simplicity of use, trialability, and observable results (1995). To that end, when the innovation of a certain campaign or the wider mental framework of animal advocacy and its inherent personal practices (e.g., eating a vegan diet, not wearing fur, not patronizing pet breeders, etc.) is introduced, it is incumbent upon activists to "package" the messaging with attention to those characteristics of successfully diffused innovations.

Relative Advantage

The relative advantage of an innovation generally encapsulates its benefits, but particularly in how the innovation is better than idea or practice it would replace (Rogers, 1995). Presenting the relative advantage of some innovations that benefit animals can be a simple proposition: for instance, veganism can improve physical health [Campbell, 2005]. Protesting vivisection, on the other hand, has no immediate or obvious personal benefit, and is even seen by some as an impediment to the advancement of medical progress—which causes a problem when trying to present such a campaign to potential innovation adopters.

Naturally, animal advocates understand that the causes for which they are trying to recruit new proponents (adopters) are often complicated, contentious, and offer little or no personal gain. (Relative advantage for corporations or institutions adopting animal-friendly innovations can be a different proposition, as discussed above.) Still, strides have been made in effective communications by showing pet owners that sterilizing their animals prevents the inconvenience of unwanted litters; exposing the fact that subsidized animal research can be defunded, leading to taxpayer savings; preserving wildlife ecosystems ensures the continuity of thriving lands; and so on.

And even when there are no tangible advantages to certain innovations pertaining to animal advocacy campaigns, many people can be and certainly have been won on an appeal to their values and the more abstract benefit of aligning their personal beliefs about ending animal suffering with their own daily practices. Like many of the ways in which advocacy is communicated, the best presentation for a moral argument is a proposition that is still heavily debated within the movement.

Compatibility

Described by Rogers as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past

experiences, and needs of potential adopters," (1995, p. 224), the compatibility attribute could actually be seen as presenting a unique challenge for animal advocates. Is the moral consideration of animals really an innovation? Insofar that people do largely accept the idea that undue harm to non-human animals is wrong or unacceptable, we might answer no—this concept is not an innovation because it is already a normative belief.

However, the use of animals for everything from food to experiment subjects to clothing to entertainment is so steeped in our cultural makeup, the practical implications of the ideology are absolutely innovative. Therefore, the real challenge of compatibility presentation lies in bridging the cognitive gap between people's opinions and practices, or taking them from a stage of contemplation to one of action (Francione, 1996).

More specifically, and again borrowing marketing tactics, where challenges exist for explicating the advantages of adopting particular issue innovations, advocates can narrow in on demographics and attempt to frame the issue according to that group's specifically-held values. For instance, by targeting mothers with a vegan campaign that focuses on the dairy industry's systematic practice of forcibly impregnating cows and then taking their calves to be sold for veal slaughter.

Complexity

Rogers describes this as how difficult an adopter perceives an innovation to be in terms of its makeup and implementation (1995). Again, activists face an interesting hurdle because the framework of overall animal liberation is a seemingly simple concept: that non-human animals should not be viewed or treated as the chattel property of humans. This thereby would afford animals the most fundamental right of freedom from the suffering and confinement inherent in imposing our will upon them (Francione, 1996). However, as we see in the Humane Research Council's survey data, people's opinions vary greatly in terms of what it actually *means* to morally consider the interests of animals when making personal decisions (2013).

To that end, as activists are well-aware, this is a comprehensive cognitive, attitudinal, and practical innovation that is extremely complex to most people because animal use and consumption is thoroughly entrenched in personal and social existence. Furthermore, as Bandura explains, an individual's "perceived self-efficacy," or understanding of their own ability to adopt and implement a change, will either bolster or undermine the motivation to make said change (2001). That said, it stands to reason that the best way forward for minimizing the apparent complexity of refusing to exploit animals and making people more confident in their ability to put that belief into

practice would be to emphasize specific smaller changes that can be made toward an overarching framework of individual (and eventually societal) abstinence from animal exploitation. This is something the animal liberation movement has been both effective and self-defeating at doing when advocating for animals, depending on how one view its overall public relations and outreach communications management.

On a more practical level, it is becoming easier for activists to give potential adopters tangible evidence that adopting an animal-free life is indeed simple and doable, due to the advent of conscientious consumerism. The relative ubiquity and affordability of vegan foods, cruelty-free cosmetics, animal-free entertainment, and the like is increasing all the time.

Trialability

This feature of innovations is the perceived ability of a new idea or practice to be "tried on" for a limited time by the adopter, and as Rogers notes, "trialability is positively related to its rate of adoption" (1995, p. 243). In relation to animal advocacy issues, veganism is probably the best innovation for which to set up a defined trial period, a tactic we see implemented often in campaigns like Meatless Mondays. Some campaigns may simply ask a person to opt out of practices such as attending circuses or buying fur; others have a low barrier to entry, such as signing a petition to enact animal protection legislation; and the most difficult campaign "asks" are those that encourage a person to get personally involved by way of attending a protest or handing out leaflets—and none of these present trial periods.

But getting involved in single-issue animal advocacy campaigns—to whatever degree: protesting, calling a legislator, adopting instead of buying a pet—can be viewed as trials in themselves. These actions, when presented within the context of a larger cause, can be opportunities for individuals to test the waters of animal activism. Indeed, they oftentimes are. People who begin by petitioning against dogfighting wind up as frontline protestors against the fur industry; those who got involved with animal rights by leafleting against vivisection become animal sanctuary operators; and many who start by adopting a vegetarian diet transition into ethically motivated vegans who actively educate others on the merits of the lifestyle and ideology. Encouraging more of these trials is obviously one way for activists to bring new people to the cause.

Observable Results

Generalization 6-5 of Rogers's attributes of innovations summary indicates that the more observable the

results of an innovation within a social network, the more likely it is to be successfully diffused throughout that network (1995). Activists can often show people demonstrable results stemming from campaign-specific innovation adoption. For instance, adopting a vegan diet may lead to weight loss and other health benefits; campaigning against horse-drawn carriages can help to get them banned in a city; and contacting lawmakers is a proven effective route for enacting better animal protection legislation.

However, showing the skeptical majority of people substantial, tangible results of adopting an ideological stance against animal exploitation as a whole is nearly impossible. More animals than ever are being killed annually as a result of population growth, globalized consumption practices, industrialization of animal research, commodification of exotic animals, and weak protection laws in many parts of the world. It can look like a Sisyphean task to advocate for animal lives, and a pointless endeavor to adopt new personal habits on their behalf.

But this would negate what leads so many to adopt the "innovation of animal liberation." That is, firstly, the very real and observable animals who will be spared suffering and death by adopting veganism, fighting industries of exploitation, and saving individual animal lives as often as possible. Secondly, there is the intangible, entirely personal benefit inherent in aligning practices with beliefs, or "walking the walk." This kind of result—a conviction of beliefs, passion for a cause, and assuredness of purpose—is certainly observable in change agent animal activists, and is often pointed out by others within their social circles. It is this confident modeling of what is personally gained by refusing to participate in the exploitation of animals that may not only be one of activists' best tools for making observable the results of adopting animal liberation ideology, but also for communicating the objective—the innovation—as a whole.

Conclusion

In disseminating the message of animal liberation, activists first ask and influence people to change (or align) their beliefs and practices. In so doing, because it takes an adoption of new principles and mental framing of the world, activists naturally (and oftentimes inadvertently) create new animal advocates who go on to further diffuse the innovation, attempting to persuade their own networks, as well as larger hegemonic ones. Animal activism and is malleable to diffusion. And its principles, therefore, are not only possible and ready for strategic use within activism, but are already inherently at work. Activists are ultimately asking people to shift their own intrapersonal paradigms of interspecies relationships in order to facilitate a much broader paradigm shift that would lead to the end of animal

use for human gain. It is an incredibly difficult proposition, but one that activists feel is urgently necessary.

Perhaps some of the best advice to any change agent, but activists under a moral pressure in particular, comes from Simon Sinek in his enormously popular TEDTalk encompassing diffusion theory: “People don’t buy what you do; people buy why you do it.” Understanding, analyzing, and modeling the research of scholars can certainly help develop good strategy. But keeping the core philosophy of animal freedom at the heart of advocacy messages is the one approach that has built an ever-growing animal activism movement to being with.

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