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Globalization Veganism for Health Abolitionist
Grand Narrative

VEGAN ADVOCACY IN INDIA

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

1

LITERATURE REVIEW

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The study aims to equip advocates for veganism in India with the data and insights necessary to accelerate and amplify the impact of vegan advocacy efforts. The study comprises a *Literature Review*, a *Content Analysis of Social Media*, and a *Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)* on dietary practices with a focus on veganism.

This *Literature Review* pulls together the “state of knowledge” on the socio-cultural and psychological factors impacting dietary patterns in India with a view to identifying key drivers to, and barriers for, veg*nism. It also serves to inform the next two phases of the project. I thank Krishnanunni Hari for a rich and exhaustive review, and Neha Gupta for her valuable contributions towards finalizing the report.

I am grateful to the study’s advisors Dr. Krithika Srinivasan, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Edinburgh, and Dr. Usha Raman, Professor, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, who despite their packed schedules made the time to provide valuable guidance. My heartfelt thanks to Anjali Gopalan of All Creatures Great and Small (ACGS) for the support extended to execute this project.

I dedicate this project to the thousands of animal rights activists in India, foot soldiers and leaders alike. Undeterred by challenges of time and resources, even sometimes in the face of hostility and intimidation by industry behemoths, they continue to pound the streets (and the Internet) to visibilize the genocide of animals, and speak truth to power.

May we realize our vision for a gentler and kinder world, one in which all sentient beings enjoy lives of freedom, equality and dignity.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACGS	–	All Creatures Great and Small
ABFS	–	Animal Based Food Systems
AMUL	–	Anand Milk Union Limited (a dairy cooperative in India)
APA	–	American Psychological Association
AR	–	Animal Rights
AWO	–	Animal Welfare Organizations
BJP	–	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRIC	–	Brazil, Russia, India, China
CO	–	Conscientious Omnivores
eWOM	–	Electronic Word of Mouth
FIAPO	–	Federation of Indian Animals Protection Organizations
FSSAI	–	Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
GMO	–	Genetically Modified Organism
KAP	–	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
KFC	–	Kentucky Fried Chicken
LR	–	Literature Review
MAQ	–	Meat Attachment Questionnaire
MRD	–	Meat-Reduced Diets
NFHS	–	National Family Health Survey
NGO	–	Non-Governmental Organization
NSSO	–	National Sample Survey Organisation
PETA	–	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PMC	–	Processed Meat Consumption
RMC	–	Red Meat Consumption
SLT	–	Social Learning Theory
SRS	–	Sample Registration System (part of the Census of India)
UK	–	United Kingdom
Veg*n	–	Vegetarian and/or Vegan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Literature Review* of about 100 papers represents the first phase of a larger exploratory study titled *Vegan Advocacy in India*. The goal of the overall study is to equip advocates for veganism in India with the necessary data and insights to enhance the design of their advocacy campaigns for greater acceleration and impact.

Towards this end, this review outlines the “state of knowledge” (globally and with specific reference to India) on the socio-cultural and psychological factors influencing dietary choices, with a focus on veg*nism (a term to denote vegetarianism and/or veganism). The review also serves to inform the design of the next two phases of the study—namely the *Content Analysis of Social Media*, and the *Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)*.

The review includes papers from peer-reviewed journals and grey literature, straddles multiple disciplines, theoretical perspectives, and research methodologies. Several of the studies are based in the west, and add value to the review because of their focus on behavior change and psychological factors which can provide important pointers for work in India. In contrast, the India studies are mostly sociological analyses of dietary patterns in the country, barring less than a handful of KAP studies focused on vegetarianism.

Outlined below are the key findings and recommendations that emerged from the review.

HOW INDIA EATS – DIETARY PATTERNS AND FACTORS

The review notes upfront that the term “vegetarian” in India carries connotations that are vastly different from the west, where vegetarianism is mostly an individual choice, unlike in India where it is largely predetermined by religion and caste at birth. “Upper-caste”-based lacto-vegetarianism is driven by religious notions of “purity” among Hindu cultural elites, with meat-eating (especially beef) being stigmatized. Recent years have witnessed conservative forces trying to impose vegetarian-only diets in public spaces and institutions, alongside attacks on Dalits and religious minorities for transporting cattle or possessing beef. Given its regressive connotations, progressive groups have distanced themselves from vegetarianism, and instead, celebrate the right of minority groups to determine their personal dietary choices. In the process, meat has started to occupy a democratic image, and any constructive discourse on animal and ecological vulnerability are rendered invisible.

Contrary to general perception, India is predominantly omnivorous. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 (2021) only 27–29% of the population is vegetarian. An overwhelming 83.4% of men and 70.6% of women in the 15–49 age group eat meat. Data clearly indicates that consumption of animal-derived products are on an upward swing: between NFHS-4 (2017) and NFHS-5 the proportion of men aged 15–49 who have never consumed meat (defined as chicken, meat or fish) fell by 5 percentage points from 21.6% to 16.6 %. Alongside, animal agriculture in the country has intensified, with deleterious consequences for animals, the environment and human health. Between 2007 and 2017 alone, production of milk increased by 63% (preceded by a 240% increase between 1970 and 2008), and chicken (the most popular meat in the country) by 114%. India is the leading producer of milk globally, the third largest exporter of beef, and has the highest cattle population anywhere in the world.

Alongside, a number of factors have contributed to the increasing consumption of meat – a loosening of traditional norms, the valorization of animal-based protein, the industrialization

of meat production which make for affordable products and the mushrooming of aspirational fast-food outlets. In addition, lines are being blurred between what qualifies as “vegetarian” and “non-vegetarian,” with an increasing number of people, even from culturally vegetarian families, embracing the consumption of meat and eggs. However, ideological dominance of cultural vegetarianism means that meat-eating, especially beef, is hugely under-reported, and given the country’s collectivist culture, results in “frontstage” behaviors of meat abstinence while meat is consumed “backstage.” Within this complex, divisive and multi-layered reality defining India, diets continue to be negotiated between the axes of choice and social norms, and shift with age, gender, space and reference groups.

Milk, in sharp contrast to meat, occupies a pure and sacred place thanks to the cow’s status as a mother figure in Hindu mythology. In addition, India’s dairy cooperative movement, which is credited with lifting millions out of poverty – and malnutrition – has resulted in the transformation of milk into an all-powerful symbol of progress, development and even nationhood. With such metaphoric loading, milk is generally impervious to political debates.

It is against the backdrop that vegan advocacy operates in India.

KEY DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR VEGANISM

“Speciesism” serves as a fundamental starting point for any discussion on dietary patterns. Endorsement of speciesism was found to be a robust predictor for meat consumption. Closely related to the idea of speciesism is the deeply-ingrained belief in the **“4Ns”**— that meat is “Natural,” “Normal,” “Necessary” and “Nice.” The omniscience of dairy across regions, religions and castes in India means that milk is to India what meat is to the west. In effect, this encapsulates the core barriers to vegan adoption.

Gender is a key determinant in dietary choices globally and in India. Women were found to be more inclined than men towards meat-abstinence and/or meat reduction. They displayed a greater avoidance of meats, especially red meats, and scored significantly higher for “meat disgust.” In contrast, men scored higher on “meat attachment” and recorded higher endorsement of the 4Ns. Meat consumption among women in India is lower than that of men by almost 13% (NFHS -5, 2021), though meat avoidance is mediated by several factors such as gender disparities, religious and familial norms, rather than a concern for animals per se.

Normalizing and sustaining meat-eating: The review yielded rich evidence pointing to the psychological processes involved in the act of eating meat, starting with “meat ambivalence” and “meat paradox,” the resulting cognitive dissonance, and the many psychological processes that come into play to resolve this dissonance and enable the individual to eat meat. They include moral disengagement, rationalizing; objectifying and “dementing” animals; religious, taste and hierarchical justifications; rejecting information aimed at discouraging meat-eating, and disassociation through language to render living animals into food products.

Vegan advocacy aims to break down these drivers for carnism (which act as barriers for vegan adoption) through the use of **three key frames, namely concern for animal rights and welfare, environmental sustainability** (both considered as “altruistic” motivations) **and health** (an egoistic motivation).

Within the animal rights frame, key strategies include **anthropomorphizing, moral shock, and amplifying cognitive dissonance** to persuade behavior change towards veg*nism. Within anthropomorphism, perceived animal intelligence was the leading motivator for “meat disgust,” followed by appearance and lastly, the capacity to suffer. While the relative

effectiveness of these strategies may vary across different settings, caution on context and framing is especially urged in the case of moral shock, given the risk of desensitization and backlash, even while it may prove useful in strengthening the perception of wrongdoing by others (such as animal-processing industries) and mobilizing funds for welfare reform.

Whether India's long **history of vegetarianism stems from a genuine concern for animals is debatable**. Within the limited evidence available, one study found that Indians were less likely to give pro-animal responses than respondents in Brazil and China. Only 52% would back a law for humane treatment of farmed animals, and one in five (18%) would oppose such a law (the highest among all BRIC nations, namely Brazil, Russia, India and China). However, another study yielded sharply contradictory findings with 90% of vegetarians and 65% non-vegetarian respondents supporting strong animal welfare laws and their enforcement.

Such contradictions are even more salient in the case of health, which appears to be both a driver and a deterrent for veg*nism. Drawing from the perceived essentiality of meat as captured by the 4Ns, western studies suggest that concerns about nutritional deficiencies, lack of knowledge on veg*n cooking and material substitution were some key perception barriers for veg*nism. One India-based study found that more than half (54%) non-vegetarian participants considered vegetarianism to be healthier; yet, they consumed meat and fish mostly based on taste and perception of a balanced diet. Another study indicated that vegetarian food was seen as tasty, healthy, strength-giving and pure by more than 85% of the sample, even as one-third disagreed that plant-based protein is better than animal protein.

Globally, evidence was similarly divided in the case of **environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation** as an argument for veg*nism. Basic awareness of the link between animal agriculture and its consequences on the environment was low; however, providing relevant information served to increase the levels of concern among participants in one study. Higher frequency of meat-eating was synonymous with lower perception of the environmental benefit of meat reduction, and the sense of “self-efficacy” for quitting meat was much lower than for other climate mitigation options.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING VEGAN ADVOCACY

While increasing awareness of the “**why**” of **veganism is important, equally important is the “how to” of veganism**, given high relapse rates and other related challenges. For this, it is crucial to shift the perception of veganism as an elitist, expensive and complicated lifestyle and present it instead as a practical, normal and doable everyday practice. Focusing on recipe creativity and material substitution is important, as is ensuring a balanced regimen to avoid potential deficiencies, and highlighting the health, nutritive and disease-reversal benefits of vegan diets.

Vegan advocacy based on **environmental concerns** would do well to simplify the complex information on the linkages between animal agriculture and environmental sustainability and climate change. Using multiple frames starting with the immediate and tangible (such as family and community) through to the larger environment will help make the issues less remote, and facilitate taking personal responsibility together with holding government, policymakers and industry more accountable. Providing product-specific carbon footprint information will also facilitate more mindful and ethical consumerism.

The review found evidence on the role of “**social modelling**” through celebrities for veganism in the west. Studies reveal how veganism moved from being perceived as a stigmatized political fringe movement to a normalized, depoliticized consumptive lifestyle of “healthism” and “kindness” due to media and celebrity-driven promotion. While celebrity engagement may increase visibility and recall of the issue, various other factors mediate the effectiveness of this strategy such as celebrity profile and fit with the issue. While social modelling can provide “top down” support for veganism, **building and maintaining networks** from the bottom-up is equally crucial in mobilizing new members and expanding the movement, providing support to navigate the complexity of familial and social relationships, maintaining a vegan lifestyle, and effectively dealing with potential vegan stigma.

In terms of **target audiences and appeals**, meta-analyses of quantitative and qualitative studies suggests that younger populations are more persuaded by moral and environmental reasons to be veg*n, while health concerns seem to be a primary motivator for those in the 41–60 age group. It is pertinent to note that this older age group in India also typically responds to religious and spiritual appeals for vegetarianism, which could be extended to a more secular, inclusive veganism. Women both in the west and in India are more inclined to meat abstinence and/or reduction, but the drivers for this behavior can vary. It is also important to note that among those who had already turned veg*n (mostly younger age groups), concern for animals and the environment emerged as primary motivators.

Some scholars are of the view that ultimately veganism will be **market-driven, and should involve branding, marketing and labelling** that can help consumers be more mindful and overcome automatic, routine purchasing decisions. The growing movement for “**ethical foods**” and food safety presents an opportunity to integrate vegan concerns, and should be complemented with consumer education and advocacy for certification and labelling that is transparent and credible. Recent research in India indicates **receptivity toward both cultured or “clean meat” as well as plant-based meats**, especially among affluent urban consumers – offering a beacon of hope of a tide that is turning.

Data suggests that in collectivist cultural contexts such as India, social norms and the approval of influential others play a crucial role in determining dietary choices. In this context, **shaping social norms** that support responsible and ethical consumerism can persuade more ethically-conscious consumers to make purchasing decisions that are more in tune with their **self-image**. This can be complemented by **choice architecture and “nudges”** at sites of purchase and consumption that can subtly make vegan products the default choice, without necessarily eliminating non-vegan options altogether – a recommendation that may be especially pertinent for vegan outreach with institutions such as companies, schools and colleges.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

While the review yields some important insights, the divergent (at times, even contradictory) findings point to the complexity of studying dietary habits globally and in India. One of the core limitations of this review is the preponderance of behavior change studies that are set in the west, which may have limited applicability in India given its vastly differing socio-cultural context. To cite some examples, many KAP studies focused on abstinence/reduction of red meat consumption, but in India the most popular meat is chicken, with wide cultural acceptability. In addition, the conflation of vegetarianism with religion, caste and majoritarian ideology, the stigmatization of meat (especially beef) alongside the veneration

of dairy present contextual challenges for vegan advocacy in India. The paucity of KAP studies (less than a handful focused on vegetarianism) further reiterates the way forward.

It is precisely in responding to these socio-cultural specificities in India that new pathways can open up for behavior change research to support vegan advocacy. This could take the form of mixed-methodology formative KAP research that incorporates disaggregated information for socio-cultural variables such as religion, age, income etc., as well as campaign pretesting and impact evaluations. Such research will necessarily have to respond to areas of inquiry such as: the knowledge levels of the violence intrinsic to animal agriculture (including dairy), and its links to human health and climate change; attitudes of speciesism; awareness and perception of veganism overall and plant-based substitutes, and how they might impact intentions to adopt veganism. An equally important area of inquiry is the construct of personal identity in India, especially within the current climate of opposing forces of conservatism and progressiveness, and how that may relate to the idea of veganism, since this will throw light on segmentation of audiences more inclined towards veganism. It is only in seeking answers to such questions that veganism can be re-imagined, re-framed and re-positioned in a manner that is secular and intersectional, can transcend polarized debates, and pulls back focus on holistic, sustainable living—one that is mindful of animals, marginalized populations, and the environment as a whole.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This *Literature Review* (LR) of over 100 papers represents the first phase of a larger exploratory study titled *Vegan Advocacy in India*. The overall goal of the study is to equip vegan advocates in India with the data and insights to enhance the design of their advocacy campaigns for greater acceleration and impact.

Towards this end, this review aims to outline the “state of knowledge” on socio-cultural and psychological factors that impact dietary patterns globally and in India with specific reference to veg*nism (a term that denotes vegetarianism and veganism). In addition, it serves to inform the next two phases of the overall study, namely the *Content Analysis of Social Media* and the public *Survey of Knowledge Attitudes and Practices*.

Why the focus on veganism? There is substantive evidence that if we are to avert a climate catastrophe one of the key action areas is to adopt a vegan diet, along with other mitigation measures. The UN estimates that about 70 billion land animals are slaughtered as food every year. Yet, this issue has been sidelined and sidestepped. Even in India, historically considered (inaccurately, as this review details) a largely vegetarian country, consumption of animal-derived products has been on an upswing especially over the last many years, with all its deleterious consequences for billions of animals, human and planetary health.

Vegan advocacy led mostly by animal rights groups has increasingly been engaged in campaigns to promote veganism, but little is known about the contexts that inform these campaigns, nor the impacts they generate. Dietary patterns in India are anchored in socio-cultural specificities that are of significant consequence; any attempt to influence normative or behavioral changes towards veganism must necessarily integrate an understanding of these specificities as well as particular social and behavior change frameworks and models that might hold resonance within them. This LR, therefore, attempt to distil the evidence to facilitate this understanding.

METHODOLOGY

The material for this LR was obtained from multiple sources using a variety of methods. Primarily, the Google Scholar search engine was used to explore the basic terrain of existing research on attitudes to meat-based and plant-based diets, the complexities of the same in India, and related constructs and strategies such as cognitive dissonance, moral shock and anthropomorphism. Different combinations of key search-words were used to ensure that most articles of significance were touched by the survey. The review was aided by an initial bibliographical analysis which provided a clear pathway to the wider landscape of research and data on this interdisciplinary subject.

The same set of search-words used for academic articles were also used to find non-academic grey literature. News media content on this subject was excluded from the scope of this review, though it does inform the overall review. Papers were accessed from a wide range of journals such as *Appetite*, *Sustainability*, *Animals*, *International Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, *Sociological Forum*, *Environmental Communication*, etc., as well as digital platforms for animal studies such as Faunalytics. The review straddles multiple disciplines—anthropology, sociology, psychology, and behavioral sciences, and represents different theoretical perspectives (nutrition model, self-

determination, protection motivation theory, theory of planned behavior, etc.). Research methodologies include survey, experiments, meta-analysis, cross-cultural, and comparative, among others.

A wide variety of organizations generated the research, including government agencies, academia and NGOs. A significant number of studies, especially those focused on cognitive and behavioral change, were from western contexts, offering good pointers for research in India, and offset by a good representation of sociological studies from India.

The data collection for the *LR* was conducted between February and April 2021.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the most important findings of each reviewed paper.

Each paper can be identified by the last name of the first author and year of publication in brackets, at the start of each paper summary, and at the end of the document, under “References,” which also provides the full title of the relevant paper. Numbers in brackets within the summary of a particular paper correspond to the page number of the original study in which a particular reference can be found. Secondary references cited are footnoted at the bottom of the pages where they appear.

CHAPTER II. HOW INDIA EATS

Contrary to the general perception of India being a predominantly vegetarian nation, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 notes that **vegetarianism is confined to a mere 27–29% of the population**. While per capita consumption of meat and poultry products is relatively low, consumption figures hide the huge volume of meat, eggs, and dairy that is actually produced in the country. **India is the leading producer of milk globally, as well as the leading exporter of beef** (along with Brazil).

Consumption of meat and dairy has increased significantly in recent times, with the increase especially marked in the last six years. For example, the percentage of men who have never tasted meat has declined by 5 percentage points from 21.6% (NFHS-4, 2017)¹ to 16.6% (NFHS-5, 2021), while the percentage of women who never consumed non-vegetarian food remained somewhat the same (29.9% in NFHS-4 to 29.4% in NFHS-5). As many as 83.4% of men and 70.6% of women in the 15–49 age group were non-vegetarian.

The report of the 68th National Sample Survey (NSSO, 2012) Round on “Household Consumption of Various Goods and Services in India,” shows that the consumption of milk products and meat is not vastly different in urban and rural areas, although higher in urban India.

- Milk and milk products accounted for 8% of consumer expenditure in rural India and 7% in urban India. The group “egg, fish and meat,” on the other hand, had a share of 4.8% in rural and 3.7% in urban consumer expenditure.
- Urban per capita consumption levels, as well as frequency of consumption, were higher than rural in case of all animal protein foods except for fish, which had a slightly higher rural consumption.
- While the per capita consumption of eggs was 1.94 per month (0.45 per week) in rural India and 3.18 (0.74 per week) in urban India, the percentage of households reporting consumption of eggs during a 7-day period was 29.2% in rural and 37.6% in urban India.
- Between 2004–05 and 2011–12, estimated per capita consumption of “milk: liquid” increased by about 470 ml per month in rural India and 315 ml per month in urban India. The proportion of households reporting consumption of “milk: liquid” in the last 30 days rose by nearly seven percentage points over this 7-year period while the proportion of urban households reporting consumption remained the same.

The Sample Registration System (SRS) Baseline Survey of 2014 (Office of the Registrar General, India, 2016) also provides data on the prevalence of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism in the country.

- Only 30% in the “General category” (almost equally distributed between both sexes) were vegetarian while 69% were non-vegetarian, with the proportion of men slightly higher than women. Only 22–24% among SCs and STs were vegetarian, while 75–77% were non-vegetarian, with a 1–2% higher proportion of men than women.
- Overall, 28–29% population in the country were vegetarian, while 70–71% were non-vegetarian. The highest percentage of vegetarians were in the states of Rajasthan,

¹ The NFHS is a large-scale survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout the country.

Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab (male- 60–73%; female- 61–76%), with women constituting 2–3% of more vegetarians than men. The lowest percentage of vegetarians were in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal (1.2–3.7%, including male and female).

- Amongst all age groups, around 70% were non-vegetarian (of this, women above 60 who were non-vegetarian is 3% lower than men in rural areas and 4% lower in urban areas). Vegetarians make up only 27–29% in all age groups, with the highest percentage being among women older than 60 living in rural areas (32%) and in urban areas (33%).

The above figures indicate clearly that majority of Indians are not vegetarian, and this applies to both urban and rural India. The NSS and SRS Baseline Survey data have been problematized and interpreted in creative ways by scholars to highlight the undercurrents of caste, religion, and politics in the dietary patterns and behaviors of the Indian population. Some key findings and readings are outlined below.

II A. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF MEAT CONSUMPTION IN INDIA

Due to religious prohibition on eating certain kinds of meat and the associated caste hierarchies of purity and pollution, the question of **meat-eating is inseparable from issues of religious nationalism, minority rights, and social mobility**. In a context where different authority figures aggressively push for vegetarianism— in reality a minority diet in the country— meat attains new and counter-normative meanings. The meaning of meat eating is important for animal rights advocates because of the violence inflicted on animals abused in the name of food. This is a fact often missed by those who try to ban meat and those who celebrate meat as an act of protest. A cross-section of this difficult area of scholarship and politics is outlined below.

1, CASTE POLITICS OF MEAT AND VEGETARIANISM

Sathyamala (2018), attempts to contextualize **beef-eating as a subversive act in response to the caste structure that legitimizes vegetarianism as morally superior**. In a qualitative, analytical paper, which also uses ethnographic fieldwork, the author demonstrates how beef becomes a transgressive food, the consumption of which particularly among the untouchables, serves as a marker of identity which challenges upper caste hegemony (p.1).

- Citing from existing research, the author states how “non-veg” is vegetarian India’s neologism that reinforces the normative status of vegetarianism. It renders meat nameless by reducing it to a depleted “non-” of “vegetables”. The cow slaughter ban imposes the dietary norm of a minority of the population on all citizens—termed by other scholars as “food fascism” and “culinary apartheid.” Combined with the beef ban are efforts to close down abattoirs, apparently for not complying with regulations, or to shut them down during Hindu religious festivals (pp. 2, 3).
- According to social reformer and one of the chief architects of the Constitution of India, Dr. Ambedkar, Hindus were divided into vegetarians and flesh-eaters, and more importantly, into those who ate cow flesh and those who did not. A further dividing line was between those who ate freshly-slaughtered meat and those who ate carrion (this distinction no longer holds in contemporary times due to refrigeration), with the

“untouchables” falling into the latter category, as they, living in abject poverty, were dependent on doles of upper castes and were forced to remove dead cattle.

- In an ethnographic study carried out in a village in Tamil Nadu (a state with 90% of its population consuming a non-vegetarian diet), Sathyamala finds that the market-induced disappearance of buffalo herds from households in the village has robbed it of necessary nutrition. Almost the entire village comprising mixed castes reported the consumption of all flesh foods, including beef, although sometimes clandestinely. It however, reported meat consumption has come down due to low caste associations of meat and its increasing price and non-availability (p. 8).
- Sathyamala states that Hindu vegetarianism is grounded not in concern for animals but in the belief that eating meat is polluting, according to the conservative ethics of purity. In an upper caste Hindu context, to talk of vegetarianism is “to talk of caste by other means,” she argues. **To impose a code against meat-eating in general and beef-eating in particular is to “smuggle casteism through the backdoor”** (p. 9). In such a scenario, claiming beef-eating as a part of one’s self-identity becomes an assertive political project that speaks of caste on its own terms.

Natarajan and Jacob (2018) offer a re-interpretive meta-analysis of different national surveys on what India eats in order to gain clarity on the proportion of vegetarians and meat-eaters among different religions and castes. Such an intervention is in order, the authors argue, as the simultaneous hegemony of vegetarianism and the stigmatization of beef ensures that a cautionary note is needed when figuring out what India eats: **any self-reported data on food habits are likely overestimations of vegetarianism and underestimations of meat in the diet** (p. 55). Other important findings in their paper are:

- The extent of overall vegetarianism is much lower than what common claims and stereotypes suggest (no more than 30% and more realistically closer to 20% of the population).
- The extent of overall beef-eating is much more than common claims and stereotypes suggest (at least about 7% but more realistically closer to 15% of the population).
- There exists considerable variation of food habits across scale, region, group, class, and gender, each complicating generalized characterizations of India.
- The considerable gender and spatial variations within social groups ensure that almost no group-specific claims about food practices can really pass muster.
- There is evidence of cultural-political pressures affecting reported and actual food habits, so that any reported data need to account for the bias of under-reporting of meat and beef and over-reporting of vegetarian diet (hence, the need to provincialize vegetarianism).

2. MEAT AND RELIGION

Filippini and Srinivasan (2018) provide meta-analysis of data from a pre-existing national survey to study the **impact of religious participation, globalization and social interactions on meat consumption in India**. They found that Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains are less likely to consume meat, but higher incomes are associated with higher probabilities of eating meat. Larger households, richer ones, refrigerator-owning households, and those situated in urban areas are more likely to eat meat. Higher prices decrease the likelihood of

eating meat. Similarly, owning a communication device and regularly using sources of media point to more chances of eating meat (pp. 20–24).

In her general analysis of human-animal relations in India, [Berti \(2019\)](#) observes that the court of law and the system of precedence that it embodies represent a specific forum in which battles on animal issues take place between activists, lawyers, and judges. Further:

- The animal welfare discourse portrays animals as “victims,” sensitive beings who should not be harmed or treated cruelly. The animal welfare movement in India, which was set up in the colonial period, is influenced by philosophical and religious ideas from the West, some of which in turn were influenced by Indian religious thought (p. 2). The colonial administration also imported dilemmas to India, one of which was to bring legislation to protect animals from cruelty, while at the same time massively exploiting them in war and economic enterprises (p. 3).
- An animal welfare consciousness was clothed in the religious discourse of European missionaries and later in a spiritual garb by Swami Vivekananda who propounded the idea of universal oneness against caste distinctions. Chinny Krishna, like his predecessor Rukmini Devi Arundale², posited the idea of communality between humans and animals which is grounded in a common physiological ability to feel pain. A Benthamian scientific rationality is mixed here with Indian religious specificity (characterized by ahimsa and karma) (pp. 5, 6).
- Animal rights are being advocated by organizations from both traditional and more recent rights-based positions. For example, Buddhist animal rights NGOs advocate for vegetarianism/veganism among the Tibetan Diaspora of Dehradun city to promote a “Green Tibetan Buddhist cultural identity” grounded in the idea of compassion and non-violence which are essential teachings of their faith (p. 8). Animal rights organizations such as the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) derive from a Western-initiated fight for non-human animal personhood as well as from India’s tradition of animal welfare (p. 13).

[Srinivasan and Rao \(2015\)](#) and [Srinivasan \(2021\)](#) discuss how social science scholarship on animal-based food systems (ABFS) in India has remained centered on the cultural roots of vegetarianism, focusing mainly around the politics of cow-slaughter and the consumption of meat and eggs, and this has rendered “debates on animal and ecological vulnerability invisible.”

A long-standing identification of vegetarianism as an upper-caste Hindu practice based on logics of purity and pollution has associated plant-based diets negatively with conservative or politically-regressive thinking. In this context, environmentalists, social scientists and progressive-minded citizens distance themselves from vegetarian ideology and even support meat-eating. **Any articulation of concern for the animals suffering in the meat industry is interpreted as a manifestation of caste and religious politics** and a violation of the eating cultures and livelihoods of minority communities.

The right to **meat-eating is also defended because it is strongly perceived as a nutritional necessity** in a country where access and affordability to basic nutrition has been unequally distributed among the population. Further, livestock farming is seen as integral

² Dr. Chinny Krishna first introduced the animal birth control program for street dogs, and is co-founder of Blue Cross India. Rukmini Devi (1904-1986), a dancer, parliamentarian and activist for animal welfare, was the chief force behind the formulation and legal acceptance of the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals Act in 1960, laying the initial grounds for animal welfare in India.

to the economic security of farmers, in particular small-scale or even home-based livestock farmers who are considered the mainstay of the economy. Given this backdrop the impact of ABFS and of commercial livestock farming on social, ecological, and animal wellbeing have remained unaddressed (Srinivasan, 2021).

Srinivasan points out that there has been a steady expansion of high-productivity commercial animal farming and increasing levels of meat, egg and dairy consumption in recent years. The commoditization, intensification, and **expansion of animal agriculture is not inhibited by socio-religious barriers, but has simply worked around it**. There is intense growth in sectors of dairy, poultry and fisheries, none of which are subject to religious prohibitions. The Hindu taboo on beef sourced from cows is also circumvented by the mechanism of export (of meat from dairy buffalo and cattle), or transferring “unproductive” cows and unwanted males to states in India where slaughter is permitted. Affective bonds and a feeling of kinship with animals, including cows, co-exist along with animal husbandry. Srinivasan describes how the violence of dairy and slaughter is also made possible by a division of labor wherein “risky, tedious, and low-status tasks are usually carried out by socially marginal communities,” (p. 8) and this vulnerability of workers has worsened with commercialization.

While the livestock and meat sectors may still have significant small and medium farms, these are now tied into an increasingly-corporatized production which focuses on techno-scientific husbandry and intensified productivity geared towards high-value markets. This commoditization creates fractures between the spheres of production and consumption, disrupting any positive human-animal relations that small-scale farms may have laid claim to. “Commoditization of farmed animals is shaped by state, multilateral, and corporate institutions, science, legal and regulatory regimes, and market relations, and justified with narratives of food security, livelihoods, economic growth, and global trade,” argues Srinivasan (2021, p.4). These processes have also displaced small-scale farmers who could not survive the change, hence support for modern animal-farming in the name of farmer welfare needs further questioning.

The defense of meat-eating practices as a source of nutrition for the masses needs to be corrected with more research on the “food-vs-feed conflict” – i.e., how intensified animal agriculture has caused large proportions of land being diverted entirely to the production of feed and cultivated fodder, and increasing costs for these. This very land could instead have provided cheaper and direct nutrition to the masses via traditional pulses, grains and cereals. Not to mention how the new mechanized farms have become local zones of pollution.

3. FOOD TRANSITION

Dietary patterns and their meanings have been changing in the past decades in India. In their **analysis of nutrition transition** literature, [Fourat and Lepiller \(2017\)](#) examine the phenomenon of nutrition transition in India and France from an economic, nutritional as well as socio-anthropological perspective.

- The authors cite Popkin’s Nutrition Transition Model which consists of five nutritional stages over time: 1) collecting food (diet comprised of plant-based food and game meat); 2) famine (diet composed of cereals); 3) receding famine (higher calorie intake yet mostly cereal-based low variety diet with higher animal food consumption); 4) degenerative diseases (high fat intake, especially from animal sources and processed foods); and 5) behavioral change (less fat and processed foods; more carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables) (p. 43).

- Compared to other developing countries, India consumes six times less meat and 4.5 times fewer eggs but 30% more milk (p. 47). However, between 1988 and 2010 the Indian yearly per capita consumption of meat doubled to 2.5 kg in rural India and has multiplied by 1.5 in urban areas (3.9 kg per year in 2010); the corresponding figures for milk are 50 liters for rural (increase of 30%) and 64 liters per year for urban areas (increase of 50%).
- A study of 10–19-year-old girls in Lucknow region finds that meat-eating is highest in rural areas, followed by slums and then urban areas. Eggetarian diets are most common in slums, followed by rural and then urban areas. This data breaks the notion that meat-eating is more prevalent in cities due to exposure and availability, suggesting instead the influence of caste on diets (p. 48).
- They cite previous research which examines the increasing pressure on the environment and the sustainability issues of the burgeoning dairy industry in India since the 1980s. Lacto- and ovo-vegetarian diets cause less greenhouse gas emissions than chicken-only and mutton-only non-vegetarian diets, but cause more emissions than vegetarian diets. Animal source foods also exert pressure on cereal and pulse prices, adversely impacting food security in the context of severe competition between food and feed (p. 45).
- As the “food model” of India as a whole prohibits the slaughter and consumption of cows, and is negatively predisposed towards meat eating, this has led to the development of a wide range of milk-based products and recipes. Further, milk consumption extends across religions and castes, even transforming to a symbol of the Hindu nation reinforced by the ideology of motherhood.
- The authors also discuss gender as a key determinant of diet. A study of attitudes to meat-eating among women in Kolkata reveals that vegetarianism is enforced among middle class women with an underlying motive of regulating sexuality and reproduction (p. 50).

Ferry (2020), in a meta-analysis of National Sample Survey (NSSO) data, points out that India, with its low meat consumption rates despite improved standards of living, presents a challenge to the current understanding that meat consumption increases with globalization and higher incomes. Ferry proposes an alternative to understanding meat consumption evolution through a **model of “food transition,” where “cultural density,” and in particular religious and caste norms, are taken into account.** He finds that:

- Lacto-vegetarians form a third of the population. People consuming an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet, ovo-vegetarian diet, chicken, and mutton diet has increased since the 1980s. Omnivorous diets with or without beef have remained stable while mutton diets have decreased drastically. Non-animal product diets decreased significantly from 12.3% to 3.6% (p. 7). These non-animal diets existed primarily due to forced deprivation of animal protein due to economic constraints, rather than as a result of conscious lifestyles.
- The Hindu discourse of non-violence and vegetarianism is based on the moral and cultural values of Hindu high castes only. Consumption patterns of Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists are much more distant from Hindu middle classes, with around 8% more Muslims eating beef in 2012 as compared to 1983. Religion here gives a “certain cultural autonomy” (p. 12). “Untouchability” among Hindus marks a stronger distinction than religion with Dalits and Adivasis being more frequent meat-eaters than other Hindus but not as much as Muslims and Christians.

- This data, Ferry notes, shows how the cow has come to mark religious differences and how lacto-vegetarianism has come to identify Hinduism.
- The distinction between castes also translates to economic deprivation. Households with low economic capital, which do not consume any animal products or are pesco-vegetarians (fish being relatively low-cost) spend less money on their food basket than mutton eaters, lacto-vegetarians, and omnivorous households with higher economic capital (p. 14). Dalits, Adivasis, Christians, and Buddhists tend to be lacto-vegetarians more often when they reside in the north-west and west central regions (where the Hindu norms are more salient and lacto-vegetarianism becomes the common diet) as compared to the south, east, and northeast regions.
- Non-Hindu groups as well as Dalits and Adivasis tend to comply with the dominant norms of Hindu lacto-vegetarianism when they are richer. Chicken meat production has been rapidly industrialized, leading to an increase in chicken consumers, among Dalits and middle and high-caste Hindus. At a symbolic level, chicken has been “deritualized” into healthier “white meat” from being a “disgusting” omnivorous bird’s flesh associated with Muslims till the 1980s (pp. 19, 20).

Fourat et al. (2018 b) trace how the categories of “vegetarian” and “non-vegetarian” foods are negotiated among 432 women and men respondents in Vadodara city belonging to lower, middle, and upper socio-economic strata, and Hindu Brahmin, Hindu non-Brahmin, and Jain religious sects. Most participants follow an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet. The findings indicate:

- Non-vegetarianism positively constructs identity for Dalits, Muslims, and Christians (p. 15). (i.e., meat-eating is closely tied with identity formation and self-respect for religious/caste minorities).
- **Most participants consider dairy and non-fertilized eggs to be vegetarian** and unspecified eggs (i.e., eggs which are not explicitly labeled as fertilized or unfertilized) as non-vegetarian. Vegetarian food is seen as tasty, healthy, strength-giving, and pure by more than 85% of the sample. A majority of 66% feel it brings good *karma*. Surprisingly, only 45% say it is wrong to kill animals, while one-third disagree that plant-protein is better than animal protein, suggesting it is okay to kill animals. Similarly, 83% agree it is okay to eat animals if permitted by religion. As many as 69% of high and middle-income groups, mostly Brahmin and Jain, fall into the “permanent vegetarian” category. “Regular non-vegetarians” include mostly men between 25 and 50 years from high socio-economic groups.
- While most respondents disallow “non-veg” food at home, it is more welcome among non-Brahmins and those from low-income and middle education groups. Mostly men — non-Brahmins (62%) — say they eat a stable vegetarian diet while 97% maintain a vegetarian diet for reasons other than affordability (pp. 8–12).

This study in Hindu and Jain homes, in a mostly vegetarian state, indicates that **even when vegetarian food is considered “purer” or fostering good karma, this does not correspond to a belief that animals should not be killed.** The **boundaries of “non-veg” consumption are negotiated differently** inside and outside the home, and also change with gender.

Staples (2017) corrects the tendency to see the dynamics between vegetarianism and meat-eating as simply a question of impurity through his qualitative anthropological research

among members of 52 households in Bethany, a predominantly Christian leprosy colony in Andhra Pradesh.

Meat, though its consumption is low among the mostly non-vegetarian respondents, forms a “special” part of their diet. It is different from the everyday fare of rice, pulses, and vegetables and hence is something to be relished, especially on a Sunday or to treat guests who will feel let down if they are not offered special items like beef, indicating the association of beef-eating as a matter of self-respect (p. 235).

- **Chicken is seen as the default meat of choice for its low cost and availability and absence of associations to low-caste status.** Meat consumption is gendered in that most households depend on men bringing the meat home for their wives or other female members to cook. As also seen by Ferry (2020), some young respondents gave up beef when they moved to cities for social mobility while others took to eating formerly prohibited meat like beef once they moved away from home (pp. 236, 239).
- While people argue that their low meat consumption does not pose a threat to their health or that of others, they are aware of the environmental and health impact of certain meat-farming methods. For example, the toxic waste management of industrial broiler chicken farm. Yet this did not impact the wide consumption of broiler chicken meat (p. 244).
- **Non-beef meat dishes are marketed as signifiers of fashion, youth, and modernity** by fast-food chains like KFC in major cities (p. 246).

Staples (2020) makes similar observations in his recent book. He wants to correct a simplistic binary drawn between “those who oppose the slaughter of cattle on the one hand, and those who view beef consumption as a fundamental gastronomic right on the other,” instead describing the dynamic nature of diet in the country.

During earlier stages of his ethnographic work, Staples had found that beef-consumption occupied a strong subversive symbolism among his low-income Christian respondents (Some Dalit Christians and others not, some early and others recent converts). His own refusal to eat beef as a vegetarian had been perceived as an affront – a rude reminder of his hosts’ marginalized social status. Recent years however showed certain shifts influenced by tense political factors, economic and health contexts (see also Staples, 2017). Traditionally beef was a cheap meat-source for protein, as it was discarded by dairy and relegated as food mainly for the marginalized – the poor among Dalits, Christians and Muslims, while other meats remained costlier. As cheaper and sanitized meat in the form of broiler chicken became available many shifted toward it. In the later stages of ethnographic work, Staples found **a growing awareness among his respondents of the medicines fed to chicken and livestock, and rising pop-science on health has led to a bent toward lighter food and reduced beef and/or meat consumption.** At times Hindutva groups tried to appropriate arguments about environmental distress to promote vegetarianism. It is in this contested context that meat-eaters respond by reimagining and adapting their diets.

4. MEAT IN INDIAN METROS

Big cities in India with their large and diverse populations from all walks of life serve as valuable microcosms where the forces of caste, class, and religion confront and converge around the issue of food. Cities are where much of the meat — produced chiefly in rural areas — is sold and consumed.

Robbins (1999) presents a commodity chain analysis of the steps involved in meat production as the animals travel from Gujarat and Rajasthan, progressively in the form of meat, to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. Robbins attempts to decipher the changing extra-economic meanings meat takes as it travels:

- **Animals are transported in large numbers under poor conditions to rural markets and then to city slaughter facilities** (p. 410). There has been an explosion in consumption sites in urban India (due to American fast-food chains like KFC, McDonald's, etc.) and increased export. As against this commodity life of meat, the social life of meat can involve people raising but not slaughtering animals by their own hand, even as they profit off the sale of the animals. Meat-eating Rajputs are turning towards raising meat animals (traditionally a lower caste occupation) while some abandon their meat-eating practices to claim higher status (p. 412).
- **Accessibility of meat to all classes enhances its democratic image** (as against earlier when it was either prohibited, or was selectively accessed by the well-off). At the same time, the Hindu nationalist body RSS projects meat as an imposition on traditional Hindu India (p. 414). This is done by mobilizing two elements of conservative discourse: economic isolationism (by villainizing Gulf countries where Indian meat is exported, aiming to stop all meat exports), and via anti-Muslim rhetoric (pp. 416, 417), directed chiefly at those who slaughter or transport meat and animals, especially cattle.

Ahmad (2014), in a qualitative analytical paper, studies the social, cultural, and political place of meat in imagining and contesting margins in New Delhi in the context of court cases on buffalo meat in the Delhi High Court, the relocation of the Idgah abattoir to Ghazipur and ethnographic research of the meat trade in the city.

Citing previous research, Ahmad states that the food one eats defines caste, moral character, homeland, and sectarian affiliations. The dominant discourse of caste continues to privilege vegetarianism (although Brahmin castes in Bengal and Pandits in Kashmir eat meat) and places it at the top of the caste hierarchy, followed by mutton eaters, with beef and/or buffalo meat eaters forming the lowest rung of the pecking order. The use of the term "non-veg" in everyday discourse reveals the "immorality and illegitimacy" that meat carries (hence, the police are quick to slap legal notices on meat shops even on flimsy grounds (pp. 23, 27).

- He notes that subtle mechanisms of pushing the good, clean, vegetarian, non-alcoholic way of life abound in everyday context. Further, there is significant mobilization against meat consumption in the ecological and animal rights framework. The upper class, upper caste Hindu way of life inevitably forms a sub-text for these positions.
- **Meat is not sold during festivals like Navratri.** Chicken prices are dynamic, while buffalo meat is the most affordable protein source. Ahmad finds that upper and upper-middle class Muslims rarely consume buffalo meat. **Meat-serving dhabas and meat shops have been served legal notices** when residents complained that they were operating next to a Hindu temple, or that they were selling raw meat in "unsanitary" conditions (pp. 26, 27). On the other hand, the "sacrifice" of goats and other animals for Hindu gods and deities like Kali in different parts of the country goes unquestioned, suggesting that the margins made by meat depend on who slaughters and consumes, not just on the polluting nature of meat.

Dolphijn (2006), in a qualitative analytical paper, draws on 30 in-depth conversations with residents in Bangalore city to explain why the opening of fast-food chain KFC in the city in 1996 was met with strong resistance due to rumors that the restaurant was using

meat-products prohibited by certain religions and castes. The author also **discusses how caste-boundaries are becoming less rigid** with the city offering a range of foods and city residents, including those from **Brahmin families, are willing to eat out, some even consuming meat-dishes prohibited in their diets**. American fast-food restaurants like KFC are used nowadays as escape routes to evade Brahmin dominance since they explicitly question the Brahmin binary between the vegetarian and non-vegetarian menu (p. 58).

Caplan (2008) in a qualitative analytical paper, **argues against the “crude essentialism” of associating vegetarianism with Brahmins and non-vegetarianism with non-Brahmins** (p. 120). He studies the dynamics of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism through the lens of commensality among middle-class women members of a Chennai club who belong to different religions and castes. The site of the study (near Adyar) was predominantly populated by Brahmins (40%) and Hindu middle castes as well as Tamil Christians and Muslims. Caplan found that:

- Many non-vegetarian Hindu families ate vegetarian food on religiously significant days of the week like Tuesday and Friday. Non-vegetarians ate very little meat and shared the basic composition of meals and snacks with vegetarians (p. 127). Several non-Brahmins, especially women, were vegetarian even while they cooked meat and eggs for their family members (p. 128). Some Brahmin men often ate non-vegetarian food outside the house. Eggs were cooked even in Brahmin homes, especially for children, their consumption rationalized on grounds of their greater need for protein.
- The distinction between food outside and inside the house is fluid, especially due to food deliveries through pizza chains and food caterers. Moreover, members also take food cooked at home in dabbas (tiffin-boxes) to office or school where it is shared among their peers.
- Yet Brahmin identity is still being selectively negotiated. During informal occasions, such as when a group of women eat at a friend's house, the rules are relaxed to allow a Brahmin to eat food cooked by a non-Brahmin. Issues around commensality are dealt with in more formal events like weddings by having Brahmin caterers to cook and serve the food (pp. 139, 140). Often, Brahmin guests at a non-Brahmin house take home their share of food in a “tiffin-box” so as to avoid eating with non-Brahmins (p. 136).

II B. FOOD PROSCRIPTIONS AND NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY

In a co-authored qualitative paper, **Khara et al. (2020)** argue for an adoption of **Goffman's concept of “Frontstage and Backstage Behaviors”**. In this the former are actions visible to people, and the latter are actions engaged in privately. To understand the dynamics of meat consumption in a **collectivist country like India it must be factored that people may view themselves from the perspective of others and feel bound to traditions and obligations**, especially due to the shame felt when seen by others in socially inappropriate situations (p. 2). Through face-to-face interviews with 33 Mumbai residents in the age group 23–35, belonging mostly to Hinduism and Islam, and evenly distributed into male and female, Khara's study explains why meat consumption tends to be underreported in surveys in India. This is due to the stigma associated with meat-eating (considered a taboo) and also because of the shame, guilt, and punishment that can occur if this transgression is discovered (p. 8). The other findings are:

- Although meat-eating is stigmatized and strict segregation of veg and non-veg foods practiced, meat consumption is on the rise in India due to increase in disposable income,

exposure to other cultures, and urbanization (p. 2). Understandably, given India's collectivist culture which derives meaning from webs of social relationships, frontstage and backstage behaviors have evolved over time in order to avoid conflict and to maintain collective harmony.

- Meat consumption is increasing especially among Indian youth; reasons for this include more opportunities to eat meat as they often live away from home and the fashionable, modern associations with meat eating. In contrast, vegetarian fare is associated with traditional practices which are losing their currency. The facade of religious vegetarianism is maintained in the interest of frontstage audience like family members and neighbors only to give way to voracious meat-eating in the backstage.
- Being discovered for one's backstage meat-eating can result in punishment, abuse, and, in the case of beef, threats from right-wing groups. Due to these risks, participants tend to lie about their meat-eating. Participants often find the challenging of frontstage roles to be enjoyable. Sometimes, certain parts of the house are transformed into the backstage with the help of understanding family members. Presence of an accomplice, like friends or a partner, is a key part of backstage meat-eating; the accomplice is trusted and has in-depth knowledge of frontstage conventions (pp. 5–6).

Fourat (2018 a) points out, in a qualitative paper, that although India's consumption rates of animal products were stable over the last three decades, there is still movement within specific categories, such as **a fall in consumption of goat meat and an increase in that of dairy, eggs, chicken, and fish** (p. 37). Fourat conducted 43 interviews in New Delhi to understand the **cognitive mechanisms people use to allow consumption of animal-based products**.

- The “consubstantiality” of animals and humans gives rise to defensive mechanisms that attempt to reduce the anxiety around ingestion of other animals. These are grouped into a) the classification systems; b) selection of animals; c) religious rituals (to transfer blame of killing to a divine hand); d) disjunction processes (transforming animals like “pig,” to food, as in “pork”). Separating the edible from the inedible through the pure and impure sets up classificatory hierarchies. These are between humans and non-humans and also among non-humans.
- For example, the *Manusmriti* prohibits the eating of carnivorous animals while allowing cow and dog meat in the case of starvation. Frontiers of the self are transcended through magical thinking in the act of eating. Former executors of animal sacrifice became celebrants of non-sacrificial rituals, sanctifying the cow and giving her milk the central place in Indian cosmogony (p. 38–39). In recent times, the prohibition of meat only for Brahmins, globalization and easy availability of meat, dairy, and eggs, valorization of animal-based proteins, shift from religious to industrial slaughter, and disappearance of animal sacrifice have changed human-non-human relations in India.
- Fourat finds that eating meat was not a problem for non-vegetarians as long as they were not responsible for the slaughter. Culinary techniques disguise any repulsive texture or sight of the animal in meat. Disjunction from the animal is also achieved by using the term non-veg for meat (pp. 42–43). The slow disappearance of animal sacrifice (especially for gods who demand meat) leads to a drop in consumption.
- Most interviewees make a distinction between buffalo and cow meat, while some do not, and claim to eat neither and worship both (p. 44). The pig is viewed with disgust due to religious prohibitions (based on the pig's omnivorous and therefore possibly

anthropophagous diet) and its potential to carry diseases (p. 48). Chicken and fish are not considered meat as they are white and soft; they are not anthropomorphize-able. Egg consumption has drastically increased due to its protein content and its ambiguous “alive” status (p. 49). Some can bear its consumption only when it is disguised, for example, in pastries. Milk is heavily consumed among middle class vegetarian families; paneer replaces meat and cheese in dishes. Milk consumption, “for life,” is rooted!

II C. A COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND WESTERN ATTITUDES

Ruby et al (2013) conducted a quantitative study **comparing Western and Indian respondents who subscribe to omnivorous and vegetarian diets and differences in their attitudes to ethics of purity, authority, and ingroup.**

- The authors state that Euro-American vegetarian respondents were significantly more concerned about the impact of diet choices on the environment and about animal welfare, strongly endorsed universalism values, and gave little support to right-wing authoritarianism as compared to Euro-American omnivores. The same omnivore-vegetarian differences were not significant among Indians, the effect sizes ranged from 0.23–0.31 (p. 343).
- Moreover, the second component of this study finds that vegetarians more strongly believe that eating meat pollutes one’s personality and spirit than did omnivores, and this difference is especially pronounced among Indians. Indian vegetarians are more religious and endorse purity, authority, and ingroup ethics higher than Indian omnivores. Religious and purity ethic differences between Western vegetarians and omnivores are not significant. Overall, among Western and Indian groups, vegetarians endorse harm and fairness ethics higher than omnivores. However, ethics of harm and fairness among Indians (treating others equally; avoiding harm to others) may not extend to non-human animals (p. 346).

II D. MILK CONSUMPTION AND ITS CONNOTATIONS IN INDIA

Wiley (2011) analyzes the **malleability of milk’s local meanings and how these intersect with globalizing processes** that attempt to impose uniformity on views of milk. She observes that:

- Milk’s unique status is built on its ability to enhance growth not only of a country’s citizenry but also national and individual strength and power. In the context of malnourishment, this enhanced physical growth indicates social and economic development and a thriving family.
- India drinks 39 liters per person per year, a 240% increase from 1970. India has longstanding, continually expanding, school milk initiatives. This enhances children’s educational success and provides a market for local and multinational dairy companies. Milk’s privileged position in such schemes is justified by its place in government dietary guidelines—“Eat milk and legumes everyday” by the National Institute of Nutrition (p. 15).
- Milk in India is marketed for its properties to enhance height/size and growth (strength/ strong bones). Both are powerful symbols for national and individual stature (pp. 16, 21). In addition, banking on the sacred place of the cow as mother in Hinduism and in the Indo-Aryan civilization, her milk is said to nourish the population, giving

strength and purity to children and the nation. The cow and her protection are symbols for strength of male citizens (p. 20). Links between cow protection and her breed improvement, physical growth, and national strength were articulated in the freedom struggle and in the present postcolonial state.

- Lack of access to milk provides justification for the milk industry's expansion, especially since milk is framed as essential for growth and strength (however, that milk makes children grow is not supported strongly by scientific literature.) Most milk in India is a mix of cow and buffalo milk—a fact that is not broadcast.
- Symbols of cows in advertisements are Western Holstein cows and not Zebu, indicating that the cow's traditional value is not harnessed to sell milk and that Western breeds are seen as more productive. At the same time, the "Nandini" brand uses the motif of the wish-granting holy cow and the image of a Holstein, thus merging the modern and the traditional to talk of milk's benefits (p. 24).
- Hurdles to using religious symbols to market milk include the sizable Muslim population and strong Hindu political movements. The dairy industry must try not to shake up communal antipathy, hence completely avoid traditional roots of milk, in favor of nutritional descriptions with some unifying nationalist themes (p. 25). Meanings of milk are rather fluid and not fixed by the biology of milk digestion—milk consumption has surged even in previously lactophobic regions (p. 26).
- Milk is partly a national symbol in India which makes the discussion of its intolerance inconvenient. Overall dairy intake increases through the consumption of *dahi* and *lassi* (local culinary preparations) even when fluid milk intake falls due to intolerance (p. 27). Previous research indicates that India has less lactase impersistence in the north and more in the south and east (p. 13).

Narayan (2018) unpacks the romantic religious imageries of dairy found in upper-caste Hinduism, and highlights how the Hindu ethic of cow protection criminalizes cow slaughter and beef production in many Indian states, but obscures dairying's direct role in the butchery of spent females and unproductive male bovines. **Applying a feminist vegan critique**, she describes how patriarchal interpretations of Hindu legends (such as the boy-god Krishna's love for butter) are "instrumentalized by both commercial and religious purveyors of dairying to commodify bovine motherhood (p. 134)." The udders of the bovine mother and the breasts of the human mother are often conflated in the scriptures to signify fecundity and abundance. Hindutva narratives further interlock the romantic imagery of a Hindu woman as ideal wife and mother and the strong and prosperous Hindu nation, which overflowed with cow milk and butter. In these ways, milking and mothering legends objectify motherhood and justify the reproductive and sexualized exploitation of cows for milk.

Narayan notes how "dairy economics in India has always recognized the necessity of slaughtering unproductive dairying animals to sustain milk production," (p. 138) despite the stated ethic of non-violence that underpins Hindu resistance to cow slaughter. As early as the 1960s, Amul founder Verghese Kurien opposed a national ban on cow slaughter, declaring it indispensable if India wanted cheap and plentiful milk. Mahatma Gandhi's public call to Hindus to acknowledge these double standards are worth noting. Yet these truths about dairy have been routinely sidelined.

AMUL AND ITS SYMBOLISM

Mamidi (2017), through qualitative textual analysis, discusses the importance of contextual knowledge in understanding the humor present in the cartoon-based Amul advertisements in India, it being one of India's leading milk company that is built on a cooperative farming model. Some of Amul's advertisements are part of common collective memory. The main elements of Amul ads are the picture, the main text and the slogan. This paper explains how these elements come together to optimize the effect of one of India's best known—and loved—brands with particular reference to its product, butter.

- Contextual knowledge serves as a cohesive link for the eye-catching pictures and witty, time-sensitive slogans that define Amul's trademark branding. The slogan usually refers to an event or person, and links it with the product (butter) in a witty way. The text is always a mix of Hindi and English, and uses code-switching and puns effectively between the two. As the target audience needs to be literate English-Hindi bilinguals and well-informed about current events—politics, sports, films, social issues, etc. and also familiar with current popular culture icons and events—wit may or may not always be the best marketing strategy (p. 2). Even so, if the message in the ad is indirect and intellectually satisfying, and if the audience gets it, they feel happy comprehending the witty message. This positive state of mind, in turn, enhances a positive attitude towards the product (p. 5).
- Suspense and relief are the key factors in the success of Amul advertisements. They cater to the curiosity of the audience. There are many followers who wait for the next advertisement to be out. By placing hoardings at strategic traffic points, the humorous ads provide much-needed relief during rush hours (p. 8).

Subramanian (2013) explores the link between the trope of nationalism and Amul's brand identity through a semiotic analysis of select Amul ads. The paper states that well-planned and appropriately-implemented communication tools are necessary to disseminate "brand identity." It is the total proposition— a promise that a company makes to consumers. It may consist of features and attributes, benefits, quality, and the values that the brand possesses (p. 4).

Amul's campaign theme, "**The Taste of India**," features a song of the same title. It cleverly triggers a feeling of nationalism by bringing together ordinary people from different parts of the country. They are of different age groups and walks of life, and engage with each other in routine activities (cooking, sports etc.) through a range of Amul products (butter, milk, ice creams), which act as a key glue binding them. The primary message here is: Amul products are affordable by all, or that people belong to a "common economy" (pp. 398, 399). Amul products are also shown as marking and bringing value to all important moments of life.

- **Amul banks on the shared and cherished pan-Indian culture of consuming milk, buttermilk, ghee, etc.** That all religions (Hindu and Sikh, in the sample) live in harmony is indicated through boys and girls, young people and old persons rejoicing together. The paper does not indicate any further the position of religious harmony in Amul ads, indicating, as Wiley suggests earlier in this review, that dairy companies hesitate to employ the trope of the sacred cow to sell their products due to a large Muslim consumer base and existing political tensions around the "holy cow." Nevertheless, the ads show that India is proud of, and happy to consume, Amul, which is no less than any international brand (p. 399).

- Amul products are shown as bringing joy to everyday routine moments. The title song represents how the “Taste of India” drives human emotions and a sense of belonging. Repetitions of “India” and images of “Indian customs,” like a son touching his grandfather’s feet, integrate Amul with the uniqueness of Indian cultural bonds (p. 400).

Ardhianto and Son (2019) conduct a qualitative semiotic analysis (modeled after Barthes’ semiotic theory) of a TV advertisement for an Indonesian product called UHT UltraMilk. The paper focuses on the marketing strategies used in the ad, which attempts to motivate people of all ages to consume milk regularly as a healthy daily supplement. (pp. 30, 31). The ad captures the progression from childhood to parenthood by presenting a “natural” flow from breast-milk to processed cow milk. The idea is to **instill confidence among consumers, encourage them to achieve their dreams, and living a healthy and balanced life by drinking milk**. This is primarily conveyed through the tagline, “Love Life, Love Milk” (pp. 40–41).

II E. FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN INDIA

Maxfield et al. (2016), through their **anthropological study of adolescents** from private and government schools in Vijayapura, Karnataka, try to understand the notion of food prestige as grounded in globalization and changing food environments. These two latter forces determine changes in food availability and accessibility (for instance, fast food chains make access to heavily processed foods possible). It is found that:

- More than half of the participants are vegetarian (p. 10). Dosa, idli, tea, and chicken are items often eaten both at home and outside. Rankings for foods of prestige are inverse to those of tradition and routineness; i.e., foods eaten outside home are seen as more prestigious (p. 14). Hence, Indian adolescents find non-traditional and non-local foods to be more prestigious (p. 1). Adolescents depend on material lifestyles like that of food to express their individuality (as separate from the family) and to negotiate their identity, peer relationships (wanting to eat like their richer peers in bigger cities), and mark status (pp. 2, 17). Consequently, marginalization, bullying, and social embarrassment is suffered by individuals who eat differently, for instance, for health-related reasons. Teenagers also heavily influence the family’s purchasing decisions.
- In moments of “generational conflict,” parents and older family members may counter mass media representations of “cooler” alternative identities with tradition and heritage-related identity markers (p. 18). The appeal of non-local food is also enhanced by international mass media like the TV and Internet in remote communities. Non-elites also see consumer goods as a ticket to upward middle-class living (p. 3). The article does not look into prestige patterns of meat/non-veg consumption, as compared to plant-based, among the participants.

Kumar and Kapoor (2015) attempt to identify the factors influencing **consumer buying decisions of vegetarian and non-vegetarian products** among 282 households in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela within an emerging middle-sized market. It is found that:

- Vegetables and fish are purchased twice to thrice a week, and fruits, chicken, and meat once a week. Vegetables and fruits are bought in larger quantities than non-vegetarian products. Consumers prefer to buy all these products in person to ensure freshness.
- Consumers older than 35 years buy fruits and vegetables more frequently than others; those younger than 25 years buy mutton more frequently. Income has a significant effect

on buying of vegetarian items, while demographic factors affect the purchase of non-vegetarian food.

- Non-price attributes like freshness, taste, nutritional, and medicinal value are ranked higher for both veg and non-veg food. For meat, attributes like food safety (chemical-free, freshly served meat, and animals kept well before slaughter) and food quality (health and age of animal, quality of feed, hygienic processing conditions) are ranked high. For fruits and vegetables, market convenience, availability of quality fresh products with availability of choices, and most importantly, physical appearance, are the preferred market attributes (pp. 10–14).

II F. INDIA'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS ANIMAL RIGHTS AND WELFARE

Two surveys conducted by Animal Equality/India and Faunalytics provide data regarding consumption habits of plant-based and animal products in India. Importantly, they also try to comprehend attitudes of the urban public to issues of farmed animal welfare and rights. Both are independent publications, with the Faunalytics study posted on their website. They are neither peer-reviewed nor academic but their profiles as an animal rights NGO and an animal studies research NGO, respectively, make them valuable for this review.

Animal Equality (2018) commissioned Ipsos Public Affairs to conduct **an 11-city³ survey across India of food consumption habits and attitudes towards animal welfare**. The mobile app-based survey involved 502 vegetarian and 500 non-vegetarian⁴ urban adults. It tested their consumption patterns of animal products, their attitudes toward animal welfare, support for animal welfare laws and policies enacted both by the government and industry, and the factors that could influence their switch to a plant-based diet. Key findings include:

- More than half (54%) the non-vegetarian participants considered vegetarianism to be the healthier option. Yet, they consumed meat and fish mostly for its taste and the perception that it made for a balanced diet. A significant percentage of non-vegetarians maintained their meat diets as they had been used to it from childhood.
- Around 80% of the vegetarians found non-vegetarian food to be unhealthy. They chose vegetarian diets mostly for health reasons (41%) as well as a concern for animal welfare (28%). Only 12% said they were vegetarians due to reasons of religion or convenience (pp. 8, 9).
- Barriers to a fully vegetarian diet among non-vegetarian participants included dislike for the taste of vegetarian fare (48%) and because the family was non-vegetarian (31%) (p. 8).
- Conversely, the major reason for adopting a vegetarian diet among non-vegetarians was health (41%) and concern for animals (28%). A majority of the vegetarian participants were aware of animal cruelty and thought that animals killed for meat should not be tortured. As many as 74% of such vegetarians were willing to pay more for less cruel alternatives (pp. 11–12). A significant majority among both vegetarians

³ Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Guwahati, Jaipur, Mumbai, Pune, and Shillong

⁴ Must be noted that understanding of “vegetarian” and “non-vegetarian” food may differ across communities and regions. For example, fish is considered vegetarian and consumed even by upper-caste Bengali Brahmins; vegetarians may not consume eggs in direct form, but may eat cakes and other products with eggs in them. Factory-produced eggs are increasingly consumed by traditional vegetarians because they are “not fertilized,” hence no killing of life is involved. Overall, “non-veg” refers to meat in any form—chicken, pork, mutton, beef.

(90%) and non-vegetarians (65%) asked for strong animal welfare laws and their enforcement. They also expressed a support for animal welfare standards that can be adopted by companies. In addition, 63% of vegetarians strongly supported the need and work of animal welfare organizations (AWOs). Around half the non-vegetarian participants agreed that slaughter is unfair, and more than half said they were aware of AWOs (pp. 13–15).

Dauksza (2018) discusses India-related findings from an **exploratory survey by Faunalytics**, conducted across Brazil, India, China (BRIC nations) and the United States (Anderson and Tyler 2018), to discern attitudes and behaviors towards animal welfare and consumption of animal products. Key findings from the India study which had a sample size of 1004 adults:

Due to the prevalence of religious vegetarianism (mostly among Hindu ‘upper’ castes than among “lower” castes and non-Hindus), India had the highest number of vegetarians among all BRIC countries. A majority of Indians eat chicken, fish, dairy, and eggs. The consumption of beef and pork was far lower than other BRIC countries. Despite the relatively large number of vegetarians, **Indians (as inferred from this survey), irrespective of their diets, were less likely to give pro-animal responses than respondents in other BRIC countries.** This suggests that meat-abstinence for religious reasons does not necessarily translate into animal welfare concerns.

- Only 52% would support a law that requires farmed animals to be treated more humanely. Moreover, one in five (18%) would oppose such a law (this is the highest among all BRIC countries). Women in India are more likely to hold pro-animal views than men, but also more likely to consume more dairy than men. Indians in the youngest age group (18–24 years) were less likely to hold pro-animal beliefs and attitudes (such as thinking that farmed animals can suffer like humans, or that eating meat contributes directly to animal suffering) than older Indians.
- **Indian respondents under 45 years were more likely to eat chicken and beef than older respondents.** Those older than 55 were more likely to abstain from all animal products. This suggests that younger Indians are moving away from vegetarianism/veganism. It could also mean that irrespective of their diets when they were young, respondents had a tendency to adopt vegetarianism when older. People from North India were likelier to be vegetarians than those from other parts of the country.

CHAPTER III. DRIVERS FOR MEAT CONSUMPTION

The following studies, set in contexts other than India, provide a greater understanding of the complex psychological processes influencing dietary choices, and how they may act as in the barriers and drivers.

III A. SPECIESISM

A fundamental starting point for any discussion of veganism is the idea of “Speciesism”⁵ – the belief that affords moral consideration only to humans – which serves as the fundamental bedrock for all forms of discrimination against non-human animals, including the belief that humans have the moral right to determine some nonhuman animals as “food.” **Likened to other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism⁶ endorsement of speciesism was found to be a robust predictor for carnism.**

Rosenfeld (2019) explores the underlying role of anti-speciesist attitudes in producing the ethical motivation required to follow vegetarian and vegan diets. Through two quantitative studies in the United States, one with 576 participants (mostly omnivores, followed by vegetarians and vegans) and the second with 201 vegetarian/vegan participants, the following observations are made:

- Animal welfare dietary motivation partially explains why people who reject speciesism are more likely to be vegetarian. Even so, **the extent to which people endorse speciesism appears to be a much stronger predictor of their vegetarian status.**
- Although vegans reported greater ethical motivation than vegetarians did, this effect disappeared when controlling for speciesism. These results suggest that the lower endorsements of speciesism in vegans may explain why they are more ethically motivated to follow their diets than vegetarians are. **Speciesism, thus, may be a more robust predictor of vegetarian versus vegan status than is ethical dietary motivation** (pp. 793, 794).

III B. THE 4Ns – NATURAL, NORMAL, NECESSARY AND NICE

One of the key tenets underpinning meat consumption is the idea of the “4 Ns” or the belief that eating meat is “**Natural, Normal, Necessary and Nice**” (**Piazza et al, 2014**), an adaptation of the original concept of the 3Ns⁷. Piazza et al.’s research tests the concept of the 4 Ns through five quantitative studies which use samples of different sizes, starting with a minimum of 100. Respondents consist of a mix of students and non-students from the United States. Results of each study phase are indicated below.

Study 1: (With 188 students from the University of Pennsylvania, 6% of whom have never eaten meat while the rest are meat-eaters; the latter phase of this study uses a separate sample of 107 adults). The study establishes that **the bulk of reasons (83%) to eat meat used by the participants fall into the 4Ns model**. In a non-student sample, the 4Ns comprises 91% of the justifications offered. “Necessary”, was the most frequently used

⁵ Richard D Ryder Victims of Science, 1975

⁶ Peter Singer, Animal Liberation, 1970.

⁷ Developed by social psychologist Melanie Joy, 2014, the 3Ns refers to the idea that eating meat is “natural, normal and necessary.”

reason, followed by “Natural,” “Nice,” and “Normal” (Piazza et al., p. 17). Subsequent studies propose an instrument, the 4N Scale, and tests the efficacy of the same.

Study 2: (With 171 University of Melbourne students identifying as omnivorous, vegetarian, etc.). The study is conducted in a sample that includes omnivores, restricted omnivores, vegetarians, and vegans in the context of increasing evidence of meat-eaters objectifying or dehumanizing animals particularly when they are confronted with evidence of the contradiction between caring for animals and eating them. Study 2 finds that individuals endorse the 4Ns in relation to the level of meat restriction in their diet (hence, omnivores endorse 4Ns higher than other groups).

Omnivores also include fewer animals in their circle of moral concern and attribute minds to animals less often than other groups, which indicates that increased adherence to a meat-based diet is associated with less concern for animals and non-attribution of cognitive capacities to animals. Omnivores are also more likely to endorse exploitative ideologies than other groups (p. 119).

Study 3: (With 195 US participants who are predominantly omnivores with 9% identifying as vegetarians who sometimes eat meat). **The study finds that men’s endorsement of the 4Ns is higher than that of women.** Endorsers are more likely to make food choices on the basis of familiarity while those who reject the 4Ns are motivated by animal and ecological welfare when making food choices (p. 121).

Study 4: (With 215 participants adhering to omnivorous and partial vegetarian—those who abstain from all except some meats, but consume eggs and dairy—as well as vegetarian and vegan diets). The study finds that individuals who endorse the 4Ns are less involved in animal welfare advocacy and are less likely to restrict their animal product consumption. The same individuals also tend to hold speciesist beliefs (though 4Ns is as an endorsement a construct distinct from speciesism).

- People who endorse the 4Ns experience less pride and less moral self-regard with respect to their animal-product consumption decisions. Omnivores who strongly endorse the 4Ns experience less guilt about their dietary practices than omnivores who endorse them to a lesser degree. The more a person endorses speciesism, the less guilty that person feels about consuming animal products, the less likely to increase restriction of animal products, and the less likely to engage in animal-welfare advocacy (p. 123).
- The Ns that produce the greatest levels of disagreement across dietary groups are “Necessary” and “Nice.” This suggests that belief about the necessity of eating meat, and the pleasure derived from it, may be the least persuasive of the 4Ns in convincing a vegetarian audience about the justifiability of eating meat.
- By contrast, endorsement of the naturalness of eating meat (e.g., that human beings have evolved body structures adapted to eating meat) was the most uniform across dietary groups, in that it produced the highest ratings of endorsement among vegetarians. The authors speculate that beliefs about the naturalness of eating meat may be the most persistent and difficult to overturn (p. 125).

The authors also cite from previous research which concludes that both vegetarian and omnivorous respondents rate individuals who reject meat as more virtuous than those who eat meat. Consequently, **meat eaters respond defensively to the presence of vegetarians** perhaps because vegetarian appeals and campaigns often come across as self-righteous

and off-putting. Additionally, it may be that the moral commitments of vegetarians pose an implicit threat to meat eaters' own moral identities (p. 115).

III C. CATEGORIZATION AND MORAL STANDING OF ANIMALS

Categorizing some animals as “meant for food” immediately predetermines one’s relationship with them. Studying the role of such categorization in determining dietary choices, and how they might vary across cultures and communities promises valuable insights.

Bratanova et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study of 80 US citizens to investigate whether the act of considering an animal as food reduces moral concern for that animal. Key findings:

- Categorizing an animal as “food” may directly alter how we think about that animal. The act of categorization (which is separate from personal consumption and hence uninfluenced by one’s responsibility in causing suffering to the animal) may shift our focus away from morally-relevant attributes (i.e., the capacity to suffer), and therefore change our perception of the moral worth of the meat animal. In this sense, the category “food animal” may act as a conceptual frame or schema. **Once an animal is categorized as “food,” food relevant attributes become more salient (e.g., tastiness, tenderness, flavor)** and food-irrelevant attributes less salient (p. 194).
- Because suffering is unlikely to be considered food relevant, thinking of the animal as food may reduce its perceived capacity to suffer. Participants were presented with a scenario where an unknown animal, the tree kangaroo, is being cooked and used as food; they attributed it with significantly less capacity to suffer. As expected, this reduction in turn leads to diminished moral concern. Importantly, this occurred regardless of whether humans were responsible for killing the animal.
- Even when people do not actively contribute to the death of the animal, categorizing it as food leads to a reduction in its perceived capacity to suffer and in its subsequent moral standing. Categorizing an animal as food often co-occurs with people killing the animal.
- Previous work that the authors cite has shown that people deny mental states to other humans who are suffering. By analogy, they may deny food animals the mental states necessary to suffer simply because they are killed. Likewise, when people think that their group has caused suffering to others, they deny the victims complex mental states. Similarly, if we hear that our group members (i.e., other humans) have caused suffering to animals, we may deny the latter complex mental states associated with moral concern (p. 196).
- The authors provide context by citing from previous research: in the case of meat, people may feel an uncomfortable tension between their moral beliefs (I should not hurt animals) and their behavior (I eat meat). This tension is unpleasant and people are motivated to resolve it. One resolution available to meat-eaters is to change their behavior. Many people, however, do not change their behavior and instead continue eating meat, and instead change their perception of these animals. “Capacity to suffer” is the characteristic on which people base moral concern. As the perceived capacity to suffer decreases, so too does our moral concern. **Concluding that meat animals do not suffer brings peoples’ moral beliefs (animals should not be hurt) into line with their behavior (I eat meat).** Their rationalization is that if animals cannot suffer, then I am not hurting them by eating meat (p. 193).

III D. MEAT ATTACHMENT

Graca et al. (2015) explore the **willingness and unwillingness of participants from the United States and Portugal to adopt a plant-based diet**. The paper proposes and tests the validity of the Meat Attachment Questionnaire (MAQ). The 1,023 participants are randomly split into two samples for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The MAQ consists of 20 questions (see Appendix III), which include addressing a positive bond towards meat consumption; subjective social norm/ perceived social pressure; human supremacy; eating habits; dietary identity; and willingness to switch to a plant-based diet.

- The MAQ advances the theoretical understanding of consumer willingness to adopt a more plant-based diet, but ultimately also functions as a tool for the assessment, design, and evaluation of tailored initiatives encouraging meat substitution. The MAQ shows:
 - positive correlation with a measure of attitudes towards meat, subjective norms concerning meat consumption, meat-eating habits, and human supremacy beliefs;
 - an association with dietary identity (i.e., positive correlation with self-identification as omnivore and as meat consumer, and negative correlation with self-identification as vegetarian and as vegan); and
 - significantly higher scores for men than for women.
- A four-factor solution with a global second-order dimension of meat attachment fully meets criteria for a good model fit, providing evidence for measurement invariance. Likewise, reliability analyses show strong values of internal consistency. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that meat-attachment is a separate, self-standing, and relevant psychological construct. This also supports the idea that holding a pattern of attachment towards meat consumption may hinder personal willingness and intentions to adopt a more plant-based diet (pp. 122, 123).

III E. THE ROLE OF HABIT

Rees et al. (2018), attempt to provide empirical evidence for the role of habit in meat consumption through a quantitative study of 412 participants from two German universities. Across the three study components, it is found that habit strength is the single strongest correlate of future meat consumption.

Forming an implementation intention can substantially increase the probability of successfully enacting intended meat consumption reduction despite the strong influence of habit. There is also preliminary evidence that self-monitoring may be one mechanism underlying the effectiveness of implementation intentions. In the subsequent week of the study, the stronger the goal, the less meat participants actually ate. The individual's **intention to voluntarily reduce his or her meat consumption consistently reflects the attitude toward such a behavioral change as well as the personal perception of how easy or difficult this will be**. Perceived normative expectation regarding meat consumption is strongly linked with intention in one of the first two correlational studies. Meat consumption reduction intentions, in turn, were consistently and strongly linked with actual self-reported meat consumption in both studies. In Studies 1 and 2, habit strength is the dominant correlate of self-reported meat consumption. When habit is added to the models, the size of correlation of the “usual suspect” Theory of Planned Behavior predictor intentions and perceived behavioral control is considerably reduced (pp. 8, 9).

III F. MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Graca et al. (2014) look into consumers' use of moral disengagement strategies to reduce cognitive dissonance and willingness to change diets. This is done through a qualitative study of six focus groups with a total sample of 40 participants (who identify as meat-eaters after the sampling is completed).

Moral disengagement (from animals and the perils of animal agriculture) is employed as a **self-protection mechanism, making people resistant to change even when they have knowledge about the negative impact associated with their eating behaviors**. This may create conditions for current patterns of meat consumption to endure even among people who affirm the environment, public health, and animals as entities/domains with moral relevance (p. 13). The following moral disengagement themes are identified from the participants' responses:

“Yes, but...” Reconstrual of the harmful conduct: The most recurrent pattern of response is the tendency to justify and legitimize current standards of meat consumption and production even while recognizing them as potentially harmful. This justification is expressed through three paths: by portraying meat consumption as a matter of sustenance or as an imperative like survival and evolution. In this way, meat consumption becomes a means for serving higher ends to which each person is naturally entitled, so that all the damage it might eventually convey is almost unconditionally justified and legitimized (p. 7).

“Yes, but... there's a reason”: Here, participants associate meat-eating with belongingness and collective identity. They a priori reject any possibility of changing meat consumption habits, and associate such a possibility with a step backwards into times of economic insufficiency (p. 7).

“Yes, but... there's no alternative”: Here, even though they acknowledge their food habits may have a detrimental impact on the respective topic in discussion, participants justify maintaining their habits with the lack of perceived viable alternatives. This idea seems to neutralize any feeling of self-censure that may arise from inflicting harm. At the same time, some participants also show a tendency to immediately frame the discussion as an extreme stance. They feel, in the sense, that being open to question the possibility of making changes in their habits would inevitably imply changing these in a drastic way (p. 8).

“Yes, but... there are worse things”: The tendency is prevalent to compare the harm of meat-eating with problems that are depicted as inflicting even greater harm. The absence of change seems to be perceived in a more favorable and acceptable way, and the resulting harm seen as less serious, or even insignificant, when compared to other more serious and pressing problems (p. 9).

“It's not up to me”: The tendency is to obscure and displace personal responsibility concerning the impact of current meat production and consumption patterns, and the possibility of change towards less harmful alternatives. This is expressed by projecting accountability exclusively to mass production systems, while minimizing the role of current consumption patterns (called “blame mass production, not mass consumption”). In this way, discussion is maneuvered so that it does not have any implication on the individual's choices and duties. Mass production systems are criticized by some participants but seem to be mainly depicted as existing by themselves, and not to meet

demands of current mass consumption standards. And even when the role of demand is occasionally mentioned, it is framed as a consequence stemming from factors such as the global population growth or food waste caused by food safety rules. This justification emerges only when the discussion is framed in the impact of animal agriculture towards nature and the environment (p. 9).

“It’s their responsibility”: In this case, participants tend to attribute the responsibility of promoting and enforcing change mainly towards legal spheres, public/educational entities, production systems, or professionals from specific areas of expertise, minimizing their role as individual consumers (p. 10).

“It’s not that bad”: The tendency is to downplay the negative impact associated with current meat production and consumption standards by disputing a priori possible evidence regarding these consequences. Such evidence is labeled as facts that may eventually change over time, or as findings that may not be applicable to different contexts and persons (p. 10).

“Today’s truths are tomorrow’s lies”: Some participants contrast evidence on the negative impact with examples of health practices that in the past were seen as desirable and even recommended by public health authorities. However, in time these were revealed as neutral or even harmful and vice versa. This way, eventual information about how current meat production and consumption patterns may negatively impact public health is automatically framed as pseudoscientific truths or partial facts (p. 10).

“Meat is happy”: The lives and deaths of animals raised for food are framed on a process depicted as constantly evolving, thanks to progresses in technology and areas of expertise that allows to minimize and eventually neutralize suffering (p. 11).

“Don’t make me think about it” – Active avoidance and dissociation: The tendency is to actively avoid discussing and having information about the impact of current meat production and consumption patterns. This only comes up when the discussion is framed on the impact on animals.

“We could change”: In such cases, personal change is mainly pictured as a hypothesis for the future and not something to pursue at the present time. This pattern of speech is occasionally followed by awareness that one is expressing conflicting ideas about the topic under discussion, and is an effort to conciliate such ideas (i.e., often recurring to disengagement mechanisms) (p. 11).

These findings thus reinforce the notion that mere knowledge and exposure to information may not be sufficient to help people consider how their eating habits impact nature and the environment, public health, and animals. In fact, discussing the impact of current meat production and consumption patterns with people who eat meat may simply induce a state of cognitive dissonance, as explained below.

III G. MEAT PARADOX

Buttler & Walther (2018) juxtapose ambivalence regarding meat consumption and moral disengagement to propose a behavioral method to measure the “meat paradox” which can circumvent the limitations of self-reported meat consumption (p. 3). Meat paradox is explained as follows: meat consumption elicits highly ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, it is **associated with sensory pleasure and tradition; on the other hand, it is linked to moral, ecological, and health related issues**. This conflict is referred to as the meat

paradox (p. 2). Through a quantitative study of 32 omnivores and 32 non-omnivores it is found that:

- Omnivores exhibit more meat-related ambivalence than non-omnivores; however, there is no difference in ambivalence towards plant-based dishes between these groups (p. 10). Non-omnivores attribute significantly more emotion and mind to animals than omnivores. Hence, ambivalence moderates the link between diet and attributions of animal emotion and mind—omnivores attribute significantly less mind and emotion to animals if ambivalence is heightened (p. 13).
- **The link between diet and denial of harm is moderated by ambivalence**, while the association of diet and rationalizations of meat consumption is not affected. The measure of moral disengagement is strongly determined by diet, perhaps because the rationalization of meat consumption is a well-established routine in omnivores because they need to justify their diet directly. However, the non-attribution of animal emotion and mind does not directly defend one's own behavior but is an indirect strategy that helps to resolve meat-related conflicts by denial of harm (p. 18).
- Another interesting finding is that conflicted non-omnivores (who also attribute more mind and emotions to animals) potentially may have to cope with ambivalence as well. This is applicable to those individuals who decide to abstain from meat but have not yet developed a sense of disgust for meat (disgust helps vegetarians to uphold their diet). Such individuals use strategies like moral engagement via increased attribution of mind and emotions to animals. These strategies do not help in building a sense of disgust toward meat but nevertheless, the authors hypothesize, help to resist the temptation of meat.
- The authors also **cite from previous research to list the strategies omnivores use to negotiate the meat paradox**: by lowering the perceived harm of meat consumption through denial of animal emotions and their capacity to suffer; by avoiding responsibility for the negative aspects of meat consumption, i.e., by justifying or rationalizing meat consumption; by detaching one's identity from the harmful action. These are all moral disengagement strategies that keep one from adopting non-omnivorous diets (p. 4).

III H. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND ITS REDUCTION

Cognitive Dissonance⁸ is a theoretical framework from social psychology which refers to the psychological stress resulting from conflict occurring among/between an individual's actions, feelings, ideas, values and environmental factors. For example, **an individual may hold values of compassion and kindness to animals, but when they receive information that their eating of meat involves violence to animals they will try to reduce/resolve this dissonance or psychological distress through a variety of strategies**. In contrast, creating, visibilizing and heightening cognitive dissonance is one of the key strategies used by vegan campaigns with a focus on resolving this dissonance through behavior change.

Rothgerber (2014 a), through a set of five quantitative studies with American participants, looks into the dissonance-reducing processes and the techniques that omnivores use to reduce dissonance from eating meat. He studies contexts in which such **dissonance is induced by the presence of different types of vegetarians**—consistent, strict, imposter,

⁸ Festinger, L (1957): A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Stanford University Press.

and vegetarian out of choice/out of food constraints (p. 2). The vegetarians have information about them presented to the omnivores. Hence, in the study they do not advocate for a vegetarian diet or overtly criticize omnivores; therefore, imagining them as morally superior is difficult (p. 39). Existing dissonance theory research from different disciplines converges on **three basic mechanisms which enable problematic behavior: (1) hiding or avoiding the injury, possibly by making the victim invisible; (2) denying one's role/responsibility in causing the harm; and (3) denigrating the victim.** A more detailed explanation is provided below:

- **Avoidance as a strategy to reduce cognitive dissonance** is well-assisted by the sheer isolation of factory farms from society—harming others is much easier when their suffering is not visible. Legal guidelines and institutions in the United States make gaining information about farm animal welfare next to impossible. Besides, socialization processes encourage American children to think that meat originates from happy animals living happy lives (p. 33).
- Disassociation is encouraged by **changing language that renders live animals into food** products. Flesh is hence euphemistically termed as “bacon,” “sirloin” etc. When meat resembles the actual animal by being bloody or fatty, there is higher reluctance to eat it due to disgust.
- Perceived behavioral change is another dissonance-reducing technique that involves **claiming that one is vegetarian while acknowledging consumption of red and white meat**; it can also be embodied as under-reporting of meat consumption in an attempt to pass as vegetarian.
- **Denial of animal pain and mind** is used by less apologetic omnivores who acknowledge that they eat meat. Dissonance engendered by “I hurt animals” is eliminated by “Animals don’t really experience pain, at least as humans do.” The denial of injury breaks the link between acts and their consequences, thus enabling the individual to act without compunction. Similarly, eating animals, expecting to eat them, and being made to think about certain animals as food sources leads to greater perceived mental differences and dissimilarity between humans and animals.
- **Pro-meat religious, taste, and hierarchical justifications** encourage greater reported meat consumption. These perceptions allow individuals to act on a moral imperative and maintain their view of themselves as moral actors who do not inflict harm on others.
- Omnivores may not use any of the above processes and still reduce dissonance by **perceiving themselves as having no choice but to eat meat**, which is seen as necessary for survival and for health. This forgoes responsibility for harming animals, which also sharply reduces the disapproval of self or others (p. 34).
- **Vegetarians may also unwittingly function as reminders, just by their presence, to omnivores of their behavior, causing guilt, anger, and a host of other negative emotions.** This activation of meat-eating as a meaningful category is an unusual occurrence because as members of a very large majority, omnivores almost never define themselves in these terms. Vegetarians may also threaten the dissonance-reducing strategies used by omnivores by unsettling vegetarian imposters with the possibility of the discovery of their inauthenticity, and by undercutting the notion that meat is necessary for survival.

Overall, Rothgerber's paper observes that whenever possible, meat-eaters may focus on derogating vegetarians to minimize dissonance, thus eliminating the need to endorse one of the other dissonance-reducing strategies. Clearly though, vegetarians can produce a host of negative reactions, cognitions, and judgments among omnivores that have nothing to do with vegetarians themselves, i.e., their dispositions, attributes, etc. Instead, vegetarians serve as a reminder of eating meat, the guilt accompanying this reminder, and threat to strategies used by omnivores to feel better about consuming meat. Consequently, exposure to vegetarians may only harden pro-meat sentiment though defensiveness and the justifications it produces. **The chief barrier to reducing meat consumption, according to the author, is not necessarily a lack of contact with vegetarians, but how to help omnivores work through their defensiveness** (pp. 39, 40).

De Lanauze and Siadou-Martin (2019) explore the role of cognitive dissonance in bringing about behavioral change and the impact of external information in reinforcing conflicting attitudes. Through two quantitative studies set in France, the authors propose a conceptual model to describe the mediating role of cognitive dissonance in behavior change (p. 5). They observe that **people deal with cognitive dissonance by modifying at least one of the dissonant cognitions—either lowering the impact of the new attitude, or actually modifying their behavior** (p. 3). Perceived level of past meat consumption is a condition that encourages cognitive dissonance (p. 9). Trivialization is the most often used strategy to reduce dissonant cognitions; it deflates the importance of the arguments received and minimizes the perceived stakes and consequences of the criticized behavior (p. 4). Another common strategy is to undermine the credibility of the external information that produces the cognitive dissonance. Some key findings:

Study 1: surveys 501 meat-eaters to gauge their attitudes and behaviors regarding meat eating. They are also provided informational text about the negative impact of meat consumption on human health. It is found that **when participants are confronted with new dissonant information, they resort to dissonance-reducing strategies like trivialization and decredibilization**. Dissonant information increases psychological discomfort which should encourage behavior change. Behavior change could not be reliably measured as this study tested the impact of external information on psychological discomfort immediately after exposure to the stimulus (pp. 7, 9) rather than in the long term.

Study 2: It surveys 236 consumers and replicates Study 1 with an experiment that includes a control group of participants who are exposed to a more neutral, less dissonance-inducing stimulus. It finds that the effect on psychological discomfort does not last. Two weeks later, when exposed to the same stimulus survey instrument, the average level of discomfort is not significantly different from its initial level before submission to the stimulus. This suggests that incremental discomfort aroused momentarily in reaction to negative information tends to vanish over time.

The authors discuss that big meat-eaters are more likely to feel discomfort, but strong hedonic and emotional states like their love of meat, as a consonant cognition, will concurrently reduce their ill-being and motivation to change. The effects of negative attitudes toward meat production processes on levels of psychological discomfort are not significant, indicating that origin of meat (i.e., living animals) and production processes (involving slaughter and breeding of animals) may not be decisive in explaining consumption choices. Production processes relate to environmental and social (with seemingly remote consequences) cognitions which produce less discomfort than affective and personal ones.

From these results, the **authors recommend that communication strategies to reduce meat consumption should have messages that are strong enough to generate discomfort but are still credible and focused on essential issues**. Rather than the effect of the initial negative stimulus, behavior change intentions depend more on the final level of psychological discomfort, which is a result of the combined effects of previous levels of discomfort. Hence, **if at a given moment, the discomfort is not sufficient to trigger an intention to change, the corresponding motivational arousal will progressively wane** (pp. 10, 11).

Bastian et al. (2012) investigate, through three quantitative studies at an Australian university, **the increase in cognitive dissonance when people are motivated to perceive the minds of food animals**. They also study the role of the denial of mind to animals in facilitating effective meat-eating behavior. Some of the findings:

Study 1: A quantitative survey of 71 students found that animals considered appropriate for consumption are rated as having “less” mind than animals considered inappropriate. In addition, the extent to which an animal is thought to possess mind is associated with how deserving it is considered to be of moral treatment, and how bad people feel if they ate the animal. On the other hand, animals that have minds are considered inappropriate for human consumption, and people believe that eating them is morally wrong and will have negative consequences (p. 250).

Study 2: It attempts to find out if meat-eaters are more inclined to deny mind to animals they eat when animal suffering associated with the production of meat is made salient. Through a survey of 66 meat-eating students, it is found that when reminded that an animal is being raised for meat production, and the suffering associated with this, meat-eaters deny it mental capacities compared to when they are not reminded (p. 251).

Study 3: In this study with 128 participants it is found that participants denied minds to food animals when they are asked to think about the origins of meat. However, this denial is only significant for participants who are told they are going to sample the food animal’s meat. By denying minds to animals, people bring their cognitions in line with behavioral commitments, facilitating effective and unconflicted action. Although all participants say they will potentially eat meat and are reminded of the origins of meat, only those with the expectation that they would actually eat meat attempted to reduce their dissonance (pp. 252, 253).

It is evidenced that not only is mind denial triggered by dissonance, but the act of denying minds also reduces negative affect before eating meat, suggesting reduced dissonance and increased capacity for effective and unconflicted action of eating meat. The authors make the following observations on the basis of these three studies:

- Animals are afforded minds when it suits our interests, but the inverse is also true; when it does not suit us that animals have minds, we fail to see that. People are committed to meat-eating behaviors which are culturally cherished. Such behavioral commitment is enabled by denial of mind to animals, reducing the overall cognitive dissonance attached to meat-eating.
- In addition to dissonance-reducing strategies like trivialization and dementalization, more common is the possibility that **people more or less stop experiencing dissonance**. It is likely that repeated dissonance experiences across a lifetime change how one chronically construes animals one eats, such that in the absence of salient reminders of their capacity for suffering, possible cognitive dissonance related to meat-

eating diminishes across time. Further, whether people experience dissonance when eating meat will also be affected by what kind of meat they eat. Bastian et al.'s (2012) paper focuses on cows and sheep as examples of food animals. As indicated in Study 1, some animals are perceived to have less mind (e.g. chicken, fish, snails, insects), and therefore, dissonance related to their consumption may be less evident (pp. 253, 254).

CHAPTER IV. DRIVERS FOR VEG*NISM

Vegan advocacy relies on three key drivers for promoting behavior change, namely animal rights and welfare, health and fitness, and environment (including sustainability issues and climate change). The effectiveness of these drivers vary depending on the study settings and profiles of respondents. Studies detailing these drivers are outlined below.

IV A. ANIMAL RIGHTS AND WELFARE

Within the animal rights frame, some of the key strategies to promote veg*nism include anthropomorphizing, moral shock, countering moral disengagement, and amplifying cognitive dissonance and meat disgust.

Izmirli and Philips (2011) conduct a quantitative analysis on a sample derived from a previous survey by Meng (2009)⁹ to determine the relationship between the consumption of animal products and attitudes towards animals among university students in Eurasia (p. 437). The sample is composed of 3,433 students from 103 universities in 11 Eurasian countries¹⁰. Significant findings include:

- Almost half the respondents avoid some meats; 4% are vegetarian and 0.4% vegan. Students avoiding some meats mainly give the environment and their health as the reason, whereas most vegetarian students cite their health as the main reason. Religious instruction is cited by very few students in all categories. Of the students that do not avoid any meats, all consume beef and nearly all consume pork, poultry meat, and eggs.
- About three quarters of them consume milk; about one half consume lamb or seafood. Nearly all vegetarian respondents say that they avoid beef, lamb, and pork, a few consume poultry and seafood, and most consume eggs and milk.
- Vegans have a greater concern for animal welfare, animal rights, animals in experimentation, wildlife, and animals as spiritual symbols than students that only avoid some meats or no meats. Vegetarians have animal welfare, animal rights, and animals in experimentation index scores (adapted from Meng, 2009, p. 441) in between vegans and those who avoid some or no meat, but on other indices are similar to the latter two groups. Those who avoid some meats have higher levels of concern about killing animals than the other three groups, and vegetarians have particularly high levels of concern about unnatural animal practices. Further, perceptions of animal sentience are not affected by avoidance of animal products. It is partly driven by people's concern about animal suffering, with greater difference between most and least sentient species (chimpanzee versus fish) in those participants with high levels of concern.
- The cost of meat may also influence consumption. Females are much more likely to cite their health as the main reason for avoiding eating or using animal products, whereas males are more likely to cite the environment and, to a lesser extent, animal suffering. Female students are more likely than male students to avoid meats, particularly red meat.

⁹ Meng, J. (2009). *Origins of Attitudes Towards Animals*. Google book online, available at: <http://jmeng.goodeasy.info/publications/readOAA.php> (accessed 5 May 2010).

¹⁰ The countries are China, Czech Republic, the UK, Iran, Ireland, South Korea, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Spain, and Sweden.

- **The authors find a correlation between avoidance of animal products and levels of concern for animal rights, animal experimentation, and wildlife indices.** Vegans have the highest level of concern. The particularly high level of concern about killing animals among students who avoid some meats suggests that this could be a major reason for their avoidance. The predominant reason for this avoidance of at least some meats among non-vegan students is an ethical concern about life termination. Only 17% of non-vegan participants cited animal suffering during slaughter to be a reason for their avoidance of some meats (pp. 447, 448).

Freeman (2010) calls for an ideological authenticity in an analysis of the dynamics between animal “welfare” and animal “rights” in the “Go Veg” campaigns of five US animal rights organizations. He observes that in problematizing meat-eating, activists must balance the risks and benefits involved with being either too oppositional or too moderate. This involves deciding how much their messages should reflect a transformational animal rights perspective and non-speciesist values vis-a-vis more mainstream animal welfare values grounded in human interests (p. 163).

- Freeman observes that when AR activists promote animal welfare reforms and suggest meat reduction, claiming that it can raise public awareness, drive up meat prices, and incrementally lead to abolition, they are sending mixed messages. Their claim is challenged by survey findings that 80% of meat-eaters do not ever intend to go fully vegetarian, based on concerns that vegetarianism may be unhealthy and because they like the taste of meat. Researchers have also concluded that **people are more motivated to eliminate meat based on an animal suffering/moral rationale, than a health or environmental rationale** (p. 167).
- The AR organizations surveyed utilized four problem frames: (1) the suffering of animals due to cruelty (most prominent frame); (2) the commodification of animals as objects (huge numbers crammed into an area to underline the impersonal nature of mass production); (3) the harmfulness of animal agribusiness and animal products to humans and the environment; and (4) the needless killing and death of animals for food (pp. 169–172).
- In problem frames, most animal rights organizations ask people to fight factory-farming and only sometimes blame “animal agriculture” and “free-range” farms. This is distinct from “end animal farming.” Most calls-to-action ask consumers to boycott animal products, as this is considered more worthwhile than working with an untrustworthy industry and ineffectual government regulation for welfare reforms. Most messages emphasize consumers’ power to “save the earth” by boycotting animal products; most do not accuse consumers of meat-eating but typically insinuate that consumers are caring people who are kept innocently ignorant of factory-farm cruelty (pp. 172, 173).
- Furthermore, an industry reform or cruelty problem frame often highlights the worst or most abusive aspects of factory-farming. By doing so, it implicitly makes less painful or more mundane practices of farming animals, such as captivity and use, seem less problematic. Organizations must explain that **the rights (veganism) and welfare (industry reform) solutions are unrelated by clarifying that veganism is the most ethical consumer solution and that welfare reforms are a separate solution aimed at having industry mitigate the most cruel practices while society transitions from an animal-based to a plant-based diet** (p. 176).

- The commodification problem frame would also benefit by emphasizing how all farming is inherently objectifying, rather than just emphasizing the suffering involved in industrialized mass production.
- Freeman argues that animal rights organizations' rhetoric should increase humans' connection with their own animality and nature by ensuring that moral messages avoid humanist appeals to a purely "humane" or anthropocentric notion of civilization and ethics. But in deconstructing the human/animal dualism, organizations should also embrace diversity by appreciating species' variety and individuality to avoid a humanist insinuation that nonhuman animals must resemble humans to deserve respect (p. 166).

1. ANTHROPOMORPHIZING

Categorization of certain animals as nothing but "food" inhibits empathy for them. Confusing and dissolving these boundaries between humans and animals, or between companion and farm animals, disrupts the normalized nature of meat-eating. The following papers explore the role of anthropomorphizing as a strategy for vegan advocacy.

Wang and Basso (2019) test the belief that anthropomorphism leads to less favorable attitudes toward meat consumption by inducing feelings of anticipatory guilt. Participants from the United States in varying sample sizes are first exposed to anthropomorphism by showing them webpages of a cafe where customers interact with piglets while having food. The participants are then assigned to a meat or non-meat cafe condition and their endorsement of the cafe and attitudes to the food served are measured (p. 155). Key findings are as follows:

- Consumers have lower intent to patronize a restaurant where they can have friendly interactions with animals when meat (versus non-meat) is on offer. Only the enjoyment of food, but not its tastiness, is reduced in the post-piglet cafe exposure meat condition. When prompted to think about meat animals in anthropomorphic terms, participants have less pleasure eating meat, such pleasure being the most salient barrier to adopting a vegetarian diet (pp. 156–157).
- Anthropomorphism has a negative effect on consumers' attitudes toward meat, which in turn, reduces their intentions to patronize a meat restaurant. This effect holds whether consumers consider themselves or staff members to be taking part in a friendly human-animal interaction.
- Consumers exposed to the friendship metaphor (applied to animal-animal interactions and human-animal interactions) are more likely to anthropomorphize the meat animals (pigs) by endowing them with humanlike traits that are associated with social connection. The negative effect of anthropomorphism on attitudes to meat consumption is not contingent on human-animal interaction but on the friendship metaphor (animal-animal and human-animal friendship) that is used to express anthropomorphism (pp. 157–159).
- Anthropomorphism enhances negative feelings toward meat through anticipatory guilt, cuteness of food animals like pigs, empathic concern, and disgust (p. 160).
- The authors explain that **anthropomorphizing meat animals (pigs, in this case) through human-animal or animal-animal friendship can alter omnivorous consumers' attitudes toward meat consumption and lead to lower intentions to patronize a restaurant, or to buy (pork) meat products.** Moreover, the results

indicate that the negative effect of anthropomorphism on these attitudes is mediated by increased feelings of **anticipatory guilt** experienced when consumers consider eating (pork) meat.

The authors state that these results do not extend beyond pork meat, as they fail to replicate with beef meat (an explanation could be that unlike cows, which are usually portrayed in English as somewhat idiotic (e.g., “stupid cow”), pigs are commonly considered more intelligent than other species produced for food in the United States). By anthropomorphizing meat animals, the friendship metaphor thus contributes to re-framing the human-animal divide that revolves around dehumanization and reminds people that labelling an animal as food is an amoral act in itself (p. 163).

Beggs and Anderson (2020) conduct a quantitative survey for Faunalytics with a sample of 1,073 American adults to understand the beliefs regarding chicken and fish, and which of these beliefs are favorable to the welfare of these animals. Key findings include:

- Some pro-animal beliefs are already reasonably common—for example, people understand that air and water quality are important for chickens and fish. This indicates that they will be more sensitive to welfare issues like poor living conditions on farms.
- The beliefs that have the largest correlation with signing a pledge to reduce fish consumption are those about fish personality; for example, that fish has emotions and are more intelligent than people give them credit for (58% of participants thought so); that fish can communicate (84%); that many farms have horrible living conditions; (60%) and that fish play (72%), and are loving and beautiful (82%). Focusing advocacy efforts on bolstering these fish-related beliefs may be the most effective way to obtain dietary pledges to reduce consumption.
- The beliefs that have the largest correlation with signing a pledge to reduce chicken consumption are that chickens are beautiful (54%); that they need room to explore and exercise (88%); but live in horrible conditions (82%); that chickens are more intelligent than most people give them credit for (66%); and that they are loving (45%). Those who agree that chickens do not contribute as much to climate change as eating other animals are less likely to take the diet pledge.
- People are more likely to sign a petition that calls for welfare reforms than to take the diet pledge to reduce their own consumption. The authors also find that people who eat more of each animal are less likely to take the diet pledge to reduce their consumption than those who eat less already. However, these high consumers are no less likely to sign a petition to help improve conditions for the animals.

The authors recommend the following for animal advocates:

- Based on the findings, **messaging around the personality, emotions, suffering, and intelligence of the animals is likely to lead to the best results**, even outside of the context of diet pledges and welfare petitions. Slightly different beliefs are also important for each animal and each outcome.
- **People are more likely to agree to sign a petition than to take a diet pledge to reduce their consumption.** Advocates interested in both outcomes will be best served by asking people to sign the petition first, and then introducing the diet pledge. This may help increase diet pledges due to something known as “behavior consistency”. People generally want to be consistent in what they do, so following one successful ask with another related ask may increase uptake (pp. 4–6).

Cherry (2010) looks into the animal rights strategy of crossing symbolic boundaries between humans and animals, and between farm and companion animals. The qualitative analysis comes from in-depth interviews with activists in the AR movements in France and the US. Cherry observes that symbolic distinctions between humans and animals are deeply embedded in culture and supported by multiple institutions. **Humans also tend to see themselves as outside of nature and natural laws** (p. 458). AR activists view the dismantling of this distinction as both a goal and a strategy. Elaborating on this strategy:

- **Activists try to expand the term “animal” to include both human and non-human animals** (p. 459), rather than maintaining a hierarchical differentiation between humans (superior) and animals (inferior).
- Stating that humans are animals constitutes a primary tactic to highlight the boundary’s arbitrary and socially constructed nature. This is also reflected in the phrase, “human and non-human animals.”
- **Universalizing strategies are also deployed**, and they involve two steps—first, activists universalize the victimization of humans and animals by placing animals alongside humans as victims of violence; and, second, they universalize the struggle for animal rights by equating the AR movement with the human rights movement.
- Activists also **universalize victimization by linking abuses toward animals to abuses toward humans** (p. 461). The underlying logic behind this strategy is that if one opposes acts of torture, murder, genocide, and discrimination, then it should not matter who comprises the targets of these acts. Thus, activists focus on the horrors of the acts themselves, and highlight the similar social structural positioning of animals and humans who are victims of such acts (comparisons between murder and killing of animals, “meat is murder” and between animal exploitation and slavery).
- Activists also **universalize struggles** (to find a common activist identity across struggles) with many comparisons made between the tactics of the AR movement and the anti-slavery movement and the US civil rights movement (p. 467).
- Graphic descriptions of human bodies as animal bodies and substitution of farm animal in the slaughterhouse with a pet animal comprise more **discursive boundary-crossing tactics** that activists employ (p. 469).

2. MORAL SHOCK

Wrenn (2013) makes a case for employing moral shock tactics in abolitionist activism. She notes that **the AR movement relies heavily on moral shocks**—i.e., the tactic of circulating graphic photographs, films, and stories that describe the brutal exploitation of non-human animals. The welfarist faction relies on moral shocks to motivate reform, while the abolitionist movement may incorporate them to motivate veganism. Other key observations are:

- Abolitionist outreach is less reliant on graphic imagery and narratives than welfarist outreach is, focusing more on a reasoned and rational presentation of information. She suggests that abolitionists borrow from welfarist tactics, which are more successful in eliciting emotional reaction and motivating participation (p. 381).
- Gary Francione, the founder of the abolitionist approach to animal rights, contends that **showing someone content on the terrible treatment of animals elicits the**

almost-automatic reaction that the treatment be improved and not that the use be stopped altogether (p. 382).

- **Moral shocks utilize emotions, increase chances of donations, and are more effective in recruiting new members into the movement than social networks** (pp. 383–385). However, moral shocks for veg*n advocacy do not necessarily lead to empathy, since they call out viewers on what they are contributing to. Viewers become defensive and are unlikely to consider a movement that requires fundamental changes in their lives. The possibility of transitioning to veganism or volunteering for the movement is prevented. This challenges the claim that moral shocks are more effective than social networking (or proximity to vegans) in recruiting new members. Transitioning vegans and vegetarians are less impacted by images of suffering, and instead, require more factual information. Further, people in the current media climate are used to seeing suffering and gore; moral shock activism proves ineffective in such a scenario.
- Meanwhile, welfarism, combined with negative media portrayals and stereotypes, has largely framed abolitionism and veganism as difficult, radical, or extreme. Many AR organizations frame their goals (to go vegetarian, reduce meat, etc.) in welfarist ideology to reduce conflict (p. 388).

Context should determine which strategy is to be used. Using overly emotional and shocking imagery to campaign against hunting—something seen in the public eye as a logical scientific endeavor—will be counterproductive. Similarly, even moral shock imagery used to promote veganism can be interpreted as emotional and feminine; many AR activists turn to rational argumentation to gain legitimacy from potential constituencies. Abolitionists, in particular, work to frame non-human animal rights and veganism as a matter of justice and moral rationality rather than of compassion. Therefore, welfare **tactics like moral shocks should be deployed with careful framing and with attention to context** (p. 390).

Scudder and Mills (2009) look at the effectiveness of moral shock advocacy through a quantitative study of 86 communications students in the US by showing them a PETA video on animal abuse in a pig farm. They are then asked to rate both PETA and the meat production industry. Results indicate that these advocacy messages had the intended impact of harming the credibility of the animal food-processing industry. However, it is the *perception* of wrongdoing and *not the intensity or negative nature* of the graphic video that accounts for the significant erosion of the already-low credibility of the animal-processing industry. Credibility of PETA increased among participants after watching the video (p. 164).

Mika (2006) undertakes qualitative focus group interviews with 52 non-activist university student participants to gauge the effectiveness of strategies like moral claims that are used by AR organizations. The study observes that **the moral shock approach may deeply offend, resulting in a backlash against the organization undermining its credibility** and tainting the movement as a whole. Media groups tend to “detextualize” sensational protests when they focus only on the shocking components. This leads to a minority group (like PETA) representing the entire movement. Attention will be diverted from the issue being talked about and instead focuses on the demonstrators (p. 921).

PETA’s messaging used for exposure to the sample employs three types of framing:

1. **Transformation:** Extreme and personal, this frame reconceptualizes a phenomenon so that what is earlier tolerable is now immoral and unacceptable (e.g., using Holocaust comparisons). Participants’ reaction to this frame is visceral, negative, strong, and

immediate. Many are deeply offended by the comparison of Holocaust victims to animals (p. 923).

2. **Extension:** Primary framework of the movement is extended to include issues that are of immediate concern to potential adherents but only of marginal relevance to the movement's core commitments (e.g., associating vegetarianism with nationalism, sex appeal, or Christianity).
3. **Absent referent:** Here, the dead animal is invoked through a reference to meat, and, in the exposure example, a woman's body with the same animal parts. Since the killed animal is invoked, this is a disconcerting strategy which also produces uneasiness in female respondents (p. 929).
 - The efficacy of moral shocks lies in the fact that the object of moral outrage is typically external to the target audience—**most moral shocks inform viewers what others (scientists, circus trainers, hunters, etc.) do to animals** (p. 932). However, advocating a switch to vegetarianism involves pointing out to meat-eaters the exploitation that they are participating in by eating meat.
 - Moral shocks, which are used for this purpose, are found to be ineffective as the viewer is told that the enemy, who inflicts suffering on animals, is themselves. Being called culprits leads most respondents to doubt the credibility of PETA. Moral shock images catch the attention of every participant but have little impact in recruiting members.
 - **Frame extensions are ineffective** as participants point out that the statements made, especially from the Bible, are false. Some feel being asked to prove their patriotism by going vegetarian is “shameless opportunism,” while others dislike being made to feel guilty. No one makes a connection between sex appeal (although it garnered attention) and vegetarian diets (p. 935).
 - Although generally PETA ads are seen as ineffective, for some viewers they may represent the first step in a journey that results in joining the movement. Groups like PETA that engage in broad-based campaigns must tailor content according to the target audience. With regard to the use of extension frames, PETA runs the risk of expanding focus issues to a point where main goals and actions are less coherent (pp. 938–939).

The study also points out that **most of the members (70%) of AR organizations in the US are women, while most vegetarians are white, middle-class women who are college graduates and professionals**. As many as 65% of AR activists and a significant majority among vegetarians are atheist or agnostic, or do not subscribe to a conventional religion. For many, commitment to the principles of vegetarianism and animal rights is part of an individual or even communal spiritual ethic (p. 918).

3. COUNTERING MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Buttler et al. (2021) explore the effectiveness of distressing farm animal footage and activist dialogue in affecting people's evaluation of meat and willingness to eat meat. The paper consists of two quantitative studies of 80–100 omnivores in Germany who are engaged with activists from a local AR group who provide them with information and footage on meat production at a slaughterhouse. Important findings are:

- Counteracting moral disengagement increases participants' willingness to reduce meat consumption. This highlights the incremental value of counteracting moral

disengagement and highlights that **two-stage intervention strategies are superior to mere information campaigns** (e.g., by confronting people with animal welfare issues).

- The **dialogue with activists successfully changed people's evaluations of meat**, going beyond the effects of raising people's awareness of meat's moral implications and also increasing their willingness to change their diets. The argumentation helped – at least partially – to counteract some moral disengagement strategies as people attributed more emotional capacities to animals after they spoke to the activists (pp. 6–8).

4. MEAT DISGUST

Ruby and Heine (2012) examine the factors, primarily disgust, that determines **why people eat some animals and not others**. They conduct two quantitative studies of 608 Euro-Canadian and Hong Kong Chinese participants (Study 1) and 188 Euro-American and Indian participants (Study 2). Both samples are omnivorous in their diet. Key findings are:

- **Study 1:** It proves that the perceived human-like attributes of animals predict disgust at the thought of eating them, and that reflecting on these attributes increases disgust. Within both cultural groups, disgust is a significant negative predictor of willingness to eat animals, and social influence is a significant positive predictor. Social influence has greater predictive power among Hong Kong Chinese than among Euro-Canadian participants. Thus, this study provides initial evidence that the choices of close others may indeed have more of an impact on one's food choices in collectivistic cultural contexts.
- **Among the predictors for disgust, animal intelligence is the strongest positive predictor, followed by appearance** (deviation from neutral towards cute or “ugly”). Perceived capacity for emotional bonding with humans emerges as a small yet significant positive predictor, but only among Hong Kong Chinese participants. Finally, perceived capacity for suffering does not emerge as a significant predictor (p. 49).
- **Study 2:** Reflecting on animals' psychological attributes has a greater impact on disgust among Euro-Americans than among Indians, suggesting that disgust at eating meat among Euro-Americans may be more linked to the anthropomorphizing of animals than it is among Indians. Disgust and social influence emerge as significant predictors of willingness to eat meat, but social influence carries relatively more weight in the Indian sample.
- Indian participants report more overall disgust and less willingness to eat than Euro-Americans, and reflecting on the animals' attributes does not significantly impact their reported disgust. Attitudes toward meat consumption may be more fixed in Indian cultural contexts. Within both cultural groups, disgust is a significant negative predictor of willingness to eat animals, and social influence is a significant positive predictor but more so in the collectivistic cultural context of Indians (p. 50).
- In stark contrast to directly making salient the link between meat and animal suffering, which can lead people to dehumanize the animals they eat (also see Bastian et al., 2012), the present studies demonstrate that **having people first reflect on their perception of the attributes of animals subsequently increases their disgust at the thought of eating them**. However, reflecting on the animals' attributes is more impactful on Euro-Canadian and Euro-American participants than on Hong Kong Chinese and Indian participants. By extension, it is possible that Euro-Canadian and Euro-American

omnivores are more preoccupied with the mental states of the animals that they do (and do not) eat than are omnivores from other cultural contexts, or that disgust at the thought of eating animals is simply less malleable in collectivistic cultural contexts.

- Robust gender differences emerge across both studies, such that women are more disgusted than men at the thought of eating animals (Ruby and Heine, 2012, p. 51).

Zickfeld et al. (2018) explore the **effects of “cuteness” of food animals on meat consumption** by looking into mediating factors such as empathy, humanization, motivation for caretaking, and general pro-social attitudes. American and Norwegian citizens of varying sample sizes were recruited for two quantitative studies. The key findings of the paper are:

- **Study 1:** It divides respondents into two groups—the experimental condition where they are given an advertisement for lamb chops that includes a picture of a lamb and a control condition where this picture is excluded. Willingness to eat the meat is higher in the control condition. The experimental manipulation leads to an increase of empathy, and a decrease of willingness to eat the meat and state dissociation ratings. Experimental participants also gave higher cuteness and humanization ratings than those in the control condition (pp. 10–15).
- **Study 2:** It experimentally tested whether cuteness influences willingness to eat meat by increasing empathy. Participants here are divided into two groups—some are exposed to a “neutral” lamb’s picture on an advertisement for lamb chops, while others are exposed to a “cute” lamb. Both pictures were edited using software to look neutral or more baby-like/cute. The researchers find that the willingness to eat the lamb chops did not differ between the cuteness condition and the neutral control condition. Participants reported higher cuteness scores in the cute condition, which, in turn, was associated with decreased intention to eat the advertised meat.
- **Increased cuteness of the animal resulted in less willingness to consume meat in the US, but to a lesser extent in Norway.** Importantly, results from all studies are consistent in that the effect of cuteness on willingness to eat meat is mediated by empathy towards the animal. Overall, the cuter consumers perceive animals to be, the less inclined they are to eat the animal’s meat (pp. 18, 19).

IV B. HEALTH – DRIVER OR DETERRENT FOR VEGANISM?

Feher et al. (2020) review existing research from international and Hungarian papers and through it offer a comprehensive list of **barriers and benefits of switching to a plant-based diet**. This can be used appropriately for pitching veganism as a healthy choice. Key observations are:

- **Most vegetarians are motivated by ethical and/or health reasons (avoidance of health risks).** Vegetarians weigh less, have a lower risk of obesity and cardiovascular diseases, have decreased saturated fat and higher iron-absorption rates than omnivorous people (p. 8). Vegetarianism can promote a decrease in social dysfunction and an increase in well-being and contentment. Individuals adopting a plant-based diet usually spent less money on health and healthcare, and at the same time, the quality of their life improves (p. 9).
- The enjoyment of, and excessive commitment to, eating meat and the immense difficulty in giving it up are identified as the biggest barriers to transitioning to a plant-based

diet. Compared to the popularity of eating meat, factors associated with health and conveniences have been found to be less important (p. 9).

- **Concerns relating to the risk of deficiency of essential nutrients like Vitamin B12 and Vitamin D are a main barrier** to adopting plant-based diets. Expert opinion remains divided on the issue since these nutrients are found only in animal products and in non-routine plant sources like algae (p. 11). Difficulty in cooking vegetarian meals, non-availability of vegetarian options in restaurants, and its tastelessness are often given as other barriers.
- Individuals try to keep their body mass balanced by using a plant-based diet; however, this carries the risk of developing eating disorders. Negative stereotypes about vegetarian diets (protein-deficient, B12-deficient, malnourishment) are still persistent in the public. **The preservative effect of family habits (families are often reluctant to switch with the individual) can be a barrier**, mainly for women and the elderly, when attempting to convert to a plant-based diet. Followers of celebrities who turn vegan are likely to make the switch by imitation, which can overshadow the ethical and health considerations of veganism (p. 11).

Carfora et al. (2017 a) tests the **mediating roles of anticipated regret and intention in the randomized controlled trial of a messaging intervention for reducing processed meat consumption (PMC)**. The quantitative study for which 124 participants in Italy were randomized to condition, uses an SMS that focused on anticipated regret and reminded participants to self-monitor PMC using a daily food diary. It was found that:

- A simple message encouraging self-monitoring of PMC plus reminder of potential anticipated regret about eating PMC was sufficient to increase anticipated regret and intention, and consequentially to reduce self-reported PMC. This supports the efficacy of a text messaging intervention that combines the reminder to engage in self-monitoring, writing a daily food diary, with the elicitation of anticipated regret simultaneously.
- Anticipated regret, combined with the engagement in written self-monitoring, could be increased by SMS reminders in young adults, prompting a sequential enhancement of intentions in relation to healthy eating behaviors (pp. 19–20).

In the second part of the experiment **Carfora et al., (2017 b)** present a different quantitative paper that **explores the role of eating identities in understanding and changing red meat consumption (RMC)**. The focus is on testing the efficacy of SMS text messages that remind participants to self-monitor RMC using a daily food diary. The randomized sample size was 342 for Study 1 and 244 for Study 2. Key findings include:

- **Text messages are efficient in promoting health behaviors and reducing RMC.** It confirms that messaging interventions can be a useful strategy to encourage young adults to change their eating behavior. The effect of the messages is shown to be mediated through changing healthy-eating and meat-eating identities and intentions to reduce RMC.
- The greater impact of Perceived Behavior Control (PBC) and attitude on intention are the most important predictors of healthy eating, and specifically of meat consumption. It is seen that past behavior is not a significant predictor of intention. Further, meat-eating identity explains intentions about RMC. According to previous studies, a positive attitude towards meat decreases intentions to reduce meat consumption, while a perception

of behavioral control concerning changing meat consumption increases intentions to reduce meat consumption.

IV C. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The impact of animal agriculture on environmental sustainability and climate change has been attracting increasing scholarly attention in recent years; the studies outlined below examine the impact of this knowledge on dietary choices.

Sedova et al. (2016) present a qualitative study on **the attitudes and behaviors of 13 environmental studies graduate students in the Czech Republic toward meat-eating, and their strategies for coping with the cognitive dissonance** induced by the issues related to meat-eating and production. The following observations are made:

- All the respondents view meat-eating as problematic due to its ethical and environmental consequences, and feel some kind of dissonance between their attitudes and behavior. Animal welfare in factory farms is recognized as the main issue by all the informants. Twelve out of 13 respondents regard excessive meat-eating as undesirable. Four say they will not be able to kill an animal themselves or watch it being killed.
- **Animal welfare and the origin of meat in factory farms is seen as a major issue.** Some see organic farming as a viable solution while others think organic farming does not solve the ethical issues behind killing animals, nor can it meet current demands for meat. Seven respondents say the key solution lies in a significant reduction in the total amount of meat consumed.
- Respondents take these positions varyingly into account when buying meat with only one buying organic meat. **Constraining factors are high prices, lack of accessibility and lack of information (sometimes due to lack of interest) on organic, well-raised meat.** Only four informants may or are considering becoming vegetarians; seven do not want to. Four claim it is hard to achieve a healthy and balanced diet without meat and three state that vegetarians face many problems and limitations: canteens or even restaurants do not always offer vegetarian meals and it may be a problem when traveling. Some students also recognize the insufficiency of vegetarian diets to address the environmental and ethical issues of dairy farming and the egg industry. But none of them are willing to forgo these products. A vast majority of them do not discriminate between animals on the basis of species or hierarchy; they rather distinguish food and non-food animals according to habit, cultural framework, or a relationship with a particular animal (pp. 419–420).
- **Pursuing environmental studies does not influence the respondents in their attitudes towards meat-eating significantly.** Although they acquire more detailed information and deeper insight into the corresponding issues of meat and climate change, they already possessed some basic level of knowledge even before the studies. However, **social norms and pressures are a strong factor in determining meat-abstinence.** In the social circle of these students within their campus, it is common to check the origin of meat (whether factory farmed or not) or to reduce its consumption. Daily meat-eating is usually frowned upon by their environmental studies classmates. However, outside their university social circle, daily meat consumption is seen as the norm (p. 420).

- Unlike in the general population (who are not already aware of meat's environmental impact), misrepresentation, denial of mind to animals, seeing animals as impure, disgusting, or dangerous are not coping strategies used by students in the sample owing to greater knowledge of environment and science. They use different strategies: reduction of perceived choice or promising themselves improved future behavior. Sometimes, they also use strategies that are similar to the ones used in the general population viz detachment, concealment, and shifting the blame.
- Although not vegetarian, **the students usually avoid meat in the company of a reference group, namely, their friends from the environment studies class and other fellow students.** This is because people tend to prioritize social norms over personal norms in the presence of one's reference group. However, the influence of a reference group can have an effect in the other direction as well, as seen in the case of their family and partners who see meat-eating as the norm.
- How do young people in families where meat is regularly eaten become vegetarian? According to existing research, this happens when young people conclude that meat eating is wrong. Once social norms are internalized, they become an autonomous application of independent thinking and feeling, regardless of the social context. Vegetarianism thus becomes, the authors observe, part of one's identity.
- In this research sample, both the proclaimed attitudes of the students and the fact that most of them have significantly reduced consumption of meat may indicate a change of moral norms towards not eating meat. On the other hand, they did not, in general, view meat-eating as wrong.
- People often exclude animals from their scope of justice since they view them in terms of utility to people and severity of conflict between people and the animal. **Students of environmental studies divide animals into in-groups and out-groups of moral concern.** One species of animals may fall in both groups at once depending on whether or not the particular animal is part of the closer social circle. (p. 422).

Graham and Abrahamse (2017) look into the **impact of climate information provision on intentions to eat meat.** They conduct a quantitative survey of 848 participants from New Zealand, through convenience and snowball sampling, to find the relation between self-enhancement/transcendent values and meat consumption. Key findings are:

- Human values play an important role in sustainable food choices. **Self-enhancement values are positively related to meat consumption and self-transcendence values are negatively related to meat consumption.** Compared to a no-information control group, the provision of information about climate impacts of eating meat are associated with higher levels of concern about these impacts and lower intentions to eat meat, when meat consumption and environmental concerns are controlled. However, the information does not affect attitudes towards meat consumption.
- People may have a favorable attitude towards meat for different reasons (e.g., taste, nutrition) despite intention to eat less meat because of the environmental impacts. For example, **environmental messages are often framed as a societal issue that needs to be tackled by everyone by changing certain behaviors. This may mostly appeal to people who endorse self-transcendence values,** because they, in general, will be thinking about the wider impacts of certain actions. Another explanation relates to the importance of meat consumption to people's self-identity. Thus, trying to influence

attitudes about a behavior that is integral to self-identity, such as eating meat, may be construed as a personal attack, making attitude change less likely.

- Most people don't associate meat consumption with climate change. The present study finds that the **provision of information about climate impacts of meat is associated with a significantly higher increase in concern about these impacts**. This is especially among those with relatively low levels of general environmental concern and among those with high self-transcendence values.
- An individually framed message can be more effective in changing attitudes towards eating meat when people have a stronger endorsement of self-transcendence values (pp. 105, 106).

De Boer et al. (2016) explores how to involve consumers in the transition to a low-carbon, less meat-consuming society through a quantitative survey of 500+ participants each from the US and the Netherlands. Stratified sampling is used and several mitigation strategies are proposed to the respondents (organic food, meat-less diet, locally sourced diet etc.). Important findings are:

- The **outstanding effectiveness in mitigating climate change of the less meat option is recognized by merely 12% of the Dutch and 6% of the American sample**, although many more participants give the option fairly positive effectiveness ratings. This result can be partly explained by the complexity of the links between meat-eating and climate change (which requires adequate knowledge about the production process, feed-meat ratio, etc., all of which are difficult to communicate through information provision).
- Participants who are willing to adopt the organic food option and the "drive less" option are also more often willing to take up the less meat option or the local food option. The willingness to eat less meat increases with the option's perceived effectiveness and, in addition to that, with higher willingness to change ratings for the "organic food" option and the "drive less" option, not being a regular meat-eater, and female gender. Belief in human causation and willingness to buy local food are significant predictors only in the American sample.
- An **increase in "carbon awareness" can make it feasible** to design food-related policies that focus on particular products and provide consumers with information on product-specific carbon footprints. This approach can only work if consumers recognize, understand and value carbon footprint information, and if they have meaningful opportunities to switch products (pp. 24, 25).

Hunter and Roos (2016) conduct a quantitative survey with a stratified simple random sample of 1,000 single family homes in Sweden to evaluate **the predictors of intention to reduce or alter meat consumption to mitigate climate change**. They find that:

- Having the belief that climate change is severe and is a risk to oneself and one's family, or even a risk to society, people in poor countries, animals, and plants is a strong predictor of mitigation intentions. Hence "threat other" (a combination of vulnerability and severity items that represent a threat to other entities than oneself or immediate family) is a better predictor of mitigation intentions than "threat close" (severity and vulnerability items that represent threats to oneself or the next generations)

- **Framing messages of climate change with multiple moral frames** (directed both at local victims like family, country, etc. and more distant ones like the larger environment, animals, etc.) promote climate-friendly food choices.
- Respondents are significantly more likely to replace beef with chicken/fish/pork than any other mitigation options. As expected, they are significantly less likely to refrain from eating meat completely than all other options. To understand why this may be, we see that response efficacy to quitting meat is similar to response efficacy in all other mitigation options. That is to say that the participants believe that by stopping the eating of meat completely, their actions will have no greater or lesser effect on mitigating climate change. However, it is also clear that their **self-efficacy is significantly lower when it comes to meat cessation than any other mitigation option** (pp. 157, 158).

Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt (2016) provide an overview of factors influencing reduction of meat consumption in developed and transition countries to combat climate change. They use a quantitative meta-analysis of existing research set in multiple sites from different disciplines on the subject. Key observations are:

- The more frequently people consume meat, the less they perceive the environmental benefit of reducing meat consumption. Even when people are aware of the environmental impact of food, they attach more significance to packaging than to meat. Yet knowledge regarding meat's climate impact has been increasing (p. 1265).
- **Health concerns tend to rate higher than environmental or animal welfare concerns in motivating change in dietary behavior**, though there are differences between socio-demographic groups. Lack of knowledge about the nutritional value of plant-based diets and about vegan recipes is a significant barrier to people reducing their meat consumption; this can be mitigated by strong public health messaging (p. 1267).
- **Cognitive dissonance acts as a barrier** to feeling emotionally involved and thus to changing meat-eating behavior. Meat paradox— when people tend to avoid or resist information about the negative consequences of meat-eating because they contradict or threaten basic perspectives on fairness and ethical behavior -- can give rise to strong, emotionally-distressing reactions. Psychological responses aimed at relieving people of these negative feelings include denial and delegation as a means of removing feelings of guilt (p. 1267).
- The consumption, purchase, and preparation of meat is determined by the habits and unconscious routines of day-to-day practices. Habits tend to be repetitive, routine, reliable, reinforcing, and rewarding. Respondents to meat-eating cluster broadly into three key groups: those with a strong attachment to meat and an unwillingness to change behavior; those with no strong feelings and a willingness to change habits, and those who have morally internalized a strong disgust towards meat. The trend towards “convenience” is a major influence on food purchasing habits. This is encouraged by a lack of time, skills, or interest in cooking. Taste is also a significant barrier to meat-abstinence (p. 1268).
- Young people appear more open to “flexitarian” behavior. That is, they are more comfortable eating with the higher proportion of non-meat eaters, which indicates a generational shift in attitudes and behaviors towards meat-eating. **More among younger age groups are vegetarian because they are persuaded more by the moral and environmental reasons to be vegetarian, while people aged 41–60 are**

prompted by health reasons. Family history and childhood experiences play a role in that the food one eats in childhood is also a preferred adult choice (pp. 1269–70).

- Food consumption in general or meat avoidance in particular can be regarded as a choice that is part of the lifestyle decisions people make. People hence “adjust their eating behavior to manage their public image and create a certain impression on others.” **Normative beliefs regarding meat-consumption in one’s peer group also influence switching to a plant-based diet as it can affect belonging in the group.** Flexitarianism is placed on a spectrum between a meat-centered diet and vegetarianism, however, flexitarians are seen as being much more similar to meat-eaters than to vegetarians because they have a greater liking for meat, are less disgusted by it, and show less emotional resistance to meat consumption compared to vegetarians.
- **Successful social meat reduction requires supportive government policies and practices, new and different business practices and civil society initiatives** working in synergy. Attempts to reduce meat consumption at a political level through litigations, etc., can mobilize protests from powerful interest groups. Low meat prices due to industrial meat production and the easy availability of cheap meat are important barriers to meat reduction. In contrast, in some other countries where the price of meat is high, people who eat less meat are able to save money. The meat that is available in such countries is not factory-farmed (hence the high prices) and of better quality (p. 1271).

The following strategies are recommended:

- Developing “**positive**” **messages** that explicitly connect the issues of dietary flexibility, animal health, and personal health, while framing specific benefits for different target groups.
- If there are an increasing number of high-quality vegetarian restaurants or vegan outlets nearby, and if it were the “norm” to link meatless foods to personal health, animal welfare, and sustainability issues, then **habits can be readjusted to gradually form a “new conformity.”**
- Cognitive dissonance can be reduced by **promoting new social norms with the help of vegan influencers** and more positive attitudes to animals and diet shifts (pp. 1271–73).

IV D. COMPARATIVE STUDIES ACROSS ANIMAL RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Understanding the comparative advantages and strengths of different appeals for vegan advocacy is crucial to designing appropriate vegan advocacy and campaigning strategies. This section outlines some of them.

Fernandez (2019) presents an analytical paper that explores **the common ground between animal advocacy and environmental movements**. The author also tests whether using images of farm animals suffering in environmental movements is effective. The following are given as reasons why environmental movements do not address dietary impact:

- Dietary change is seen as the niche advocacy area of animal rights and welfare organizations. Further, environmental movements aim for systemic institutional change through research, litigation, etc. rather than depending on public education.

- Advocating against meat-eating is seen as counterproductive because it can come across as paternalistic and alienate NGO supporters—dietary choice is considered a personal individual right in Western cultures.
- **There is also a speciesist bias in climate ethics and environmental justice**, which conceives non-human life as inferior to human life, or even as mere resources for human needs (p. 3).

The case for using images of farm animals suffering in environmental advocacy is made on the basis of: (a) Effectiveness of making visible a concrete strategy of climate change mitigation through dietary choice and the adoption of a vegan diet considering the variables of salience and efficacy (b) The historical role of emotion in attitude-change (c) The effectiveness of using images of free-living non-human animals had already been demonstrated (p. 10).

The author states that **framing an environmental message through the image of “suffering animals” can make an effective emotional appeal to combat climate inaction by focusing attention on the suffering of the individual sentient animal**. The animal’s suffering is connected to human and non-human others who are similarly affected by climate change.

Happer and Wellesley (2019) focus on the negotiation of new information regarding meat consumption and climate change within the media environments of respondents in the UK, the US, China, and Brazil. The authors undertake qualitative research using nine focus groups with six people each. **There is a public awareness gap** (which is responsible for indifference and inertia to the climate impact of meat, and an unwillingness for behavior change) **regarding the greenhouse gas emission of meat, compared with the footprints of other sources like transportation**. The latter are thought to be higher than that of meat. It is observed that while information provision alone is unlikely to be sufficient to trigger behavior change, it has an important role to play in socializing the idea of reduced meat consumption (p. 126). Previous research notes that films and TV programs are one aspect of globalization which is driving a shift towards Western diets in China; similarly the media bolsters the idea that meat is natural, necessary, and normal in the US (p. 127). Key findings of the present study include:

- The associations between climate change and meat consumption are not yet established. There is not, across any sample, a widespread pre-existing commitment in theory or in practice to alter meat consumption due to concerns about climate change or any other environmental issue. The lack of engagement is also reflective of the way in which climate change, and by association, any related issues, is deprioritized in the mainstream media across each of the four countries and the resultant low volume of coverage that it receives (p. 131).
- Where they are exposed to information coverage of the meat-climate relationship, respondents afforded the information minimal attention since the **mention of “climate change” was not a sufficient hook to trigger their attention** (p. 132). When given a fact sheet explaining the impact of meat consumption on climate, most respondents react skeptically—directed towards credibility of sources and also toward claims like meat causes more emissions than transport which runs against the belief reinforced in school and media (this was especially so in the case of Chinese and Brazilian respondents. However, these persons also respond positively to the information

when it is grounded in science, and are more willing to address their dietary habits) (pp. 134, 135).

- In Brazil and China, meat-eating is understood by some as an integral part of a healthy human diet, for which there is no effective substitute in terms of nutrition. In the UK and the US, the question of limiting meat consumption is more familiar in the context of reinforced cultural messages about the negative health impacts of meat consumption. Some participants respond with behavioral shifts and unrealized intention of the same to these arguments. In the US, a more common theme is the way in which mass production methods have disrupted the “natural” and positive impacts of eating meat (pp. 129–130).
- In the Brazilian and Chinese groups, meat consumption is symbolic of social and economic progress, and symptomatic of the move towards a more Westernized (progressive) way of life. In the UK, it is noted as an aspiration to follow plant-based diets; there is a sense that access to alternative diets is limited within the lower-income groups for both financial and cultural reasons.
- The **low cost, convenience, and availability of processed meat is seen to reinforce cultural factors that support widespread meat consumption**. Healthier non-meat options are both expensive and more difficult to access (p. 131).

Olausson (2017) discusses how livestock production is legitimized in everyday discourse on Facebook despite its links with worsening the climate change crisis. The author conducts a **discourse analysis of Facebook comments and activity** around two news articles published in Sweden that defended keeping livestock for meat and dairy. It uses the framework of Social Representation Theory and the allied concepts of objectification and anchoring. Key observations are:

- **An opposition between the environmental impact of livestock production and air travel is set up.** Air travel is easily ontologized (due to visible eco-destruction unlike livestock which has only milk and meat as visible consequences) and “tangible.” The commonsensical representation of livestock as causing less emissions is then thematically anchored in a taken-for-granted representation of “naturalness,” i.e., that cows are a creation of nature and are necessary for the very survival of humans as against air travel which is human-made and superfluous. We see how meat-eating is justified as necessary, natural, nice, and normal (pp. 6, 7).
- There is **also an element of conspiracy thinking** which implies that livestock production has deliberately been made the focus of public debate for the sole purpose of obscuring more pressing environmental issues, which for various reasons are considered too sensitive to address (p. 8). Commentators state that there is a hidden agenda to target the innocent Swedish dairy and meat industries as culprits of climate change (p. 13).
- There is also a polarization apparent between those countries that are considered to behave in an environmentally-friendly manner, in this case Sweden, and those that do not, i.e., most of the rest of the world (p. 9). **National identity as a prominent anchoring strategy is always accompanied by discursive struggles regarding the distribution of responsibility of climate change among countries.** This manifests as, “there is no point in ‘us’ improving ‘our’ environmental behavior before the rest of the world does,” hence, “we should feel good about ‘our’ meat industry and “support Swedish farmers (who are being witch-hunted)”.

- Science, together with negotiations about (un) reliable information, are integral parts of people's discussions about livestock production on Facebook. Some are keen to anchor their statements in a sense of national belonging by choosing to rely only on scientists who allegedly say that Swedish cows are not a cause of climate change (p. 12).

Radnitz et al. (2015) look at the reasons for going vegan and the impact on healthy behaviors. This is done through a quantitative study of 246 American and Canadian vegans, some of whom were vegan for health reasons and others for ethical reasons. Key findings are:

- **In comparison to the health group, the ethical group reports being on a vegan diet longer**, consuming greater quantities of soy, selecting foods high in Vitamin D, sweets and beverages high in polyphenols and vitamin supplements. Conversely, the health sample reports consuming significantly more select fruits and fruit juices high in polyphenols than the ethical sample.
- **Those who follow a vegetarian diet for moral reasons report a greater disgust towards meat and a more intense emotional reaction to meat consumption in comparison to those who are vegetarian for health reasons.** The ethical group reports more overall stress than the health group. This gives rise to the hypothesis that a more intense emotional reaction to meat may motivate a quicker transition to veganism, which may account for the finding of longer duration on the diet among those citing ethical reasons (pp. 9, 10).

Kalte (2020) provides **empirical evidence and analysis of vegans' motives, aims, and political engagement through a survey of 648 vegans in Switzerland**, who were recruited through venue-based and snowball sampling method). Scholars have increasingly argued that the vegan lifestyle reflects a broader pattern of how political behavior is becoming more individualized and private. Veganism is particularly viewed as an unconventional form of political participation, as it is conducted to address ethical concerns and to change market practices through individual, everyday practices toward social change.

In addition to noting that 4 of 5 vegan respondents were female, the study made the following important observations:

- Political veganism is conducted with the aim of promoting the good of animals, the environment, and/or humankind. The latter concern (i.e., improving one's health) is not regarded as political in the broader sense as it arises out of personal self-interest. Other examples of non-political and self-related interest are concerns for taste and quality, weight loss, or religious convictions (p. 4).
- **Most participants (93%) were vegan to avoid animal suffering, followed by environmental concerns and health reasons.** Only 51% were strict vegans (they were motivated by animal welfare and ethical principles), while the rest made rare exceptions in consumption habits. **Health vegans were less likely to be consistent in their veganism** (pp. 10–12).
- Participation in political activities was high among vegans – for example, about 90% of all vegan respondents participated in voting; between 75% and 83% signed popular initiatives and referendums. Such engagement was especially high among political (ethically-motivated) vegans in comparison with non-politically motivated vegans – for example, political vegans signing a referendum was 83% compared to about 73% of non-political vegans; and political vegans participating in a demonstration was about 32% compared to 5% among non-political vegans. Hence, in addition to adopting a

vegan lifestyle, ethical and environmental vegans, more than health, vegans use other means both private and public, to express their values and concerns (pp. 14, 15).

- A majority of respondents indicated that they make exceptions to their veganism when they are with friends, family, or in a restaurant where the menu items were not completely vegan. This finding supports Cherry's (2006,¹¹ 2015) observation that **social networks, particularly friends and family, are of great importance for maintaining a vegan lifestyle**. In addition, it seems that eating consistently vegan in a Western society like Switzerland where meat, milk-products, and eggs belong to the common daily nutrition represents a challenge.

Miguel et al. (2021) look into the factors positively influencing consumption of vegan products. The quantitative study is based on two samples—224 Portuguese vegans and 356 Brazilian vegans—both recruited from vegan Facebook groups. It is found that:

- What drives human attitudes towards veganism is not individual factors, but essentially questions of ideological nature that address the engagement of people with nature and respect for animal life. Environmental concerns and attitudes toward animal welfare have an impact on one's attitude towards plant-based foods and rejection of animal-based ones (p. 11).
- There is a positive relationship between attitudes towards consumption of vegan products and involvement with vegan products, which in turn, has an impact on purchase intentions of vegan products. These are further enhanced by spreading information about these products by Word Of Mouth (WOM).
- Idealism seems to affect the way environment and animal welfare have an impact on attitudes, and it appears that it is among individuals with lower idealism that these impacts are greater because participants with high idealism do not need the awareness or effort to pay attention to environmental and AW issues. However, individuals with higher idealism are those who go beyond attitudes and are more prone to convert it into purchasing decisions and commitment to others by disseminating a positive WOM (p.12).

¹¹ Cherry E (2006) Veganism as a Cultural Movement: A Relational Approach. *Social Movement Studies* 5 (2): 155–170.

CHAPTER V. PARALLEL MOVEMENTS TO VEG*NISM

Faced with the realities of carnism and its negative consequences in terms of animal rights/welfare, the environment and climate change, and health around the world, small sections of people are attempting to find ways to mitigate at least some of the related consequences. This section outlines some of these nascent movements.

V A. MEAT REDUCTION

Meat reduction is significant both as a step forward in transitioning to a plant-based diet and as a goal in and of itself. It is explored in more detail by the following studies.

Hayley et al. (2015) explore through a quantitative study the **gender differences in values (self-enhancement versus self-transcendence), attitudes to, and actual Meat Reduced Diets (MRD)** behavior for three common types of meat (red meat, white meat, and fish/seafood) among 202 Australian citizens. The authors employ **Schwartz's theory of ten universal values** outlined below:

Schwartz's (1992)¹² theory of universal values draws on the Cognitive Hierarchical Model to examine the mediating role of attitudes between values and behavior (p. 4). It defines values as "concepts or beliefs, pertaining to desirable end states or behaviors, transcendent of specific situations, guiding selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and ordered by relative importance." Ten universal values are theorized by Schwartz. These values – Self-direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence, and Universalism – fall within two higher-order and orthogonally opposed value dimensions, which are Openness to Change–Conservation, and Self-Enhancement–Self-Transcendence.

The study observes that:

- Gender differences emerge for value priorities, attitudes, and behavior: women prioritize Universalism more highly than men, while men prioritize Power more highly than women. **Women are also more likely than men to hold a positive attitude towards reducing consumption of red meat and white meat;** however, neither gender differ in their attitudes towards reduced consumption of fish/ seafood. Women's stronger attitudes towards reducing consumption of red and white meat is consistent with previous studies which show that overall women are more likely to endorse and follow MRDs. Finally, while men and women do not differ in the amount of white meat or fish/seafood they consume, there is a moderate difference in their self-reported frequencies of red meat consumption, with men consuming around 9% more red meat than women. Given the higher priority allocated to Universalism by women, and/ or the higher priority attributed to Power by men, it can be argued that these gender differences in values may influence subsequent MRD attitudes towards red meat and white meat, and actual consumption of red meat.
- **Four value priorities—Universalism, Power, Security, and Conformity—are indirect predictors of self-reported frequency of meat consumption.** Universalism, a Self-Transcendence value, motivate goals and behaviors prioritizing the appreciation, welfare, and protection of the Other, be these humans, animals, or the natural

¹² Schwartz, S. (1992). *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values. Theory and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries*

environment. Prioritizing Universalism has a negative indirect effect on self-reported frequency of consumption of red meat, white meat, and fish/seafood, although this effect is negligible for the latter. Universalism is associated with not only more positive attitudes towards MRD regardless of meat type, but also predicts a lower frequency of overall meat consumption. In the study, these values are not significantly associated with any type of meat attitude or consumption.

- **Power**, a Self-Enhancement value, motivates goals and behaviors associated with attainment of social status, prestige, and dominance. Greater prioritizing of Power is associated with less positive attitudes towards reducing consumption of each meat type, which is reflected in higher consumption of each meat type.
- **Security**, a Conservation value, motivates goals and behaviors of personal health, community safety, and protection of resources. Conformity, another Conservation value, motivates goals and behaviors prioritizing self-restraint, but also the maintenance of social norms and expectations, minimizing social conflict. Prioritizing Security has a positive indirect effect on white meat and fish/seafood consumption being associated with more negative attitudes towards reduced consumption of these meats, and these attitudes in turn are associated with consumption of these meats. Conformity also has a positive indirect effect on consumption, but only for fish/seafood (pp. 103, 104).

Amiot et al. (2018) test a novel multi-component intervention to reduce meat consumption among young men in Canada. The authors conduct a quantitative study of 32 male, Caucasian, frequently meat-eating University of Quebec students (18–30 years of age) over a one-month period. The components of the intervention are: social norms, provision of information/education (as to why reduce meat consumption), goal-setting, and self-monitoring (through text messaging), appealing to fear, and activating mind attribution to meat animals.

- Results confirm the effectiveness of the intervention in producing a greater decrease in meat consumption over time, especially over the weekend. Participants in the intervention condition decreased their red meat consumption by 55.11% from baseline (Time 1) to four weeks later (Time 2)—which represents a significant decrease—whereas participants in the control condition (non-significantly) increased their consumption by 6.14% during this period.
- Fifteen of the 16 participants in the intervention group report (at Time 1) that they intend to decrease meat consumption during the upcoming month. Interestingly, upon completion of the intervention (at Time 2), a majority of participants in this condition report having achieved the meat consumption goal set before the intervention, and approximately a third of the participants even self-identify as flexitarians. It is noteworthy that changes in meat consumption in the group that is exposed to the intervention may be mostly due to the education component (through information provision). Considering the intervention in its entirety, the information provision component is identified to be the most important in helping to reduce meat consumption by participants.
- Reduction in positive emotions toward meat-eating, as is the case in our intervention, is associated with a decrease in the dietary behavior, possibly due to the belief that it becomes less legitimate. Being mindful and self-determined—rather than pressured and coerced by others—also predicts healthier eating behavior (pp. 16, 17).

Klöckner and Ofstad (2017) test the usefulness of tailored information in helping people reduce beef consumption. This is done through two quantitative studies that use a custom-designed webpage giving information on reducing beef-eating. 1,047 participants are randomly allocated into four groups: (1) no information, (2) all information available, (3) randomly provided mismatched information, and (4) tailored information matching the stage of change.

The results indicate that the participants attempt to tailor the information to their needs. The results of Study 1 show that people, when faced with a website that contains a lot of information targeting the different stages of the change process to reduce beef consumption, try to self-tailor to their needs. People in later stages of change focus more on information relevant for these later stages, whereas people in earlier stages of change focus more on information relevant for these earlier stages. However, the results also show that people not only attend information that is targeting the specific stage of change they are in, but also explore other sections of the website. The effects of tailored information get stronger if the process follows people through their change process with repeated, adjusted information. Study 2 also provides first indications that tailoring seems to have a positive effect on stage progression.

Grassian (2019) conducts a **mixed-methods study on vegan and meat-reduction diet-challenge campaigns organized by AR groups in the UK.** The findings, as a whole, are published on his personal website but not in any peer-reviewed journal. Important findings are as follows:

- **Those with the strictest vegan goals are the most likely to meet reduction goals (78%), while meat reducers were the least likely (39%).** Those in vegan campaigns tend to reduce more (70%) and are more likely to exceed (18%) their initial reduction goals.
- Campaign populations are lacking in diversity, with participants extremely likely to be white (96%), female (20%), university-educated, and middle-to high-income (25%).
- Vegan campaigns tend to draw a greater proportion of participants younger than 35 years (37%), while reduction campaigns tend to include more men (25%).
- **Social barriers emerge as particularly impactful,** especially for new vegans who may experience stigma, negative reactions from friends and family, and feelings of unease when seeing others consume animal food products. Conversely, vegan communities can be important sources of support, skills, and knowledge.
- **Animal protection emerges as the most impactful motivator (85%), followed by environment (81%) and health (61%),** leading to greater reductions and meeting of reduction goals than other motivators. Those motivated by animals can experience a vegan mind shift, where animal-based foods come to embody suffering and death, and are thus considered completely outside the realm of potential food items (p. 3).

V B. CONSCIENTIOUS OMNIVORISM

Rothgerber (2014 b) conducts a quantitative survey of 196 individuals in the US to investigate the underlying differences between conscientious omnivores and vegetarians. Participants identified as conscientious omnivores (or COs—individuals only eating meat from farmers who raise their animals in a humane way), vegetarian, or vegan. The essential question asked in the study is: what, if anything, distinguishes those

who choose conscientious omnivorism as opposed to veg*nism (a term that includes both vegetarians and vegans) as a principled stand against factory farming.

- The present results suggest that COs differ from veg*ns not only in their behavior but also in their attitudes. Attitudinal differences between COs and veg*ns are widespread and include variations in the way that living animals are evaluated. This includes the level of disgust towards and dislike of dead animals served as meat, justification for eating meat, and attitudinal differences not directly related to animals in any way. While not directly addressing the issue of change, the present findings also cast doubt upon the notion that COs are in a transition stage to veg*nism.
- Attitudes about animals and meat constitute the critical differences between COs and veg*ns. For COs, killing animals for food is acceptable provided the animals do not suffer. This determination among COs is strongly mediated by less overall favorable evaluation of living animals and less disgust for meat and its sensory characteristics. In fact, controlling for animal favorability and meat disdain, there are no differences between COs and veg*ns in their judgment of the acceptability of killing animals for food. COs, unlike veg*ns, are less likely to perceive their diet as contributing to their sense of self. The significant role of abstinence from meat in veg*n self-concept and veg*n ingroup norms explains why breaking dietary rules of meat-abstinence is so disturbing for veg*ns. It is indeed an assault on the veg*n identity as well as on the veg*n community's sense of itself—all of which is built on the practice of meat-abstinence. In addition, for veg*ns, greater meat disgust and identification are related to more positive views toward animals.
- It is also possible that the act of consuming animals causes COs to fail to develop disgust for animal flesh. By continuing the practice of meat consumption no matter how selectively, COs may be disrupting the motivational process that will culminate in their finding meat disgusting. Previous research that the author cites **confirms that disgust reactions to meat are a consequence, not a cause of meat avoidance**. People abstain from meat and then develop a sense of disgust towards meat, not the other way around.
- Differences between following a CO and veg*n diet may cause differences in in-group identification, with veg*nism having the consistency that enables identity formation. Veg*ns also send a clear, unambiguous verbal and visual message to others. Because COs are likely to consume meat in front of others, they may well be viewed by others as omnivores and treated as such. Given that their diet may be more difficult to explain (and accommodate) than a veg*n diet, they may prefer to say nothing about it at all, blending with omnivores; all of which may weaken ingroup identification.
- Previous research both by this author and others state that ethical vegetarians offer more reasons for their vegetarianism in comparison to health vegetarians. They report being more disgusted by meat, show more concern when they see others eat meat, express stronger emotional reactions to meat consumption, and believe that meat causes undesirable changes in personality.

V C. ADVOCACY FOR HIGHER WELFARE STANDARDS

Given their significant power and scale of operations, industries have been a target for advocacy and lobbying efforts by AR groups globally. Advocacy is aimed at halting the production of animal products, else more commonly, to improve their factory-farming

practices and welfare standards on behalf of animals. This section outlines some of the efforts in this area.

Alonso et al. (2020) take a welfarist point of view to **analyze European consumer perceptions to farmed animal welfare from a selection of scientific articles and other writings**. They state that even when consumers are aware of, and stand for, higher animal welfare standards, these factors do not always influence buying decisions where other product attributes such as price are prominent. Most see farm animal welfare as a part of the food quality attribute. Consequently, high animal welfare products are seen to be tastier, healthier, traditional, and organic. However, there are more consumers who are aware of animal welfare than there are consumers who are also willing to pay higher for high welfare products. Standardized labels that can provide concrete information on welfare conditions of the animals used for a product can boost responsible consumerism (pp. 5–7).

Vanhonacker and Verbeke (2014) from a similar welfarist standpoint argue that opportunities to **improve animal welfare in the short term will be market-driven rather than through an upgrade in animal welfare standards** (p. 155). Due to the different attitudes and conceptions of animal welfare, a mix of strategies such as information provision, communication and marketing strategies (e.g., advertising, product assortment, packaging, display, and product positioning) can be used to address the different attitudes of target segments regarding animal welfare. The authors suggest that **appropriate information-provision regarding animal welfare standards can overcome automatic, routine purchase decisions**, make consumption more mindful, and even drive consumers to pay more for higher welfare products (p. 159).

Sinclair et al. (2019) examine the same welfarist point but from the perspective of livestock stakeholders across Asia. Through focus group interviews of stakeholder leaders from various Asian countries, including India, it is found that most participants have a positive attitude toward increasing animal welfare as it can improve the health of animals, cut down veterinary costs, and improve meat flavor. These are seen as advantages, despite an increase in the cost of production due to an increase in space requirements for the animals, etc. That animal welfare can cut medical costs is met with skepticism by some (p. 6). **In India, animal welfare is also connected with food safety and biosecurity. Human and animal welfare is seen as more interlinked** in India than in other surveyed countries; for instance, rabies must be eradicated due to the risks to the lives of both humans and dogs. The proximity in which humans and animals live in India also enhances the perception of animal welfare as important in and of itself, and not simply for economic gains (pp. 11–12).

Adams (2008) looks at the variety of tactics that animal rights organizations in the United States like PETA use. These include billboard advertisements, shareholder resolutions, boycotts and personal attacks on corporate officials to leverage fast food companies to make changes in their factory-farming practices. Critics contend that the fast food industry is culpable in animal rights abuse, and has an ethical duty to use its economic muscle to bring about change in the way animals are raised and processed for human consumption (p. 303).

- **Adams identifies the two different positions of animal advocates vis-a-vis fast food chains like KFC—the animal rights position and the animal welfare position.** For rights advocates, nothing short of total cessation of animal consumption—and, by extension, animal farming and marketing—will suffice. Consumers have a moral obligation to avoid the consumption of meat, and McDonald's and KFC have a parallel obligation not to sell it. Welfarists, in contrast, while also encouraging vegetarianism, advocate for the humane treatment of animals throughout the entire process of breeding

(including freedom from unnatural genetic alteration), rearing, transporting, and processing (p. 311).

- The author notes that **the McLibel case resulting from McDonald's suing PETA for defamation won animal rights in the US is a significant victory**. In finding McDonald's, the world's leading fast-food provider, "culpably responsible" for acts of animal cruelty (restrictions on movement, unnatural confinement, inadequate stunning, etc. in factory farms which provide meat to McDonald's) an impartial court of law establishes a clear, unambiguous legal connection between fast food providers and their obligation to ensure that non-cruel methods are used to produce animal-derived food for human consumption (p. 317).

The **fast-food industry in the US has responded to pressure from AR organizations in the following ways, which provide success stories and lessons learnt for vegan advocacy globally:**

- Detailed supplier requirements are described on the websites of virtually all major fast-food chains.
- Steps taken to address potential supplier misconduct in the treatment of animals range from the creation of advisory boards to factory monitoring to detailed animal handling and processing specifications.
- The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) has promulgated a policy in which it "believes animals can and should be raised, transported and processed using procedures that are clean, safe and free from cruelty, abuse and neglect" (p. 318).
- KFC has demanded that animals provided by KFC suppliers should be free from mistreatment "at all possible times from how they are raised and cared for to how they are transported and processed." KFC, like Wendy's and McDonald's, has created animal welfare advisory councils composed of leading animal welfare experts to aid it in developing guidelines and programs (p. 319).

V D. ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

The emergence of "ethical consumerism" as a movement in recent years is an important opportunity to integrate animal welfare/rights concerns into consumer purchasing behavior, along with other dimensions such as environment sustainability, fair wages etc. In the case of animal welfare/rights issues, **ethical consumerism is contingent on product labeling** that indicates if animal-derived products are used, and the conditions in which animals are kept. The notion of ethical consumerism in India, especially in relation to animal welfare, brings up interesting considerations, and the following study is one of the few in this domain.

Khara (2015) presents an extensive qualitative study in her doctoral dissertation on factors influencing the perception and **attitudes of urban middle-class Indians to ethical food products in a study done in Gurgaon**. It utilizes an exploratory approach through focus group discussions. Six focus groups are conducted with male and female Hindu and Muslim participants in the age groups 18– 35 (p. 66).

- The author divides **participants' definitions of ethical foods into four themes**: religious foods; foods associated with the norms of one's caste and home-state; "healthy" foods; and foods subjectively defined as "ethical" by participants (p. 154). Despite the low awareness of animal welfare foods, there are still a range of attitudes towards the idea.

- The study also categorizes participants into four groups: “Considerers,” who are interested in the concept of animal welfare (AW), sometimes through their religion, and are in support of products that keep AW in mind during the production process (p. 124); “Ambivalents,” who take a more passive stance on the issue of animal cruelty even though they are not comfortable with cruelty, and are suspicious of AW foods on grounds of corruption and lack of transparency relating to food practices; “Less interested” who prioritize their own convenience and lifestyles over AW, and consider the latter as not making much of a difference since the animals will be killed anyway (p. 126).
- Respondents define ethical foods as those that benefit the individual or one’s own ingroup rather than with a social or environmental advantage. Lack of awareness and knowledge (of welfare issues around items they are currently buying) emerges as a problem among all three sample groups. Provision of better information is said to help in mindful buying decisions (pp. 141–143).
- **Some of the barriers to consuming ethical food include limited availability and accessibility, price and affordability, priority to more pressing challenges** like the still-unsatisfied basic needs of farmers in a country like India, and skepticism on whether ethical foods can make a significant difference. There is also skepticism regarding the ethical foods themselves (which can be mitigated by their sale through “good” familiar brands or “government-approved shops”), the unwillingness to give up on daily conveniences, not having the “time” in their “hectic life” (a hesitation overcome if ethical food consumption becomes a trend in their social groups) and the perception that there is no scope for ethical foods here as the “average Indian is selfish” (pp. 144–152).
- Khara notes that, although mediated by religious teachings and adherence to one’s scripture, empathy for animal welfare, especially among Considerers, is indicative of “benevolence” or concern for the welfare of other beings. To counteract lack of information regarding ethical foods, it is suggested that **the consequences of one’s consumer choices must be made visible, tangible, and close-at-hand** by highlighting the process of food production through narratives (p. 171).

1. LABELING OF FOOD ITEMS

Sheehan and Joonghwa (2014) conduct a quantitative study to explore **whether the term “cruelty-free” could be considered a moral heuristic** by examining how well consumers understand the designation. The study also looked at how this labeling affects consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions towards brands, and what happens when they are provided more information about the designation. The survey sample is 132 participants. Key findings are as follows:

- Only 10 respondents (8%) indicate that they recognize the global cruelty-free Leaping Bunny symbol. While almost all of the respondents recognize that the term “cruelty-free” referred to animals, 64% relate the term to animal testing of products. After reading the informational paragraphs about the definition of cruelty-free, 80% of respondents indicate that they are not aware of this information, and 15% say they are aware of some of the information. Therefore, it is evident that consumers vary in their understanding of the definition of the term “cruelty-free,” with a majority arguably misled in their understanding of the term.

- While **there is no legal or standard definition of the term “cruelty-free”** in many countries, and for certain product categories, and it is interpreted in different ways, this study also shows that the term is highly motivating to certain consumers. In addition, indication of the “halo effect” is seen as brands using the term are seen as safer and more socially-responsible than other brands. **As a moral heuristic, the term “cruelty-free” is flawed**, and its existence creates the possibility that **consumers could be misled into purchasing products that they believe are ethically-superior** when in reality the products may not be superior to others.
- Some respondents believe that cruelty-free brands treat animals humanely. After reading the informational text shared as part of the study, consumers indicate that brands using the cruelty-free designation are less socially-responsible and less safe. Overall, the attitude toward cruelty-free brands also decreases in positivity (pp. 11, 12).

2. GREEN AND BROWN LABELING IN INDIA

Fischer (2019) looks into the dynamics between vegetarianism and meat-eating in India as mediated by veg (green) and non-veg (brown) labels that are mandatory since 2011 for all processed food products. The author states that the long-held idea that the more individuals and social groups follow a vegetarian lifestyle, the higher the social status they enjoy, is breaking down. **Veg and non-veg are increasingly individual lifestyle choices rather than determined by religious orthodoxy.** He further observes that on the one hand, vegetarianism is celebrated, promoted, and certified by the BJP (the current ruling party) and the state, and on the other, meat-eating (and its “brown” regulation) is a sign of prosperity, pluralized markets, reconfigured status/hierarchies, inclusion, social mobility, health, and cosmopolitanism (p. 17).

Fischer conducts a quantitative survey of 1,000 informants (795 men and 205 women) in Hyderabad based on stratified random sampling in locations such as markets, educational institutions, workplaces, and residential areas. 80% of the sample comprised Hindus. From among the “open category” (comprising varna categories Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya) as many as 75% were meat-eaters. 60% of these meat eaters were Brahmins. Of 205 women respondents, 186 ate meat. Among the relatively small group of respondents with the highest incomes, meat-eating is comparatively lower and is considered a sensitive issue (pp. 19–22). Of the surveyed, **75% are not familiar with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India’s (FSSAI) green and brown logos** (p. 23).

In another study **Fischer (2016)**, looks into the branding of foods as “kosher,” “halal,” and “Hindu vegetarian” in the globalized market due to the effects of the religious economy. He states that **broad socioeconomic changes** have led to a sizable expansion of the middle classes and it has transformed their relationship to food consumption practices. It is in this climate that McDonald’s launched in India in 1996. On McDonald’s website, it states that India is the first country in the McDonald’s system where non-beef and non-pork products are served. More than 70% of the menu is locally-developed with complete segregation of vegetarian and non-vegetarian products from the food processing plants to the point of serving the customers (p. 69).

CHAPTER VI. SUPPORTING VEG*N ADOPTION

Creating a supportive eco-system for the uptake of veganism will require a range of synergistic and complementary interventions: advocacy and campaigning to increase awareness and change attitudes; public figures and influencers who can inspire, motivate and help shape supportive social norms; the availability, accessibility and affordability of vegan substitutes; and on-ground social networks that provide the necessary ongoing support for transitioning to and maintaining a vegan diet. This section outlines some of these strategies while also drawing from studies focused on meat reduction, which hold valuable lessons for vegan advocacy.

VI A. SOCIAL MODELING

Social learning theory (SLT) also referred to as “social modeling” (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. It considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. **Social modeling has been a common strategy across various domains to promote social and behavioral change**, and the movement for animal rights and veganism is no exception. Celebrities and public figures have defined the movement since its inception, and this section examines the contours of social modeling for veganism, its advantages and strengths, and the factors impacting its effectiveness.

[Phua et al. \(2019\)](#) explore the effects of celebrities turning vegan on consumers’ attitude toward veganism, behavioral intentions to become vegan, and intentions to spread electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) information on veganism. Here, the reference is to pro-veganism messages propagated on Instagram.

A quantitative study is conducted with 303 American undergraduate students (mostly omnivores, but also vegetarians and one vegan). Key observations are:

- The use of a celebrity endorser in advertising can capture the attention of an audience more effectively than standard promotions because the **positive image of a celebrity can transfer to the image of a brand**. Consumers buy the product so as to gain cultural meaning from the celebrity-brand association. Celebrity endorsement has proven to be effective in health communication as well. Consumers may be more likely to perform a specific behavior when they perceive the celebrity endorser’s motivation for performing it to be congruent with their own (pp. 3, 4).
- The results indicate that consumer-eating habits are linked with three key dependent variables: health consciousness, intention to spread eWoM, and intention to become vegan. However, celebrity endorser motivation (egoistic reasons like health versus altruistic ones like animal ethics and environmental concerns) do not have any main effect on these variables.
- The study shows that a **“match” between a celebrity endorser’s perceived characteristics (i.e., being a vegan) and the consumer’s self-concept (i.e., being a non-meat eater) leads to significantly greater health consciousness, eWOM intention, and intention to become a vegan.**

- Non-meat eaters who look at an Instagram post by a celebrity espousing an egoistic motivation for becoming vegan develop significantly greater intention to spread eWOM about the post, and also a greater intention to become vegan. Hence, “egoistic” motivations for becoming vegan are more effective than “altruistic” motivations.
- As perceived source credibility increases, non-meat eaters exposed to the celebrity endorser with egoistic motivation develop more positive intention to spread eWOM and intention to become vegan. As subjective norms towards veganism become more positive, non-meat eaters exposed to the celebrity endorser with egoistic motivation develop significantly higher health consciousness (pp. 15, 16).

Via her dissertation [Lundahl \(2017\)](#) critically explores **how sustainable consumption and veganism, which were previously stigmatized practices, came to be promoted by the media and celebrities, and became “fashionalized.”** She notes the entangled relations between celebrity, spectacle, and media interests feeding off and energizing one another symbiotically (pp. 24–26) to play a dominant role in shaping consumption cultures and public perception.

Analyzing selected lifestyle media and news dailies in Britain, Lundahl notes a shift in focus from the animal rights frame between 2000 and 2005, to environmentalism framing in 2006–2010, and, finally, health and weight-loss framing in 2011–2015 (p. 67). **Sustainable consumption underwent a “celebritization,” which helped to give it mainstream acceptance, but also underplayed its moral and political focus,** its ties with animal rights and anti-speciesism, instead highlighting associations like eco-chic, trendiness, beauty, free-choice consumption, inner peace and self-care, weight-loss and health – aspects more aligned to individualized consumption lifestyles.

[Lundahl \(2018\)](#) lays out how the news media deployed the “positive deviance”¹³ of **vegan celebrities to destigmatize and normalize veganism in the popular imagination.**

Destigmatization can happen if, for instance, a person belonging to a stigmatized group (e.g. a habitual smoker) mends their ways or transcends the limitations of their handicap, thus gaining a charismatic status, and can potentially be an influencer for change. The media used strategies of “boundary management” – selecting which features of the stigmatized practice were highlighted and what were to be underplayed or redefined. This created a “positive deviant” image of a celebrity and also improved veganism’s image.

Based on her analysis of media coverage of veganism, she traces three distinct and progressive phases. The early frame, which did not feature celebrities, was of “negative deviance” in which **veganism was seen as a sign of extremism and moral decay.** Vegans were cast negatively as eco warriors, even urban terrorists, confused or misguided, malnourished, etc. The association of veganism was chiefly with AR and environmentalist movement, and was cast in a very “us-vs-them” tonality. In later years this shifted to the second and then third frames – i.e. **“Veganism as a celebrity fashion” and “Veganism as a healthy diet.”**

The second frame of “celebrity fashion” focused on trendy adoptions of vegan diets by glamorous celebrities, the focus was primarily on aesthetics and beauty. It was not necessary that these influencers were committed to a vegan ideology. Media reports also highlighted

¹³ Positive Deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behavior and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers. Positive Deviance aims to identify these behaviours and allow the rest of the community to learn from them.

the “normalization” of the vegan diet -- reports of increasing numbers joining a Veganaury diet, or the many celebrities who were exploring veganism. However it was also found that positive and negative deviance remain dynamic. If a celebrity’s adherence to veganism showed up as short-lived or contradictory, it reduced the legitimacy of the influencer as well as of veganism. A common perception remained that celebrities can be fickle, their vegan diets a mere fad, and it was considered unwise to blindly emulate them. Yet this new boundary management by the media brought the key of shift of veganism from negative to a positive deviance.

The third frame of veganism as a healthy diet now shifted to active de-stigmatization. This portrayed veganism as a scientifically-proven healthy (supplement to a) diet, as opposed to a diet for aesthetic, weight-loss reasons or as a fad. The rationality of veganism was highlighted; scientific, expert information related to the health and disease-ameliorating benefits of veganism shared, role models with high credibility were highlighted (p. 260).

Lundahl notes that there was a class element to these framings and boundary work – with the focus on “reasonable, rational thinking” celebrities that educated persons would feel justified in following, and with the focus on veganism as “Healthism.” Critical analysis has shown that the body serves as an “important symbol of differences in taste and class, as well as a symbol of self-surveillance, for instance as regards to excess weight.” **The shift to “Healthism”** also assigned a key role to experts – such as doctors, nutritionists and personal trainers - as those who can tell us how to conduct and improve ourselves (p. 265).

Doyle (2016) in her qualitative critique explores the questions of how **celebrity vegans as cultural intermediaries make the ethics of veganism more accessible to audiences**, even as these ethical concerns about the exploitative use of animals as food get reframed in the context of celebrity consumer culture. She does this by bringing together two distinct sets of literature: on veganism and eco-feminist philosophy; and on ethical (food) consumption and celebrity culture. The idea is to provide a philosophical and theoretical framework for the analysis of two celebrity vegans—Hollywood actor, Alicia Silverstone and TV chat show host, Ellen DeGeneres.

The analysis finds that both celebrities represent veganism as a diet and lifestyle that foregrounds an ethics of care, compassion, kindness and emotion that is consistent with ethical veganism. Yet, this is reworked through the commodity logic of celebrity culture to make it more marketable and thus consumable. **By downplaying the term “vegan,” and emphasizing “plant-based diet” and “kindness,” potentially-hostile attitudes towards veganism are circumvented.** The ethical commitment is refigured as the individual choice to be healthy, happy and kind, consistent with the motivational practices of lifestyle-oriented consumer politics.

The analysis also contrasts the two personas in their vegan advocacy: **Silverstone presents the journey to a kind self/life as both desirable and achievable.** The desirability rests on her persona as a celebrity Hollywood actor and her authority as a vegan, and an animal and environmental campaigner. This is marketed through her books, social media and other events. She also draws on the appeal of femininity and motherhood.

On the other hand, for **Ellen DeGeneres** kindness and compassion are part of how she presents being vegan. This is not through an explicit marketing of these values, but indirectly through her celebrity public persona as a caring and empathetic person. Furthermore, as a celebrity who has experienced prejudice, which impacted her ability to maintain her celebrity status, it is DeGeneres, rather than Silverstone, who **makes important**

connections between animal rights and gender/sexual inequality, calling attention to unequal power relations that eco-feminist philosophers have foregrounded – and which may hold resonance in the context of animal rights and veganism. However, Doyle also notes that DeGeneres tends to keep distance from overt promotion of animal rights, perhaps to avoid contradiction with the approachable tonality of her program.

An exploratory study ([Biswas et al, 2009](#)) draws much-needed attention to cross-cultural differences in responses to the use of celebrities in consumer advertising, and may hold some lessons for vegan advocacy. The study cites other research that reiterate the role of celebrity endorsements in creating influence, which is operationalized in different ways – as attention getters, as sources of credibility, producing more recall, positive responses and greater purchase intentions, and “transferring meaning” to brands. However, there is **some lack of consensus on which celebrity characteristics may provide the best fit**, and the paper acknowledges that high-visibility celebrities are fast giving way to **“plain folks or clips of real events” as a way to make advertising commercials more compelling**. Also, with the emergence of sites like youtube.com or metacafe.com, where most viewers are relatively younger, information rich, and net savvy, marketing communication seems to have derived new meaning to advertisers.

The study examined consumer perceptions in India and the United States of celebrity endorsements using **cultural dimensions of power distance and individualism-collectivism** (Hofstede, 1980)¹⁴ **and context** (Taylor et al, 1994)¹⁵. While India represents a culture that is high context with high power distance, the United States embodies a low context, low power distance culture.

Findings suggest that in both countries there is a positive, although moderate, impact of celebrity endorsements on attention and exposure of consumers. The common reason for recalling celebrity ads in both cultures is the likeability and glamour of the celebrities; however, celebrity ads are not found to be particularly believable or trustworthy, except in the case of domain experts such as sportspeople endorsing sports-related products. Moreover, the study indicates that very few consumers in both the cultures have purchased products or brands as a result of endorsement by celebrities, except when they were considerably younger.

Celebrity status and glamour may wield greater influence in collectivist cultures such as India which is defined by high power distance. This is because in such cultures, belongingness, harmony, and respect for social hierarchy are key values. In contrast, in a country such as the United States with low power distance and individualistic values, consumers may consider celebrities simply as unique individuals who are accomplished in their respective fields and hence their impact on consumers may be based more on expertise and achievement as compared to the Indian consumers. While not strongly validated in the study, results do point towards this tendency.

In an emerging market such as India, advertising strategy using celebrity endorsements seems to be very popular and might still present a valid way of grabbing consumers' attention. The perceived power distance between the celebrity and the consumer as was

¹⁴ Hofstede (1980): the power distance index explains how different societies have addressed basic human inequalities in social status and prestige, wealth, and sources of power. This dimension fits very well with celebrity endorsement given the popularity and mass appeal of celebrities. In the current study, India has a higher power distance (77) compared to United States (40) (Hofstede, 1980).

¹⁵ Taylor, C. R., Wilson, R. D., & Miracle, G. E. (1994). The impact of brand differentiating messages on the effectiveness of Korean advertising. *Journal of International Marketing*, 2(4), 31-52.

found in the study may certainly help draw the attention of Indian consumers, but care must be taken in the way the celebrity is employed in the ad. Such a strategy should be utilized only when it warrants itself rather than being motivated by herd mentality. “The product or the brand needs to be the hero and the not celebrity.”

Babu (2012) presents a simple analytical study that applies the Elaboration Likelihood Model to unpack the PETA ad of an unclothed celebrity advocating vegetarianism and evaluate its effects. Babu notes that **only viewers who regularly engage with PETA's media and are interested in animal rights are persuaded by the ad**, while others are unlikely to engage with it enough to be persuaded (p. 66). With regard to moral shock advocacy, the author concludes that PETA's typical communication strategies are always characterized by “in your face” advertising, designed to create maximum publicity by being bold or outrageous. Though this might ensure public attention and some extent of attitude change, it definitely does not guarantee long-term behavioral change (p. 71).

VI B. MULTIMEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Rodan and Mummery (2014) analyze, through a **qualitative-semiotic study**, **Animals Australia's multimedia campaign, “Make it Possible”** (focused on making animal welfare issues in factory farms visible to the public), through the lens of affect theory. The campaign was emotively framed, deprioritizing scientific arguments for establishing animals as sentient, and instead, stressing the animals' likeness to us so as to produce affect. The video used for the campaign calls upon the viewers to use their capacities for moral imagination and identification with the animals' suffering. The authors draw from the work of Jasper and Poulsen to state that, in the animal rights movement, representations of animals are effective condensing symbols able to convey a master frame of cruelty and suffering to produce the moral shock required to engage and motivate people (p. 79). The paper makes the following key points:

- **The video campaign attempts to activate the ethical agency of viewers and compel them to take individual responsibility for the state of the animals.** It positions viewers as essentially compassionate but not knowing the terrible price animals pay in factory farms to end up as food (dichotomies set up between compassion and cruelty, ignorance and knowledge). It is shown that now that viewers know the truth, they must make the moral decision of boycotting factory farmed meat (the other option would be selfish and cruel) (p. 80).
- The multimedia campaign also consisted of **personal testimonies from viewers on what the video made them feel and what they were going to do about it.** Out of the testimonies surveyed, there were three themes: commitments to vegan/vegetarianism (13%); consumer action (35%) —i.e., pledging to change purchasing habits, retaining meat-eating but committing to more ethical consumption; and broad-scale animal advocacy (52%) (p. 84).
- **Moral Shock as used by this particular campaign strategy proves effective** in mobilizing people by motivating them to align their behavior with their values of compassion in the face of the *truth* that they now know about factory farming (p. 85).

VI C. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Buddle et al. (2017) discuss the usefulness of platforms like Twitter in campaigns for animal welfare. The paper, through a social constructivist analysis (with non-event-based sampling) of big data derived from Twitter, looks at the rapid generation of tweets in July 2014 after PETA released undercover footage of ill-treatment of sheep in Australian shearing sheds. They observe that news media interest in livestock production is often generated after animal-rights groups initiate a campaign against an animal industry or campaign.

- Social media does not work independently of news channels, as can be seen from the online campaign to ban live export of animals from Australia kick-started by Animals Australia after an investigation aired on TV (p. 436). This is also proven by the large number of tweets containing links to news articles (p. 440). Activist and social-movement campaigns strive to be “affectively charged” to gain recognition and build momentum around issues. They are hence characterized by strong, emotive language to push their message. Further, the idea of trust is employed to convey that animal farmers cannot be trusted with animal welfare.
- References to Australia appeal to a sense of patriotism, with farming, and the wool industry in particular, being associated with the growth of the nation. This idea is echoed by associating the poor treatment of sheep with the idea of being “un-Australian.” It is also observed that the **content shared by animal activists seldom extends beyond their followers unless it gains traction in news channels**. Thus, a large amount of online traffic for social media content (in the form of shares, likes, retweets, etc.) does not translate to more engagement with the content outside the online network. Online activism is often criticized as slacktivism, as there is no evidence that sharing or liking an online post results in any real-life change of behavior. It is concluded that Twitter is not currently an effective medium for conversations between meat producers and the community about farm-animal welfare (pp. 441, 442).

Buddle et al (2018) conduct a qualitative study to explore meat consumers’ reactions to online farm animal welfare activism in Australia. Focus group interviews of 66 Australian meat consumers were conducted. Key findings are:

- n Meat consumers do not seem to engage with information about animal welfare shared via social media by animal welfare activist organizations either directly or via people within the participants’ networks. This is because **meat consumers do not appear to consider animal welfare activists as credible sources of information**. Typical statements include: activists only highlight examples of poor or uncommon practices in animal farming; activist organizations simply want to promote vegetarian or vegan diets as opposed to reducing meat consumption or encouraging more ethical ways to produce meat products; activists and their supporters are ignorant of “actual” animal farming; activist groups on social media are not considered to be engaging in authentic activism but only in “slacktivism.”
- While social media may “amplify” animal welfare activist content, it is unlikely to engage those who identify as meat consumers when seen as based on exposés or high-profile and extreme issues.
- Any serious political or social form of action in the current internet era must have an online dimension, which requires investment of time and energy to develop multi-sited and multi-skilled forms of strategy. While actions such as clicking “like” or “share” can

look less impressive when compared to the spectacle of offline protests, activists clearly value social media as effective tools to raise public awareness. This is not only for issues, but also to show decision-makers that public attitudes are changing, and to reveal that individuals are willing to collaborate to take public action over particular issues. The considerable traffic generated by animal welfare activists online, particularly in extreme cases, does not necessarily indicate the success of this content in terms of changing the public's views. Content shared by an individual or organization typically only reaches their micro-public (p. 11).

A study by the Vegan Society Researcher Network ([Bryant, 2019](#)) and a related blog ([Rishel, 2020](#)) provide an overview of effective communication strategies for animal rights and vegan campaigning. Some key findings include the following:

Strategy: Campaigns should focus on farmed animals, rather than animals in shelters or labs, simply because of the sheer numbers of animals involved. Furthermore, advocates should be aware that fish and chickens make up over 99% of farmed animals in the U.K. and suffer more than other farmed animals, and should be prioritized accordingly.

Message content: Animal cruelty messages are the most effective at changing consumer behavior on aggregate, though some consumers may find health or environmental arguments more compelling. Though fish account for the majority of farmed animal suffering, they are the least persuasive species to use in advocacy materials. Advocates should be wary that health or environmentally-motivated consumers may reduce red meat consumption and replace it with white meat, which would lead to more animal suffering.

Target groups: It is possible to persuade a wide range of consumers, and the best strategy overall is to reach as many people as possible. However, there are some demographics who are particularly receptive to the vegan message, namely young women, left-leaning, city-dwellers, well-educated, and high income.

Media: There is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of leafleting and online advertising. However, social media posts can be optimized to reach more people and be more effective at changing behavior. Whilst websites are a good medium for giving information on how to go vegan, documentaries appear to be the most common source of influence for vegans. Displaying billboards in difficult-to-avoid places is another strategy; though there is no evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies they may address major limitations of traditional forms of advocacy. Text message reminders for motivated meat-reducers are likely also to be an effective means of reducing meat consumption. The review also discusses **evidence that short videos on social media, preferably presented by effective narrators, can serve as a persuasive format.**

Other recommendations from the study include: using photos of injured animals and animals in small cages; images and messages that suggest meat contamination and infection with E Coli that can trigger disgust reactions; communicating on the “how” to adopt plant-based diets, instead of only the “why” of veganism can help reduce meat consumption. This is especially relevant given data that 84% veg*ns return to omnivorous diets due to cravings for meat, the sudden nature of the switch to a vegan diet, and lack of a connection with other vegans. The study also advises against messages that liken humans to animals, compare factory farming to rape and slavery, and use sexualized imagery of women.

VI D. ONLINE “CHALLENGES” TO SUPPORT VEGAN ADOPTION AND MAINTENANCE

The review looked at strategies used by several animal rights groups and some vegan entrepreneurs to support potential interested audiences to **transition to veganism through timed or limited duration vegan diet challenges**. Various called 18, 21 or 22-Day Challenges, these have been increasingly popular in recent years, especially on social media.

Two non-academic studies are conducted by Faunalytics on the Challenge 22+. In the first study, [Rosenthal \(2018\)](#), explains that the Challenge 22+ involves all participants joining a Facebook group where they get daily challenges. The challenges include cooking a vegan dish, or motivational aspects relating to ethical consumption, health, and environment. Participants also share their experiences in the group. The success of the campaign can be attributed to its **supportive and non-judgmental environment, professional and organized support through personal and group mentoring, and structured content**. In addition to veganism, meat reduction is also promoted to increase the overall pool of potential vegans. Participants are also periodically surveyed to see how many turned and stayed vegan.

In the second analytical study, [Faunalytics \(2019\)](#), looks into the impact of Challenge 22+. It is found that over 77% of frequent meat-eaters, 64% of reducetarians (those intending to reduce meat consumption), and 34% of almost-vegetarians, report that they reduced their meat consumption after completing the Challenge. The paper also advises against email surveys to see how many participants have stayed vegan as it has a low response rate.

VI E. SOCIAL NORMS, NUDGES AND ASYMMETRIC INTERVENTIONS

[Orzechowski \(2020\)](#), in a non-academic study for Faunalytics, observes that **social norm interventions**, like making all the default options in a vegetarian menu with meat options as “extra,” are not subliminal but make subtle reinforcements to the positioning of a topic. The following suggestions are given regarding social norm messaging:

- Dynamic social norm messaging (which shows behavior of people as changing over a period of time) is more effective when people can be made to (potentially) feel a part of the change being made.
- Avoid telling people what to do. Instead, emphasize freedom of choice through highly visible messaging.

[Campbell-Arvai et al. \(2014\)](#) explore the effectiveness of asymmetric interventions, namely, defaults, as compared to behavioral ones (e.g., nudges) to facilitate a pro-environmental behavior in a real-world setting. They conduct a quantitative study of 320 American participants randomly allocated to eight experimental campus dining-hall menu treatments (including those with meat-free options). The menu choice experiments use varied approaches: (a) the presentation of meat-free menu items in either a default or non-default position, (b) the presence or absence of information about the environmental benefits of reducing meat consumption, and (c) the attractiveness—appealing or unappealing—of the meat-free options. Key findings are as follows:

- Overall, those individuals who are assigned a default menu—both with information and without—are more likely to choose a meat-free menu item than those who do not receive a default menu. Defaults may counter the propensity to make choices that overweigh short-term benefits (e.g., for taste or to satisfy a habit) at the expense of

options that are accompanied by longer term consequences (e.g., related to long-range environmental or human health).

- The **attractiveness of menu items (in a default position or otherwise) has a significant influence on food choice**; with unappealing menu options selected less frequently than appealing ones. The efficacy of a default-based menu configuration in terms of motivating meat-free meal choices seems to trump the inherent attractiveness of those menu options.
- The **provision of information on the menus, albeit in simplified but realistic terms** (for what is typically encountered on a menu), **does not have a significant influence on an individual's choice of a meat-free menu option**. Although this kind of information may help in motivating behavior-change over a longer time scale, it appears to be less effective at motivating behavior change at the scale of individual, real-time choices. Similarly, values and worldview only play a more indirect and supporting role in decision making.
- **Male participants are not as likely as female participants to choose a meat-free meal option**; they are also more likely to view a meal as incomplete if it lacks meat and thus may be much less willing than women to accept a meat-free meal option, even if it is the more convenient choice.
- Food service managers can, even without eliminating options, **provide easier access to environmentally sustainable or healthier food options while placing unhealthier or less environmentally-friendly food options in a slightly less convenient position**. All without significantly increasing the transaction costs associated with making the non-default choice (pp. 13–16).

Vigors (2018) looks into the efficacy of “nudges” as a way of bridging the gap between high levels of awareness about animal welfare among consumers but the low demand for high welfare products. A **“nudge” is an intervention which seeks to influence peoples’ decisions or behaviors in a predictable way—often by changing the conditions of the decision-making environment**. This is often via change in choice architecture or the way in which options are presented and aligning the goal of an individual’s behavior with their self-stated interests (p. 2). Key observations of the study include:

- Information-provision and greater options of higher welfare products may not be effective due to high cognitive load on consumers, their willful ignorance, and the time constraints of purchasing decisions. Further, an individual’s decisions are influenced by **social norms, i.e., the implicit rules or behavioral expectations within a group**, such as a sense of fairness or reciprocity. The main advantages of nudges, on the other hand, are that they are not coercive and are more cost-effective (pp. 3–5).
- The **citizen consumer’s moral intention** to buy higher welfare products creates a salient self-image of being someone who values animal welfare. This **can be harnessed even in a market environment that is saturated with options by changing how the choice information is presented**. This institutes an effective self-nudge, which triggers ethically-oriented consumers to purchase according to their self-image. Increasing consumer knowledge and exposing them to key environmental cues such as “organic” or “free range” labels, can also help an individual’s self-nudge ethical consumer behavior (pp. 7, 8).

- For consumers who are not engaged enough for self-nudges, **how choices are presented in a supermarket is key**. This is especially because decisions have to be made quickly between products that are more expensive than others and less expensive when compared to others in the aisle. Higher welfare products need to have a clearly defined and delineated section, potentially at the end of an aisle or on an aisle of their own so that the product attributes are clearly defined and at their most salient with minimum variance between highest and lowest prices (p. 10).
- A key advantage of leveraging social norms to drive ethical consumption is that **people look to the behavior of others to determine what actions are effective and what choices to make**. Studies demonstrate that explicitly telling people what most others do in a given situation (i.e., descriptive social norms), or what others approve of or expect in a given situation (i.e., injunctive social norms), can support behavior change. A message that aligns with a social norm (highlighting already existing social norms to make it more salient by telling people about it), is more effective as a tailored message and will engage a consumer more deeply as it is related to their own moral values (pp. 10–12).
- Further, a strong norm message influences the behavior of consumers who do not have pro-environmental attitudes. This is particularly pertinent for animal welfare, where consumers who do not have strong sensitivities to animal welfare are thought to be most sensitive to price. A simple message stating “50% of people who buy free range eggs also buy higher welfare chicken,” may be more effective than saying not enough people are buying higher welfare products.
- **Pre-commitments are a nudge tool** which motivates people to commit to a goal which aligns their future behavior with their desired self-image. They are most effective when the cost of failure is high. Committing publicly to a goal (such as in Veganuary), choice or behavior is one powerful way to increase the cost of failure, as reputational damage is risked when an individual shows a lack of consistency (pp. 13–14).
- Unlike choice architecture, **self-nudges, as they emerge from the consumers themselves, are free of the ethical problems of being coercive**. Choice architecture may hinder an individual’s development of moral character, where behavior becomes fragmented between choice architect-designed environments and non-designed environments, thus reducing individual accountability for their own behavior. In such a scenario, choice architecture must only suggest and never coerce (pp. 15, 16). Similarly, some consumers feel social norm messaging is too insistent and difficult to process.

VI F. EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES – PLANT-BASED AND CULTURED MEAT

Bryant and Barnett (2020) provide a **review of scholarship on consumer acceptance of cultured meat** from 2018 to 2020 (cultured meat or lab meat is meat produced by in-vitro cell culture of animal cells, instead of from slaughtered animals. It is a form of cellular agriculture). The authors note the following trends:

- Most people see more societal benefits than personal benefits from eating cultured meat. There is **a large potential market for cultured meat products in many countries around the world, especially in Asian countries like China and India**. Cultured meat is seen as more acceptable than other food technologies like Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), and more appealing than other alternative proteins like insects. Although it is not as broadly appealing as plant-based proteins, evidence suggests it may be more uniquely positioned to appeal to meat-lovers who are resistant to other

alternative proteins, and to certain demographic groups such as men, older people, omnivores (when compared to vegetarians) and those leaning towards leftist ideology.

- Many consumers have mixed feelings about meat from animals, and often recognize the benefits of cultured meat for animal welfare and the environment. The potential safety improvements or nutritional enhancements are seen as benefits by consumers but also as risks, due to the perception of unnaturalness and violation of norms. **Cultured meat producers and advocates should aim to build trust, facilitate understanding of the technology**, and explain how cultured meat could improve outcomes in these areas. Since neophobia and norm violation play an important role in cultured meat rejection, it is likely that this will decrease over time.
- Highlighting ways that cultured meat can help avoid zoonotic disease outbreaks and reduce the use of antibiotics by removing unpredictable and unhygienic animals from the production process is likely to be an intuitively appealing message which turns a potential barrier into an argument in the technology's favor (pp. 21, 22).

Arora et al. (2020) explore the preferences and **willingness of Indians to pay for meat alternatives**, among 394 respondents in Mumbai. A latent class model of a discrete choice experiment (a quantitative method used to elicit preferences from participants without directly asking them to state their preferred options) is used to identify four audience segments to analyze the Indian market for protein. They are the veggie lovers (21%) of sample, meat lovers (27.5%), the plant-based meat enthusiasts (32%), and the clean meat enthusiasts (19.5%). Key findings of the quantitative study are:

- The “veggie lovers” consistently display highly significant, negative preferences for all three types of meat—conventional meat, plant-based meat, and clean meat—when these are compared to *chana* (chick pea). Environmental campaigns and policies which attempt to target the veggie lovers may not be effective since this class already prefers a relatively sustainable protein. Instead, interventions aimed at reducing dairy and egg consumption are more relevant to such groups.
- 79% of the sample includes three classes that prefer meat products to *chana*—the meat lovers, the plant-based meat enthusiasts, and the clean meat enthusiasts. The key takeaway for the two “enthusiast” classes, which together make up over 50% of the sample, is their strong positive preference for simulated meat products over conventional meat and *chana*. The individuals in these segments are likely to be the first adopters of simulated meat products (plant-based products made to look and taste like meat) in India.
- The size of these classes and their Willingness To Pay (WTP) suggest positive prospects for a simulated meat industry in India. However, both classes also prefer conventional meat to *chana*, suggesting that the availability of meat alternatives may be an important barrier in transitioning away from conventional meat.
- The meat lovers comprise 27.5% of the total sample. Enticing members of the meat-lovers' class to substitute with meat alternatives may require pricing of simulated meat to be considerably lower than conventional meat. Consumers perceive simulated meat products to have health-related, environmental, and animal-welfare benefits compared to conventional meat.

The study finds largely positive attitudes towards meat substitutes within the sample, which, alongside the results of the market segmentation, suggests that the Indian market will

be receptive to meat substitutes. However, **between the two simulated meat alternatives, plant-based meat rated consistently higher than clean meat.** This finding though may be skewed by the fact that the plant-based meat enthusiasts' class is the largest of the four identified segments, making up 32% of the sample (pp. 13, 14).

Bryant et al. (2019) conduct a quantitative survey of consumer perceptions of plant-based and clean meat in the US, India, and China using Pliner and Hobden's Food Neophobia Scale.¹⁶ The survey involved 3,030 participants, of which 1,024 are from India. Important findings:

- There is a **significantly higher likelihood of urban, well-educated and high-income consumers in India and China purchasing clean meat and plant-based meat compared to consumers in the US.** The findings in India and China indicate that those who eat more meat, and are more attached to meat, are more likely to purchase plant-based and clean meat. In terms of reducing the impact of conventional meat on the environment and animal suffering, aiming at markets in China and India may have particularly high potential.
- Affluent, educated city-dwellers are the population most likely to have access to clean and plant-based meat. In India, perceived necessity is again a predictor of both plant-based and clean meat acceptance, whilst perceived sustainability predicts plant-based meat acceptance, and perceived ethicality predicts clean meat acceptance. This seems to suggest that consumers in India, who have the lowest levels of meat attachment, are most cognizant of the environmental and ethical issues with conventional meat. Messages about the environment and animal welfare may be more effective marketing strategies in India compared to China and the US (pp. 8, 9).

¹⁶ Pliner and Hobden's Food Neophobia Scale (see Pliner, P., and Hobden, K. (1992) Development of a Scale to Measure the Trait of Food Neophobia in Humans).

CHAPTER VII. VEGAN IDENTITY, LIFESTYLES, CHALLENGES AND POLITICS

Vegans are slowly starting to become a demographic in some countries, and the resulting changes in mainstream society has gained critical attention. The motivations for becoming and staying vegan, the consistency of vegan practice and how these values extend to the social and political spheres are outlined in this section.

VII A. VEGAN STIGMA AS A BARRIER TO BECOMING VEGAN

Stigmatization of vegans is a significant barrier for vegan adoption, and is seen as a deflection of the discomfort triggered among non-vegans by vegans. This section outlines the causes and different forms of such stigmatization, and how this can be overcome in various ways, including a stronger sense of self-identity as a vegan and related narratives.

Markowski and Roxburgh (2019) argue that **because of dietary deviance from the norm of meat-eating, vegans are prone to stigma**. They undertake a qualitative analysis through five focus groups in the US. The vegan focus group consists of four participants; the vegetarian groups consist of eight and six participants; and the omnivore groups consist of nine and seven participants. Findings for each group are as follows:

Vegans: Vegans is the only group that uniformly responds with positive descriptors (kind, peaceful, loving) when explaining how it views vegans and veganism. Vegans perceive that they are viewed negatively for how they eat and for their beliefs and ideas as to why they eat the way they do—patterns of which are implied as abnormal and irrational (p. 4).

Vegetarians: They understand vegans as those who regard themselves as morally superior or “pretentious” compared to non-vegans, especially when accompanying the refusal of food with an acknowledgement of the reason why they are vegan. The key idea here is that it might be okay to refuse food—presumably as vegetarians do at times—but to acknowledge a deviant identity status as the reason behind the refusal is socially inappropriate because it conveys seeking attention for one’s identity. Vegetarians likewise feel shamed by vegans who are perceived as passing moral judgment against them for eating some animal products. They feel that being vegan crosses the line from partially following food norms to completely eschewing them—from moderately acceptable to totally unacceptable.

Omnivores: Non-vegans view vegans exactly in the way that the vegans anticipate—as wanting to control and change how people behave (p. 5).

Responses to vegan stigma manifests itself in three ways:

Social distancing: Social distance by physical distance prevents any associational stigma that may come with previously having had (and recounting) an interaction with a vegan. Vegetarians are concerned with conceptually and verbally separating themselves from vegans as well as separating what they do from what vegans do. This verbal distancing strategy translates into social distance since it reinforces the idea that vegans embody undesirable personal and social attributes, all of which the vegetarians assert they do not possess because they are not part of the vegan group.

Anticipating vegan stigma: Non-vegans state that people view them differently if they are to eat like a vegan. Eating like a vegan can lead others to assume that the individual thinks

and regards others in the particular way associated with vegans (e.g., judgmental), and this is ultimately undesirable. Omnivores also anticipate being mocked for being vegan since they can appear as outlandish in refuting the norms that govern food in social situations with friends.

The third common form of vegan stigma by non-vegans involves **behaviorally distancing oneself** from vegans (p. 6).

Buttny and Kinefuchi (2020) provide an interactive critical discursive analysis of US vegans' narratives of confrontational and problematic moments with omnivores and how they manage such situations and their identity. Vegan students report criticism, jibes, and the constant need to explain themselves which stand at odds with the growing presence of vegan and vegetarian options at stores and restaurants and assumed acceptance of veganism in the West. The authors state that given the staggeringly low percentages of vegans and vegetarians, eating meat is still a hegemonic practice; mainstream media play an important role in both upholding (by stigmatizing veganism as abnormal) or challenging the hegemony (by normalizing veganism through visible vegan celebrities and positive portrayal of vegans). Veganism, is thus, **progressively being described as a positive deviance from the norm of meat-eating and as an act of political consumerism** (p. 3). Vegans' narratives range from problem stories of where some troublesome event occurred which was not resolved, to solution stories of the best ways of dealing with meat-eaters. In each case, being vegan is a social positioning that is problematized in various ways and a positioning that needs to be accounted for (p. 7). Other key observations include:

- **Omnivores notice and question vegans for not eating meat** (implying it is out of the ordinary)—this is identified as a problematic aspect of their dealings with omnivores (pp. 8–10). Vegan participants (always as the only ones who are vegan in their family and friends group) are observed as not wanting their food choices to be noticed and singled out, let alone being the object of sympathy.
- Vegans face the dilemma of **how to talk about the treatment of animals without being labeled as critical of omnivores**. Some adopt the strategy of allowing others to raise the topic so that they have the option on how to respond: the health aspects, the environmental impacts, or even the ethical animal welfare aspects. This passive approach may also avoid the potential of being labeled judgmental or aggressive but its very passiveness can be an issue because one may not be asked about one's forgoing meat (pp. 11, 13).
- An underlying assumption in these different vegan solution stories is **the notion of individual choice and the desire to avoid being seen as radical**. At the same time, the actions and the views that question the meat-eating hegemony are labeled as extreme. So vegans feel constrained in what they can say even though they may feel that eating animals is morally wrong or environmentally problematic. Hence, they are forced to respond by portraying veganism as an individual choice; this circumvents discussions about larger structural issues like industrial animal cruelty and the climate impacts of animal agriculture (pp. 15, 16).
- The authors discuss how the lack of naming for meat-eating (unlike "vegetarian" which describes both a behavior—plant-eating and an identity) places eating meat outside a belief system and thus ethics, although it is as much a belief system as vegetarianism and veganism are. This **belief system, which Melanie Joy calls carnism, is a naturalized ideology** ("it just is the way it is") that is aided by a categorical separation between

animals and meat. Such a separation helps meat-eaters remain unreflective of the fact that they are eating dead animals. Vegans are seen as “killjoys” disturbing fellowship at the table. Being vegan also entails constant negotiation with and explanation of stance to non-vegan friends and family members. **The ethical aspect of veganism may be muted, even calling it a “plant-based diet” instead of vegan, to avoid confrontation.**

In their qualitative study, [Pohjolainen and Jokinen \(2020\)](#) analyze how volunteers respond to a Finnish social media campaign for MRD (called “Meatless October”) in terms of their motivations and challenges as reflected through their blog posts. The study aims to explore **how participants recognize themselves as agents of change by taking part in a politicized (vegetarian) consumption practice.** Important findings are:

- Many participants already tried going vegetarian but dropped out due to everyday practicalities and health issues. Some of the blogs use a personal approach (more than a political one) to talk of everyday food practices such as teaching vegetarian recipes to others, and perceive the campaign as an opportunity to try out something new and challenging. This, they say, creates feelings of positivity especially when cooking as a group or cooking for others (pp. 7, 8). They also see themselves as undoing the negative stereotypes of vegetarian food by sharing recipes that are accessible and delicious.
- Issues such as affordability, time constraints, shopping, etc. do not assume much importance in the blogs. Abstaining from meat-eating itself produces feelings of stress, and acquiring the skills to make tasty and healthy vegetarian dishes for the family is a challenge. There are also feelings of failure reported in a few blogs when participants ate meat by mistake (p. 11). The challenge of avoiding meat is used as a motivator for trying out new cooking skills. Some participants say they feel increasingly exhausted when constantly learning new skills. This however, reduces over time by getting used to vegetarian cooking and by coming to terms with limited options when eating out (p. 12).
- **The loose and light organizational structure of the campaign proved a strong point in activating consumers.** This is because there are no strong regulatory structures or detailed instructions restricting experimentation. It seems to give an essential impetus and push for participants to dismantle everyday routine and ways of living that have, on many occasions, been shown to be a central factor to “lock-in” consumer behavior. The campaign also broadened the reach of vegetarianism to mainstream consumers who may be curious, but are put off by its negative stereotypes of being weird and marginal (p. 15).

VII B. SOCIAL NORMALIZATION

[Twine \(2017\)](#) makes a case for further exploration of **the food-related material practices of vegans which contribute to the social normalization of veganism in the UK.** The ethnographic study regards veganism as a practice and builds on participation observation and interviews with 40 UK-based vegan practitioners. There are four modes of material constitution which emerges as significant to the transition to, and reproduction of, vegan eating practices:

Material Substitution: An example of the greater visibility of veganism is specific vegan substitute foods in mainstream supermarket spaces. **Substitutes are aids to transition because they allow for a high degree of continuity moving between omnivorous, vegetarian, and vegan diets.** They also afford less disruption to pre-established eating routines and can therefore potentially attract new practitioners although they require new

learning, for example, preventing plant-based milk from curdling. Substitute materials generally contest the meaning of veganism as wholly “other,” offering familiar types of replacement, and again potentially aiding continuity.

Substitution exhibits plurality and material creativity that re-constitutes the practice of vegan eating in various ways. It also reduces the resource intensity of a food practice by changing its elements (for e.g., by replacing beef with seitan steaks). Substitution here includes not only the simulation but also the parodying sense of the verb “to mock;” they **are also capable of engendering social, economic, and cultural change** as can be seen in cases where dairy companies initiate legal procedures against plant-based milk (p. 7).

Food Creativity: This signifies the experimental, creative material reconstructions of food where there exists a further domain of shared creativity, particularly on social media, among the vegan community. Aquafaba and vegan cheese exemplify this practice. Such creativity contests a widespread understanding of veganism as involving loss, and thus challenges negative meanings in addition to retaining the participation of vegans in national and cultural celebrations, keeping traditional and personally satisfying meals on the menu. They point toward the material amelioration of potential alienation from prior food identities that could arise after vegan transition (pp. 9, 10).

New Food Exploration: The tendency of vegans to explore new foods that they have not consumed prior to transition subverts the negative meaning of restriction. It suggests that veganism, at least for a significant number of practitioners, to be an expansive, abundant diet, and transition as a time of exploring new foods and incorporating them into daily or weekly food routines.

Taste Transition: Vegans are engaged in the **construction of their own taste regime**, one which interweaves aesthetic and ethical meanings in the ongoing dynamic of what constitutes vegan practice. Taste is further mobilized as a means to socially extend the practice but also to practice family and friendship, where they use food to communicate with non-vegan friends and family about veganism. They also draw omnivores into the material, sensual experience of vegan food. Vegan potluck get-togethers exemplify this (p. 11).

Cherry (2015) explores the **factors influencing recruitment into and retention of a vegan lifestyle among young people**. Through a qualitative, US-based study with 23 vegans, the author considers veganism to be a lifestyle movement, i.e., one that consciously and actively promotes a lifestyle, or way of life, as its primary means to foster social change. For the study, convenience and snowball sampling are used. Important findings are:

- **Social networks play a key role in recruitment.** Lifestyle movements like veganism are especially significant for youth who are becoming less interested in organized politics and prefer to simply live out their ideals. Participants have a catalytic experience (of realizing that meat comes from animals, learning what goes into a hamburger, and how animals die in the meat and dairy industry), which pushes them to learn more about veganism. They then share their learning with friends, and finally change their identity and practices to become vegan. Learning about veganism occurs through reading literature from animal rights organizations, cookbooks, and other vegetarian resource books (p. 3–6).
- **Participants tend to reconstruct their identity** and how they perceive themselves around ethical and moral issues. Storytelling about their conversion to veganism acts as a trigger, and their vegan journeys are important to participants in a **vegan subculture** (p. 7).

- Post-recruitment life as a vegan presents great difficulty in managing relationships with non-vegan family and friends. This is due to constant ridiculing by friends and family and their concern about the healthiness of a vegan diet. Conversion to a vegetarian diet is more tolerated for men than for women (p. 11). Local and national vegetarian organizations like “Food Not Bombs” (in which several participants volunteered), distribute vegan food among the homeless, provide the necessary social support for vegans (p. 15).
- Having a vegan identity by itself proves insufficient for maintaining vegan practices. **Retention of veganism as a lifestyle movement requires two elements: social support from friends and family, and cultural tools** that provide sufficient skills, motivations to remain a vegan (p. 16).

VII C. DISCOURSE ANALYSES OF VEGAN NARRATIVES

Sneijder and Molder (2009) use a discursive psychology framework to understand the formation of identities in **online discussions on veganism as an ideological food choice**. Important observations:

- Vegans in the online forum **seek to build vegan eating practices as simple and ordinary**, thereby rebutting the rhetorical alternative of veganism as a complicated lifestyle which is difficult or time-consuming to practice. For example, participants use listings of products, descriptions of preparation procedures without an agent, and suggestions of spontaneity and immediacy to establish the ease of coming up with simple options for a vegan meal (p. 626).
- Vegan participants also “normalize” particular health protection methods. A number of interrelated discursive devices are identified (constructed immediacy, minimization, reference to mundane products or procedures, and the use of scripting), all of which work to present methods of preventing vitamin deficiencies as a routine and unremarkable activity. These constructions systematically undermine assumptions about the “extraordinary” measures that vegans have to take in order to stay healthy (p. 627).
- Being a health freak is treated just as condemnable as leading a careless life. The good life is often shown as **“healthy but relaxed.”** This counters a portrayal of veganism as a lifestyle that is associated with strict norms and rules. The survival of a vegan lifestyle also depends on **how well one is able to account for one’s way of living to others, in terms of its non-extremeness, relaxedness, and simplicity**. It is not only ease that is negotiated here; deviance and normality are also at stake. Participants’ report of simple eating practices and preparation procedures indexically display them as normal: the meals are no more complicated than any “normal” meal which any “normal” person will be willing to prepare (p. 627).

CHAPTER VIII. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This *Literature Review (LR)* of over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles as well as grey literature yielded a wealth of data and insights valuable to the design and implementation of vegan advocacy campaigns in India. Straddling multiple disciplines—anthropology, sociology, behavioral sciences—the review encompassed global and India-specific studies using quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, and meta-analyses.

The studies vary significantly in terms of methodology, research sites, and participants, often throwing up complex, nuanced and sometimes contradictory findings. However, they do indicate broad trends and convergence around some themes and findings. Hence the review, while being important as “state of knowledge” also serves to inform subsequent phases of the overall project, namely the *Content Analysis of Social Media* and the *Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)* regarding dietary choices, with the focus on veganism.

Outlined below are the key findings and recommendations emerging from the *LR*. Unless otherwise indicated, the studies are set in non-Indian contexts.

A. HOW INDIA EATS: DIETARY PATTERNS AND FACTORS

The review notes upfront that the term “vegetarian” in India carries connotations that are vastly different from the west, where vegetarianism is largely an individual choice (driven by concern for animals, health or environment). In sharp contrast, vegetarianism in India is largely predetermined by religion and caste at birth. “Upper-caste”-based vegetarianism is driven by religious notions of “purity” among Hindu cultural elites, with meat-eating (especially beef) being stigmatized, even as dairy enjoys blanket celebration, given the cow’s veneration as mother-figure and a symbol of nationhood.

Recent years have witnessed conservative forces trying to impose vegetarian-only diets in public spaces and institutions, alongside attacks on Dalits and religious minorities for possessing beef, or transporting cattle. **Vegetarianism in India, therefore, has acquired a regressive connotation** (unlike the west), resulting in progressive groups distancing themselves from it, and instead, celebrating the right of minority groups to determine their dietary choices. Any articulation of concern for animal suffering in the meat industry is interpreted as a manifestation of caste and religious politics and a violation of the eating cultures and livelihoods of minority communities. Within this climate any constructive debate on animal and ecological vulnerability is rendered invisible (Srinivasan, 2021; Ferry 2020).

Contrary to the general perception of India as a predominantly vegetarian country, **vegetarianism is confined to a mere 27–29% of the population** (NFHS-5, 2021; Natarajan and Jacob 2018). While per capita consumption of meat and poultry products is relatively low compared to the west, consumption figures do not reveal the huge volume of meat, eggs, and dairy actually produced in the country. India is the leading producer of milk globally, as well as the leading exporter of beef (along with Brazil).

Consumption of meat and dairy has increased significantly in recent times. For example, as indicated by NFHS-5, the percentage of men who had never tasted meat dropped by 5 percentage points from 21.6% to 16.6% within the six-year period after NFHS-4. An overwhelming 83.4% of men and 70.6% of women in the 15–49 age group are

non-vegetarian. Data from the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying show that consumption of milk has risen exponentially, with a 63% increase in production between 2007 and 2017, and a 114% increase for chicken (the most popular meat in the country) during the same period (Rai, 2019). Milk production, in fact, increased by 240% between 1970 and 2008 (Wiley, 2011).

Factors contributing to the increase in meat and dairy consumption include globalization, urbanization, the adoption of industrial factory-farming practices and mushrooming of pocket-friendly fast-food chains, the loosening of traditional cultural norms restricting meat consumption, and the valorization of animal-based proteins (Khara et al, 2020; Filippini and Srinivasan, 2018; Dolphijn, 2006; Maxfield et al., 2016, Fourat, 2018 a).

Historically, **dietary patterns in India have been defined by caste, homeland, and sectarian affiliations**, with upper caste Brahmin dominance and cultural vegetarianism defining meat as “polluting” in contrast to the “purity” of vegetarian food. Within this context, “non-vegetarian” is seen by some scholars as a “neologism that reinforces the normative status of vegetarianism,” a way to “smuggle casteism through the backdoor” (Ahmad, 2014; Sathyamala, 2018; Ferry, 2020).

Given the historical and socio-cultural stigmatization of meat consumption, any self-reported data on food habits are likely overestimations of vegetarianism and underestimations of meat in the diet. This is especially the case when shame, guilt and punishment can result if this transgression (of meat-eating) is discovered, contributing to **“frontstage” behaviors of meat abstinence and “backstage” behaviors of meat-eating** (Natarajan and Jacob, 2018; Khara et al., 2020).

Yet, some studies **caution against this “crude essentialism” of equating vegetarianism with Brahminism**, given the complex web of perceptions around what constitutes “vegetarian” and “non-vegetarian”, with the lines becoming increasingly blurred. For example, eggs are cooked in many upper-caste vegetarian homes and rationalized as being critical for child nutrition. While Brahmin men may eat meat outside of their homes, non-vegetarian Hindu families go vegetarian on religiously significant days, and non-Brahmin women may be vegetarian even while cooking meat and eggs for their family members (Caplan, 2008; Staples, 2020).

Gender plays a key role in determining dietary choices both globally and in India. Given gender disparities in India, historically the pleasures of meat have mostly been afforded to men, who have been embracing meat-eating at a faster rate than women. For example, a comparison of NFHS 4 and NFHS 5 data indicates that the number of men in the 15-49 years age group who ate meat on a daily, weekly or occasional basis rose from 78.4 to 83.4% during this time period. The corresponding figures for Indian women are 70% and 70.6% respectively. Gender also plays out in the various acts of engagement around meat, with women in non-Brahmin homes practicing vegetarianism (while cooking meat for the men), something interpreted by some scholars as a means of regulating their sexuality and reproduction (Fourat and Lepiller, 2017; Caplan, 2008).

Despite – or perhaps because of – its troubled association with religion and caste, in recent years **meat has started to occupy a democratic image**. Meat is increasingly marketed and seen as a signifier of fashion, youth, and modernity. American fast-food chains like KFC serve as escape routes to evade Brahmin dominance since they explicitly question the binary between the vegetarian and non-vegetarian menu. Closely related is the idea of “food prestige” which is synonymous with non-traditional, non-local food and may be

representative of “cooler” alternative identities, and could partly account for the rising trend of meat consumption in India especially among younger generations (Robbins, 1999; Staples, 2017; Dolphijn, 2006; Maxfield, 2016).

In practice these contrasting and contradictory “push-and-pull” factors result in complex situations, with “frontstage” façade of vegetarianism and “backstage” behaviors of meat consumption. Such behaviors are especially common in **collectivist cultures like India, where peers and social norms wield strong influence** and explain why meat consumption is under-reported (Khara et al., 2020).

Milk, in sharp contrast to the “polluting” and stigmatized nature of meat, occupies a pure and sacred place. It is considered an elixir of life—celebrated and consumed with a religious fervor, thanks to its association with Hindu mythology and the status of the cow as mother figure. In addition, given the history of Amul’s dairy cooperative movement (which is credited with lifting millions out of poverty and malnutrition) and its high-visibility advertising, milk has transformed into a symbol of nationalism, progress and development. With such metaphoric loading, milk is generally impervious to political debates, rendering any discussion on it inconvenient (Fourat, 2018a; Fourat and Lepiller, 2017; Wiley, 2011; Subramanian, 2013; Narayan, 2018).

B. MEAT CONSUMPTION: DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

The review found a wealth of evidence that facilitates greater understanding of the complex interplay of demographic, sociological, psychological and other drivers for meat-eating as a practice, as well as the barriers and facilitators for adopting a veg*n diet. It must be noted that similar evidence for the consumption of dairy was relatively scarce, barring some theoretical analyses; a result, perhaps, of the fact that veganism is a relatively nascent movement, globally and more so in India.

A fundamental starting point for any discussion of veg*nism is the idea of “**speciesism**”¹⁷ — the belief that affords moral consideration only to humans—which serves as the fundamental bedrock for all forms of discrimination against non-human animals, including the belief that humans have the moral right to determine some non-human animals as “food.” Likened to other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism¹⁸ endorsement of speciesism was found to be a robust predictor for carnism¹⁹ (Rosenfeld, 2019).

A closely related idea to speciesism is the **longstanding and deeply-ingrained belief in the idea of the “4Ns”**— that is, the belief that meat is “Natural,” “Normal,” “Necessary” and “Nice.” The 4Ns effectively encapsulate the core beliefs that sustain meat eating as being natural, essential for human health, nutrition and survival. One study revealed that an overwhelming 91% of respondents justified meat eating as “necessary”, followed by “natural”, “nice” and “normal”. Endorsement of the 4Ns was positively correlated with frequency of meat consumption. Given the omniscience of milk in India, it would be appropriate to conclude that **milk is to India what meat is to the west** (Piazza et al., 2015; Joy, 2010)²⁰.

¹⁷ Richard D Ryder, *Victims of Science*, 1975

¹⁸ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 1975.

¹⁹ A term coined in 2001 by psychologist and animal rights advocate Melanie Joy to denote the form of speciesism underpinning the use of animals for food, and particularly killing them for meat.

²⁰ The original idea of the 3Ns (Natural, Normal, Necessary) from Joy, M. was adapted by Piazza et al to include the fourth term “Nice” to denote the pleasure and taste of meat.

Thinking of some animals as “food” may reduce their perceived capacity to suffer.

An 11-country Eurasian study corroborated the correlation between avoidance of animal products and levels of concern on animal rights, animal experimentation and wildlife indices, and that avoidance of specific meats stemmed from perceived levels of sentience of the animals involved (for e.g., chimps vs fish) (Bratanova et al., 2011; Izmirli and Philips, 2011).

Gender plays a crucial role in determining dietary choices, with women being more inclined than men towards meat-abstinence and/or meat reduction. Studies corroborate men’s higher endorsement of the 4 Ns with males also scoring much higher on the Meat Attachment Questionnaire (MAQ). A study using Schwartz’s theory of ten universal values found that women displayed a greater avoidance of meats, especially red meats. Women scored significantly higher for “meat disgust” while also prioritizing “universalism” more highly than men. A US-based study also found that women constituted 70% of the staff of animal rights organizations. The substantive evidence in this area strongly recommends a greater focus of vegan advocacy towards women, who can be early adopters for veganism (Hayley et al., 2015; Izmirli and Philips, 2011; Piazza et al., 2015; Graca et al., 2015; Ruby and Heine, 2012; Campbell-Arvai et al., 2014; Mika, 2006).

Meat paradox, ambivalence and cognitive dissonance: A few studies throw light on an area that is germane to our study: the individual cognitive and psychological processes that come into play and facilitate the act of eating animals, and act as barriers to the adoption of veg*nism. Studies recognize that meat consumption elicits highly ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, it is associated with sensory pleasure and tradition; on the other hand, it is linked to moral, ecological, and health related issues. The resulting conflict is referred to as ‘the meat paradox’ and is similar to the idea of “cognitive dissonance” which finds mention in research on dietary habits as well as from the broader field of social psychology (Buttler & Walther, 2018)

Evidence points to the many cognitive processes that surface to reduce cognitive dissonance and enable the individual to eat meat. These include **rationalizing; moral disengagement; objectifying and “dementing”** animals; religious, taste and hierarchical justifications; avoiding or decedibilizing information aimed at discouraging meat-eating; and disassociation through language to render living animals into food products (for example, “hens” into “chicken”). Cognitive dissonance may reduce over time and through habit, however, motivation to resolve this dissonance through behavior change can be sustained when aided by vegan advocacy (Rothgerber, 2014a; Graca et al., 2014; Bastian et al., 2012; De Lanauze & Siadou-Martin, 2019).

The review encountered some limited evidence suggesting **cultural vegetarianism in India is not necessarily synonymous with a concern for animal welfare**. For example, a Faunalytics cross-cultural study across Brazil, Russia, India, China (BRIC) and the United States showed that despite the large number of vegetarians, irrespective of their diets, Indians were less likely to give pro-animal responses than respondents in other BRIC countries. Only 52% would support a law that requires farmed animals to be treated more humanely; moreover, one in five (18%), the highest among all BRIC nations, would oppose such a law (Dauksza, 2018). These findings find resonance in another India-based study which found that only 45% of respondents say it’s wrong to kill animals, with 83% agreeing that it is okay to eat animals if permitted by religion. Another quantitative survey comparing western and Indian respondents found that among the latter, ethics of harm and fairness (treating others equally; avoiding harm to others) may not extend to non-human animals (Fourat, 2018 b; Ruby et al., 2013).

Illustrating the complexity of this domain and the need for more definitive evidence in this regard, one India-based study points to the contrary, with a significant majority of vegetarian (90%) and non-vegetarian (65%) respondents asking for strong animal welfare laws and their enforcement. Around half the non-vegetarian respondents agreed that slaughter is unfair, and 28% of vegetarians stated that their diets were determined by a concern for animals, with the same percentage of individuals born into non-vegetarian families adopting a vegetarian diet due to concern for animals (Animal Equality, 2018).

C. DRIVERS TO PROMOTE VEGANISM

The review found evidence on the use of key drivers for promoting veganism., namely animal rights and welfare, health, and environment sustainability and climate change.

1. Animal Rights and Welfare

Animal rights groups use a number of strategies to promote veganism. Among them are **anthropomorphizing** (drawing parallels between humans and animals in their capacity for intelligence, love, and suffering), **moral shock** (graphic content on the brutal exploitation of animals that appeals to a basic moral code), and **highlighting cognitive dissonance** (between self-perceived values of compassion and the disjuncture with carnist dietary behavior).

Evidence suggests that when prompted to think about farm animals in anthropomorphic terms, participants report less pleasure in eating meat. Animal intelligence, animal appearance and capacity for bonding, in that order, were identified as significant predictors for understanding why people eat some animals and not others. Animal capacity for suffering was a small but not significant predictor. Consumers exposed to the “friendship” metaphor are more likely to anthropomorphize farm animals, and anticipatory guilt, “cuteness” of “food animals”, empathic concern, and meat disgust were associated with decreased intention to eat advertised meat (Zickfeld et al 2018; Wang and Basso, 2019; Ruby and Heine, 2012; Cherry, 2010).

Recommendations to strengthen anthropomorphizing as a strategy include spotlighting the cognitive dissonance inherent in eating animals, more frequently likening non-human animals to the human animal (and vice versa) by saying “human animals” or “humans and other animals,” and avoiding dualistic phrases like “people and animals.” Evidence also suggests that messaging around personality, emotions, suffering and intelligence of animals is likely to have the best results, even outside of the context of diet pledges and welfare petitions (Beggs and Anderson, 2020, Wang and Basso, 2019, Freeman, 2010).

Evidence is far more divided on the effectiveness of moral shock as a strategy. Some studies share concern that moral shock can be counterproductive, given that it implicates the audiences for the suffering of animals and can trigger defensiveness; in addition, they point to the possible desensitization of audiences given that violence is increasingly common in the media today. An audience testimonial-based evaluation of a multimedia campaign using moral shock as a strategy showed substantive support for broad-scale advocacy (52%) followed by pledges for ethical consumption (35%) and commitments to become veg*n (13%). Graphic footage of factory-farming practices seems to *strengthen the perception of wrongdoing by others*, erodes the already-low credibility of the animal processing industry, and is effective in mobilizing donations to end such practices. One study recommends that a **two-step intervention involving showing moral shock footage followed by discussion between activists and audiences** might enhance the effectiveness of this strategy. Overall,

caution needs be paid to framing and context when using moral shock as a strategy (Beggs and Anderson, 2020; Mika, 2006; Rodan and Mummery, 2014; Scudder and Mills, 2009; Wrenn, 2013)

2. Health: Driver or Deterrent?

The health dimension of carnism and veganism is perhaps almost as contentious as that pertaining to animal rights/welfare. This is perhaps understandable given the wide-ranging, divergent and culture-specific belief systems surrounding the health benefits of particular diets, and the widespread endorsement of the 4Ns. Research evidence is divided in this area, with some studies suggesting that **health tends to be the single strongest motivator for influencing a switch to veg*nism, especially in the older 41-60 age group**. This general trend finds corroboration in a meta-analysis of factors influencing meat reduction in developed and transition countries to combat climate change, which found that health concerns tend to rate higher than environmental or animal welfare in motivating change in dietary behavior. However, other meta reviews suggest that concern for animals and the environment are key motivators for dietary changes (Graca et al, 2014; Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2016, Bryant, 2019; Dauksza, 2018; Grassian, 2019).

Some India-based studies suggest that respondents choose vegetarianism motivated by health concerns. An 11-city study found that more than half (54%) the non-vegetarian participants considered vegetarianism to be the healthier option; yet they consumed meat and fish mostly based on taste and perception of a balanced diet. Health was the major reason (41%) for adopting a vegetarian diet among non-vegetarians. Illustrating the complexity of this domain, a Vadodara (Gujarat) based study indicates that vegetarian food was seen as tasty, healthy, strength-giving and pure by more than 85% of the entire sample, but one third disagree that plant-based protein is better than animal protein, a belief that perhaps has widespread traction (Animal Equality, 2018; Fourat, 2018b).

Barriers to adopting a veg*n diet from the health angle include the 4Ns (both with regard to meat as well as dairy), concerns about getting adequate protein, the risk of B12 and Vitamin D deficiencies, as well as lack of knowledge about vegan recipes and the nutritional value of plant-based diets. It is worth noting that one study found that those adopting veganism for health reasons were relatively less likely to be consistent in their veganism than those who adopted it for ethical reasons (Feher et al, 2020; Radnitz et al 2015).

3. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

Despite the increasing focus on the role of animal agriculture in fueling climate change, evidence from this review suggests that even basic awareness of this linkage is extremely low. While one study found that when provided with relevant information on the deleterious consequences of animal agriculture, there was a significantly higher concern about these impacts, other studies found that even when such knowledge existed, it did not work as a sufficient barrier to meat-eating behaviors. A study conducted among students of environmental studies found that there was no change with regard to eating meat – however, social norms within the student group seemed to elicit positive responses towards meat reduction, or more ethical purchasing decisions (Sedova et.al 2016; Hunter and Roos, 2016; Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2016).

Barriers to the environment argument include the poor knowledge of the link between animal agriculture and climate change, and the poor correlation with intention for meat

abstinence. It is worth noting that higher meat attachment is synonymous with lower perception of the environmental benefit of meat reduction, and that the sense of “self-efficacy” for quitting meat was found to be much lower than for other climate mitigation options. There is also an inherent complexity in trying to communicate about the meat consumption-climate change link, since environmental consequences of animal agriculture are seen as somewhat remote. The general public also view climate change mitigation as beyond the scope of individual action and in the realm of government, policy makers and industry (Graca et al 2014, De Boer et al. 2016).

Recommendations emerging from this review include simplifying complex information on the links between animal agriculture and climate change, providing product-specific carbon footprint information, (thereby empowering consumers to make more informed choices); using multiple moral frames directed both at local victims like family, country etc., and more distant ones such as larger environment, animals etc., as well as greater focus on substitution options (Hunter and Roos, 2016).

D. SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION OF VEG*NISM

Ultimately, the goal of vegan advocacy is to increase the adoption of veganism by larger numbers of people. This section outlines the wide variety of strategies identified by the review for supporting this phase of behavior change. It is pertinent to note that some of the strategies outlined may be drawn solely from meat reduction or meat abstinence studies; they are included here on the premise that their findings may be extrapolated and adapted for vegan adoption.

A first step is to create a supportive ecosystem for the adoption of veganism, and one of the key strategies involves **using celebrities and influential figures for “social modelling.”** Evidence corroborates the crucial role celebrities have played in drawing attention to and visibilizing the issue. They have shaped social norms and helped transform veganism from a stigmatized lifestyle to a normalized (even if depoliticized) health diet, replacing the term “vegan” with “plant-based diet” and equating it with “kindness” to circumvent potential hostility. Evidence suggests a celebrity’s egoistical motivations (health) rather than altruistic ones (such as concern for animals or environment) may be more effective in capturing audience following. In recent years using celebrity endorsement is gradually giving way to using those who may be less glamorous but are identified by their progressive support for social causes, as well as on-ground “influencers” from diverse fields who are more relatable, make important connections, and share their “how to” journeys. The role of celebrities and influencers is especially salient for India; as a collectivist culture the role of social norms and approval of respected others is especially influential in determining individual behaviors (Phua et al., 2019; Lundahl, 2017, Doyle, 2020, Biswas et al, 2009).

While social modelling can provide “top down” visibility, recall and legitimization for veganism, building and maintaining **social networks from the bottom-up is crucial.** Social networks help recruit new members to the movement, provide support to navigate familial and social relationships, counter vegan stigma, and adapt to and retain a new dietary lifestyle. Tackling vegan stigma through such networks is especially crucial given that vegans are seen as “deviants,” given the mainstream norm of consuming animal-derived products, and the feelings of guilt and defensiveness they trigger among omnivores by their very presence. Vegan social networks are especially crucial in collectivist cultures such as in India and other parts of Asia (Cherry, 2015; Markowski and Roxburgh, 2019; Ruby and Heine, 2012).

Asking the general public to sign petitions (for welfare reform, or banning specific factory-farming practices) and dietary pledges has been a common strategy for vegan advocacy. However, evidence suggests that **getting people to sign pledges and/or petitions to improve animal welfare conditions is easier than persuading them to reduce meat consumption or go vegan**. Phasing welfare petitions first and then following up with diet pledges can be more effective in facilitating behavior consistency and increasing uptake of dietary change towards veg*nism (Buttlar et al, 2021; Beggs and Anderson, 2020).

Veg*n advocacy must continue to use a broad array of appeals to promote veganism, given their differing traction with various audience segments. Evidence from the review broadly suggests that health is the leading motivation cited by (non-veg*n) study respondents (especially in the older 41-60 age group) for going veg*n, followed by environmental sustainability, and lastly animal rights. However, studies conducted among veg*n respondents – especially those in the younger age group -- found that concern for animal rights was their primary motivation for their dietary choice. Given the variance in the salience of different appeals it is recommended that campaigns use **a strategic mix of complementary appeals** based on further research into their specific audience segments.

One of the **core perception barriers is the construction of veganism as a complex, challenging and unrealistic goal**. A greater emphasis is required on not just the “why” but also the “how to” of veganism, making it a practical, normal and doable everyday practice. Focusing on creativity and material substitution is important, as is ensuring a balanced diet and highlighting the health, nutritive benefits and disease-reversal potential of vegan diets. (Pohjolainen and Jokinen, 2020)

Vegan “Challenge” programs can play a crucial role in moving audiences from contemplation phases of behavior change through to action and maintenance of veganism. Evaluations of such programs attribute their success to the presence of a supportive and non-judgmental community, professional and organized support through personal and group mentoring and structured content including vegan recipes, daily targets and motivation. A study found that 77% of meat eaters, 64% of reducetarians, and 34% of almost-vegetarians reported that they reduced their meat consumption after Challenge 22+. Two studies also validated the effectiveness of regularly-timed text messages in motivating self-monitoring, increasing intention towards healthy eating behaviors, and reducing self-reported consumption of processed meat consumption (PMC) and red meat consumption (RMC) (Faunalytics, 2019; Carfora et. al, 2017 a).

Some scholars are of the view that ultimately veganism will be market-driven, and involve branding, marketing and labelling that can help consumers overcome automatic, routine purchasing decisions and make consumption more mindful. In this context, while “cruelty-free” labelling can be highly motivating for consumers, it can be flawed as a moral heuristic, and limited by its “halo effect:” one study suggests that 80% of consumers didn’t fully understand the actual requirements involved in such labelling. In India, a study shows that 75% of respondents were not even familiar with FSSAI’s green and brown logos to distinguish between vegetarian and non-vegetarian items (Sheehan and Joonghwa, 2014; Fischer, 2019)

The growing movement for “ethical foods” presents a nascent and emerging social norm that can be leveraged to integrate vegan advocacy concerns. However, as evidence suggests, globally that there are more consumers who are aware of animal welfare issues than are consumers willing to pay for them. Ethical foods especially in India are limited by several barriers such as limited accessibility, the convenience considerations, ignorance and

skepticism about certification processes. It is important, therefore, to ensure that consumer education on ethical foods is combined with certification processes that are transparent, credible and comprehensible to the average consumer (Khara, 2015; Alonso et al., 2020; Vanhonacker and Verbeke, 2014).

The review explored and validated the role of **social norms, choice architecture and nudges**²¹ as strategies to subtly move participants towards vegan choices. Display of variety of food in a campus cafeteria, for example, can provide easier access to environmentally sustainable, healthier food options in more convenient positions without actually eliminating non-vegan choices altogether. The role of “self-image” especially in India’s collectivist cultural context, can also be leveraged for the benefit of veganism (Vigors, 2018; Campbell-Arvai et. al, 2014)

Eventually, vegan advocacy **may benefit most from a multiplicity of discrete and synergistic** strategies – strategic behavior change communication aimed at groups most primed for the transition, social norms that are inspiring and enabling; supportive on-ground social networks, policy and program interventions to facilitate the availability, accessibility and affordability of vegan substitutes, and integrating at-site choice architecture and nudges in a manner that promotes the adoption of veganism.

E. CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The review traversed a rich terrain of research covering sociology, anthropology, psychology and behavioral sciences to understand the complex nature of dietary habits globally and in India. While the review yielded rich sociological analyses from India, it was limited by the paucity of behavior change research on veganism in India. Veganism remains a relatively new area of study in the Indian context, and this review indicates gaps in the scholarship that need to be filled by more inter-disciplinary research.

In order to gain a more definitive understanding of the drivers and barriers to vegan adoption in India it is crucial to contextualize such behavior change research within the complex socio-cultural specificities of India – the role of religion and caste in determining dietary choices, the powder keg situation created between majoritarian ideologies seeking to dictate dietary choices and progressive forces trying to defend the rights of marginalized communities to determine what’s on their plates. Advocating for the health dimensions of veganism is especially challenging, given the high levels of malnutrition in the country, and the widespread belief in the essentiality of dairy, eggs and meat for nutrition, especially for marginalized populations. Advocates for veganism must necessarily engage in a careful segmentation of target populations and crafting of messages to speak to the attitudes and self-identities they present.

Building alliances with broader domains of health and the “right to food” movements, as well as environment and climate change networks is crucial, as is emphasizing “personal choice” and freedom, and sensitivity to the contours of religion, caste and oppression. This will help deflect hostility towards veganism and position it as an intersectional social justice movement.

²¹ An intervention which seeks to influence people’s decisions or behaviors in a predictable way often by changing the conditions of the decision-making environment (often via change in choice architecture or the way in which choices are presented) with the goal of aligning the individual’s behavior with their self-stated interests.

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