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The Disruptive Potential of a Queer Vegan Praxis

By

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An honors undergraduate thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science in University Honors and Social Science

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Abstract

Queerness and veganism are two historically contested social locations that have become more mainstreamed in recent years. This thesis seeks to explore how queer vegans have experienced and utilized these identities to resist normativity. The open ended research question that guided this project was “how do young adult, queer vegans experience connections and disconnections between their queerness and their veganism?” Six semistructured interviews with young adults between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four who self-identify as both queer and vegan were conducted for this project. The interviews were analyzed using queer and feminist frameworks and ultimately aligned with existing theory to find that queer vegans experience a sort of “shared deviance” between these two parallel identities. I argue that queer vegans in particular use their queerness to disrupt normativity within mainstream veganism, and their veganism to disrupt normative notions of gender and sexuality, and more specifically, heteronormativity.

Keywords: veganism, queerness, normativity, deviance, heteronormativity

Introduction

Queer is a multifaceted term with a rich history that involves degradation and reclamation among many other things. Once known most commonly for being used as a slur against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (henceforth referred to as LGBTQ+) community, queer has since been reclaimed by many members of this community as an affirming term for their identities. In addition to its frequent use as a qualifier of sexuality or gender identity, queer has also come to represent a unique meaning all its own, one that ironically echoes the way that queer was previously (and sometimes still is) used as a slur. Queerness is a contested notion that has come to describe deviance, marginality, and a divergence from normativity. While there are certainly instances of overlap between queerness and LGBTQ+ identity, this thesis acknowledges queerness as a social location of its own different although not necessarily independent of identifying as LGBTQ+.

Veganism is a concept that has been shrouded in misconception and misunderstanding much as queerness has been. Merely a decade ago many people had never even heard the word vegan, and now it is described as one of the fastest growing movements ever (Hancox, 2018). 6% of Americans identified as vegan in 2017, which was up from just 1% in 2014 (Neff, 2017). The most widely circulated definition of veganism is “a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practical, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose (qtd. in Griffin, 2017).” Often veganism is understood as not eating any animals or their byproducts, not buying clothing made out of animals or their byproducts, and not buying products that are tested on animals or that contain their byproducts. There is much discourse as to whether veganism is a lifestyle or a diet (or perhaps neither), and what

exactly it entails to call oneself a vegan. As veganism has found its way into a mainstream spotlight, there have been many attempts to enforce harsh boundaries around who should and should not be allowed to label themselves as vegan.

Although queerness and veganism might seem to be two completely separate topics at first glance, a quick Google search will produce many an article inquiring and hypothesizing as to “why so many vegans are gay” among many similar titles. Clearly, this is a question that many besides myself have pondered. As one of those queer vegans, I intend to explore the connections and disconnections that exist between the social locations of queerness and veganism as they occur in young adults who have come of age in a time where both queerness and veganism are arguably receiving more exposure (and thus, are more normative) than they ever have before. Additionally, veganism is a “phenomenon (that) appears to be largely driven by young people (Griffin, 2017)” so it seems especially relevant to contextualize veganism from this perspective. Through the data and analysis collected from in depth interviews with six young adults that self-identify as both queer and vegan, the intricacies of a queer vegan praxis (a practice informed by theory) will be examined here through a feminist and queer lens.

Background

I find it rather important to provide a brief overview of both veganism and queerness before any attempts are made to synthesize the two. While the term vegan was formally coined by Donald Watson in 1944, it's arguable that dietary practices of veganism extend back to the sixth century prior to its formal definition (Griffin, 2017). However, it's important to acknowledge that veganism is now conceptualized as both a practice *and* an identity so it may

very well be ahistorical to refer to practices of the past as vegan ones since they lacked the component of identifying as vegan as a social identity (Griffin, 2017). This means that veganism as a movement and as a social identity has only existed for less than a century, gaining many of its adherents in more recent years.

Veganism as both an identity and a practice is arguably now at an all-time high in terms of public awareness and popularity (Hancox, 2018). Mainstream veganism is typically constructed as a “lifestyle movement” in which adherents to this lifestyle are held to a standard of near-perfection. This brand of veganism is often intertwined with notions of purity and perfecting the body through abstaining from animal products (Nguyen, 2017). This is often where popular tropes of the militantly strict or overly critical vegan may come from. However, it is in no way fair to reduce veganism to these tropes as veganism can be “complex and sometimes contradictory (Griffin, 2017)” since there are many varying implementations of a vegan praxis. This thesis exists in opposition to a more normative or mainstream form of veganism, and instead seeks to elevate the marginalized queer voices often silenced in, left out of, or ignored in mainstream vegan discourses entirely.

On the other hand, queer theorizing is a more recently developed field of academic inquiry, artistic exploration, and political practice that is often met with contention as it can be difficult to define and differentiate from women’s studies, feminist studies, or gay and lesbian studies. It is generally acknowledged that the term “queer theory” was originally coined by Teresa de Lauretis in 1991, although it arguably existed prior to being named. Queer theory is acknowledged here as a discipline all its own, one that examines gender and sexuality as socially constructed and contingent in a way that is entirely unique from other disciplines. Queer theory

seeks to question normative assumptions about gender and sexuality, and to examine those that typically exist on the margins or as the outliers of society. A queer approach especially places emphasis on deviance and normativity and is “concerned with how normalized ‘straight’ identities are constructed and maintained in opposition to ‘queer’ identities (Griffin, 2017)”. While queer theory certainly overlaps with feminist studies and lesbian and gay studies, it is a unique, amorphous disciplinary approach that will continue to be explored as this thesis progresses.

Even two decades ago, identifying with veganism as a social identity would have been a very “queer” thing as it was largely unknown and oppositional to normative food practices of consuming animals and their byproducts. However, as veganism has become more mainstream and popular within dominant culture in recent years it has been “invariably filtered through a normative lens (Simonsen, 2012).” Just as veganism consists of both a practice and an identity, I assert that queerness too is a practice and an identity that mutually comprise what I will henceforth refer to as a “social location” or a praxis. Further, I argue that there are remarkable instances of overlap between these two social locations and that they could mutually inform and improve from one another. Through my own experience, research, and connections I have come to believe that queer vegans take a remarkably different approach to veganism than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts; my thesis is both an examination of and evidence to support that belief.

Literature Review

A formal literature review of research that simultaneously explores both queerness and veganism has proven to be difficult seeing as how little theorizing has previously been done on the connections and disconnections that exist between these two social locations. Despite this relative gap, academics from a wide range of disciplines have begun to interact with veganism in a variety of ways, and I strive to contribute to that growing discourse. Despite the relative lack of pieces that examine intersections between queerness and veganism, feminist scholars in particular have been considering how a practice of veganism can inform their examinations of gender and sexuality for nearly three decades.

Critical studies of veganism as they relate to feminist notions of gender and sexuality date back to the year 1990 when Carol J. Adams published her groundbreaking book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Here, Adams connects meat-eating to notions of patriarchy and masculinity through the rape, exploitation, and sexualization of non-human animals and women alike. While Adams in no way attempts to directly conflate the exploitation of humans and non-human animals, she does try to draw connections between the remarkable similarities of how women and female animals are often treated within the heteronormative framework of society. For instance, Adams points out how women are often referred to as “pieces of meat” in a sexual context or how chicken “breasts” or “thighs” are often emphasized for their appeal (1990).

She also discusses the widespread use of “feminized protein,” such as eggs and dairy that come from the reproductive systems of female animals, and how these proteins enforce systems of domination that are also imposed upon marginalized humans, namely women (Adams, 1990). One example of this phenomena is the fact that the nickname for the apparatus used by workers

in the dairy industry to forcibly impregnate dairy cows is colloquially called a “rape rack” (Adams, 1990). While Adams was the first to formally elucidate these connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of animals, other scholars have continued to build on her initial analysis in more recent years.

At the time that Adams published *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, a feminist theory known as intersectionality was beginning to circulate amongst black, feminist scholars, activists, and authors. Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw was the first to coin the term intersectionality in 1989, and Patricia Hill Collins and the Combahee River Collective contributed significantly to this theory in their work. Intersectionality is the concept that various social identities do not exist separately from each other, rather, that these identities remain in constant interaction with one another. Identities that can intersect include gender, sexuality, race, religion, and class just to name a few. Intersectionality examines people as whole selves with a multitude of identities, some more privileged than others. An intersectional approach is crucial to keep in mind when exploring the intersections between queerness and veganism especially in terms of race, class, and ability level. Although Adams’ initial synthesis provides an adequate understanding of exactly what some of the connections between a feminist approach and veganism are, a more intersectional analysis that incorporates other positionalities is sorely missing from her work.

As intersectionality has become more widely known and utilized as a feminist theory, more recent scholars have built off of Adams’ work with an intersectional lens, paying much needed attention to positions of race and class as they pertain to veganism. Cathryn Bailey tackles racial identity as it relates to a feminist veganism in her article “We Are What We Eat: Feminist Vegetarianism and the Reproduction of Racial Identity.” Bailey explains how

mainstream veganism often chooses to remain ignorant towards race, as is demonstrated by her analysis of some of the racially insensitive advertisements produced by the mainstream animal rights group PETA. Many of these advertisements feature “images of the brutal exploitation of blacks with those of animals,” directly conflating human and animal suffering in a way that is ignorant, ahistorical, and unnecessary as human and non-human suffering are entirely unique of each other and deserve to be treated as such (Bailey, 2007). Although racist ideologies that unnecessarily compare animal rights and human rights within the mainstream vegan movement are often deeply rooted, Bailey insists that veganism itself is a tool still capable of being critically utilized by feminists of all races to uproot various systems of oppression when approached with a more intersectional lens in mind.

While Bailey does an excellent job of acknowledging and disrupting some of the contemporary racial inequities in mainstream veganism, her analysis as a white feminist lacks a certain depth that comes from lived experience. This depth is explored throughout Amie Breeze Harper’s anthology *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. It is through her own critical theorizing as well as the short stories, poems, and lived experiences of her fellow sistah vegans that Harper shows “how a specific group of Black-identified female vegans perceive nutrition, food, ecological sustainability, health and healing, animal rights, parenting, social justice, spirituality, hair care, race, sexuality, womanism, freedom, and identity that goes against the (refined and bleached) grain (2010).” As a queer, black, vegan, woman Harper is an embodiment of how marginalized groups are capable of using veganism as a tool of resistance against colonialism, heteronormativity, and anti-blackness.

Concerning other works that synthesize sexuality and veganism, Annie Potts and Jovian Parry attempt to show the gendered nature of food patterns in their article “Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity through Meat-Free Sex.” Potts and Parry show how an omnivorous diet consisting of meat and other animal products is typically associated with the sexual virility and reproductive potential of heterosexual relationships (2010). An example of this is that heterosexual couples trying to conceive are often encouraged to get nutrients like calcium from milk, or protein from meat. Meanwhile, those who adhere to a vegan diet, especially heterosexual men, are cast as losers, cowards, deviants, and failures (Potts and Parry, 2010). While this linkage of meat eating to a heteronormative brand of masculinity is extremely helpful, especially in understanding how veganism can be used in terms of resisting that particular hegemony, Potts and Parry lack an extensive exploration of a queer approach as it relates to veganism.

Rasmus Simonsen was one of the first to attempt to formally synthesize queerness and veganism in his article “A Queer Vegan Manifesto.” Here, Simonsen details the shared deviance of queerness and veganism in that “declaring one’s veganism to the world can almost be compared to the act of coming out for queer-identified individuals (2012)” and that both queerness and veganism each resist patriarchy and heteronormativity. As illustrated by Adams and Potts and Parry, meat-eating is often linked to heteronormative masculinity and the reproductive potential of heterosexual relationships (1990; 2010). Simonsen argues that queerness and veganism disrupt these normative narratives through their interrogation of “normalcy by problematizing its apparent neutrality and objectivity (Griffin, 2017).” Meat eating

and other gendered, heteronormative notions of food can in no way be considered neutral or objective within these frameworks.

Nathan Stephens Griffin appears to have been one of the most recent scholar to take up an examination of queerness and veganism in his book *Understanding Veganism: Biography and Identity*. Griffin also emphasizes ‘coming out’ as vegan much in the way that Simonsen did before him, and also interrogates ‘vegansexuality’ which is the “greater likelihood of sexual attraction between fellow vegans, and, concomitantly, a sexual aversion to the bodies of those who consume animal products (2017).” According to Griffin the participant interviews that he conducted with a range of vegans, some of whom are LGBTQ+, “provide valuable insight into both life as a vegan and the notion of identity as being fluid (2017).” Fluidity is an important notion to take into account when considering the components of identity and practice that compose both queerness and veganism.

The pieces of literature that I’ve chosen to represent here have helped me to take a nuanced, intersectional approach to my own project as I attempt to employ strong objectivity and to dismantle my biases based on my own positionality as a queer vegan researching other queer vegans (Naples and Gurr, 2014). Strong objectivity is the feminist practice of acknowledging and attempting to minimize one’s own biases, rather than insisting that they don’t exist or failing to acknowledge them altogether (Naples and Gurr, 2014). My biases as a white, middle class, college educated, able bodied, gender nonconforming, queer vegan have inarguably shaped this project and I find it important to acknowledge that. Just as Carol J. Adams identified similarities between veganism and feminism, or as Amie Breeze Harper connected veganism and black female identity, I seek to unveil the connections between queerness and veganism as well as to

identify the potential disconnections that young adult, queer vegans have experienced between these identities.

Theoretical Framework

There are a few theories that this project especially utilizes to examine queerness and veganism as socially constructed and contingent identities. As Griffin acknowledges, “intersectionality provides a mode of analysis that allows us to acknowledge, critically understand and challenge the interconnected and overlapping systems of social and cultural categorization that impact on individuals or groups within society (2017).” Intersectionality will be one of the main theories utilized by this paper to acknowledge and understand the interconnected natures of queerness and veganism. As veganism has become a more normative and mainstreamed movement, one often associated with whiteness and class privilege in western society, it is critical to remain ever attentive to how power and privilege operate within veganism. While I mainly focus on queerness as it pertains to veganism, class, race, education level, and other positionalities remain crucial to my synthesis of queerness and veganism.

Also critical to my analysis is Simonsen’s acknowledgement of queerness and veganism as a form of shared deviance (2012). Queerness deviates from expected cultural norms of heterosexual and cisgender ways of being, while veganism deviates from cultural expectations of consuming animals and their byproducts (Simonsen, 2012). While these deviations are in no way identical, they are indeed similar or as Simonsen notes, shared between queerness and veganism. I inquire as to what happens when these two forms of deviance are utilized by one individual that occupies identities of both queer and vegan.

Finally, I would like to emphasize low theory as coined by J. Halberstam. Utilizing low theory, Halberstam emphasizes “the queer art of failure (2011).” Whereas society as a whole expects success and demonizes failure, Halberstam encourages us to search for the reward that failure itself can offer without necessarily striving to succeed (2011). As Halberstam puts it, failure “allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development (2011).” Low theory will come to be critical as I examine a queer practice of veganism, one that may very well be constructed as a “failing” form of veganism by the mainstream movement.

Research Design and Methodologies

For this thesis project, I conducted six interviews with young adults between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four who self-identify as both queer and vegan. Prior to conducting these interviews, I developed an initial research question and an interview protocol. The initial question that guided my interviews was “how do young adult, queer vegans experience connections and disconnections between their queer and vegan identities?” My interview protocol consisted of ten open ended questions which I posed to my participants over the course of our semi-structured, conversational style interviews. While mainly centering queerness and veganism, these questions had to do with race, class, coming out, and more (see Appendix A for full interview protocol). I chose to structure my interviews in a conversational style in order to provide participants the opportunity to reflect on their own lived experiences in a way that hopefully allowed for the most genuine and authentic responses.

I approached these interviews using grounded theory to continue to acknowledge my own positionality as a queer vegan and to hopefully minimize my researcher bias. Rather than developing a hypothesis or preconceived notion of what themes will emerge prior to data collection, grounded theory allows themes to emerge more organically as data collection (in this case, interviews) progresses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is not inherently queer or feminist, but I found that modifying grounded theory to combine it with queer and feminist methodologies - such as using some of my own friends as research participants - would allow for the most holistic approach to my project.

I recruited my participants for these interviews in two ways. First, I reached out to individuals that I already had existing friendships with and asked if they'd allow me to interview them. Through my own experiences I've made a number of friends who are also queer and vegan and many were gracious enough to be a part of this project. Second, I recruited other queer vegans with whom I had no prior connection to through snowball sampling (asking my participants if they had any recommendations for who else I should interview), social media (primarily Facebook), and the distribution of flyers advertising for my project. While I limited my recruitment to those between the ages of eighteen and thirty due to the rationality detailed in the introduction section, the only other prerequisite was that my participants identify as both queer and vegan, whatever that may look like to them.

The interviews themselves were conducted between February and May of 2018. Five of the six interviews occurred via telephone or video chatting technology, while one interview was conducted in person. Each interview lasted approximately an hour with some lasting as little as forty-five minutes, and some extending for as long as an hour and forty minutes. Prior to each

interview, I reviewed the consent form with my participants and gave them the opportunity to ask any questions that they had about the procedure. All participants signed the consent form so that I could use their interviews as data for this thesis. At the end of each interview I also asked participants to fill out a demographic questionnaire. All participants were invited to choose their own pseudonym, and all identifying information has been altered for this publication. This study, IRB #18452, received prior approval from Portland State University's Internal Review Board in February of 2018 (see Appendix B for approval).

During the recruitment process I was intentional in my efforts to recruit a wide spread of queer vegans in order to best represent what I've experienced to be a quite heterogeneous group. As veganism is often conflated with whiteness and class privilege, I specifically sought to recruit participants that combat this normative narrative. However, as Linda Bell acknowledges in "Ethics and Feminist Research" this project is in no way representative of the entire population of queer vegans since I had preexisting friendships with four of my six participants (Bell, 2014). Rather than attempt to be representative of an entire group, this project instead attempts to center the lived experiences of a few queer vegans in order to foster a better understanding of the complex interactions between what I've experienced to be two similar social locations. The participants represent a number of different backgrounds and narratives speaking geographically, racially, in terms of education level, and gender (see Participant Demographics in data section).

Two of the six participants identified as people of color, four of the six participants identified as transgender, agender, or nonbinary, and one of the six participants had not pursued higher education at the time of the interviews. All of the participants experienced multiple geographic locations in their life, often crossing the boundaries between rural, suburban, and

urban environments. While I regret that I could not feature even more queer vegans speaking from marginalized identities of race, class, ability level, and other positionalities, I find it important here to acknowledge privilege and power dynamics. Who possesses the time, energy, and privilege to participate in an hour long interview? As a white, college educated, middle class researcher I knew that I could not uncritically ask marginalized individuals perhaps lacking some of these same privileges to contribute their time and energy to my project. Being unable to offer monetary or other traditional compensation for this project, I found that although my participants represent a number of different queer, vegan narratives many of my participants do experience privilege of class, race, or education level and thus were better situated to contribute their time and energy to my project.

While no traditional compensation was offered for participation in this study, a number of interviewees did report positive benefits as a result of their participation. One interviewee remarked that “this was interesting to me as an opportunity to kind of work through some stuff as well and kind of draw some connections that I had not drawn um so this was a mutually beneficial conversation.” The participants were able to discuss their various intersecting identities and have their lived experiences listened to in a setting perhaps not usually available to them. This hopefully provided a validating and empowering experience, especially considering that the intersections of queerness and veganism are not usually acknowledged. This study brings forth evidence to foster a greater sense of belonging among individuals who may often feel excluded in certain communities as a result of one identity or another.

Throughout the recruitment process, the interviews themselves, and my coding and analysis of the interviews I did my best to remain attentive to notions of privilege and power. As

the interviewer, a power imbalance was immediately evident, though it manifested in different ways depending on the identities of each particular participant, and whether or not we had a preexisting relationship. On the one hand, I had an existing rapport with those participants that I was already friends with (Bell, 2014). I believe that this led to feelings of increased comfortability for both interviewer and interviewee. However, this level of established comfortability may have led my friends to reveal to me information that they might not give away as freely to an unfamiliar interviewer (Bell, 2014). On the other hand, there may have also been details that my friends forgot to mention or omitted since I am already a part of their social circle. No matter the case in these instances, I take very seriously the responsibility of sharing the intimate details of all of my participants lived experiences as queer vegans, and have tried to represent their narratives in the most authentic and affirming way possible.

Data

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Pronouns	Demographics
Cornelius	They/them	A mixed race 19 year old agender individual who describes their sexuality as queer or bisexual. Raised in rural and suburban settings in the Midwest, they have a high school diploma, currently work full time in a retail chain, and live in a suburban environment in the Midwest. At the time of the interview, Cornelius was a manager in a non-vegan fast food establishment.
Emilia	She/her	A white 22 year old cis woman who describes her sexuality as queer. Raised in a suburban setting on the West Coast, she currently attends college on the Southeast coast.
Hayley	She/her	A white 21 year old cis woman who describes her sexuality as queer, bisexual, or pansexual. Raised in a mid-sized urban environment in the Western United States, she currently attends college on the Southeast coast and works part time as a tutor at her university. At the time of the interview, Hayley was studying abroad in India.

Grey	He/him	A hispanic 22 year old transmasculine individual who describes his sexuality as queer. Raised in a suburban setting in the Midwest after being adopted from a South American country, Grey has a trade degree, works full time as a supervisor at a non-vegan food establishment, and currently lives in a large urban setting in the Midwest.
Joan	He/she/they	A white 20 year old nonbinary individual that describes his sexuality as queer. Raised in a rural setting in the Northwest, Joan has a college degree and currently attends a university in a large urban setting in the Northwest and works part time in a technical field.
Ira	They/them	A white 24 year old nonbinary individual that describes their sexuality as queer. Raised in a rural setting on the Southeast coast, Ira works full time in a technical field and currently lives in a midsized urban environment in the Western United States. At the time of the interview, Ira was traveling abroad in India.

Situating Queer Identity

In my recruitment for this project, I specifically sought out individuals who resonated with the term queer. I intended for “queer” to represent both an umbrella term for sexuality, as well as a deviant or non normative identifier. Some respondents exclusively utilized queer as a label for both their sexuality and gender, while others used queer just for their sexuality, while others still utilized queer in tandem with other identifies for their sexuality and gender. Many of the participants felt as though being queer encompassed more than just a sexuality or gender for them. Many identified some rather intangible aspect to choosing to identify as queer, one that extended beyond mere sexual preference or gender identity. In the words of Emilia:

“. . .it’s like who I’m attracted to in those ways but it’s also. . . who I am like in other ways too. You know like the communities that I am a part of and things like that and like how I connect with other people. I don’t know how to like eloquently put it, but it’s like not just like oh I’m attracted to this person so like I’m this. . . . It’s deeper than that of like a part of who I am.”

Many participants echoed this sentiment of feeling as though their queerness was a deeper part of them than just their gender or sexuality alone. Grey uses queer to describe both his gender and sexuality, while also using transmasculine to describe his gender. Grey remarked that:

“for me it’s just like it kinda just encompasses me as like a person, my sexuality, my gender, it kinda encompasses everything as a whole, so I kinda use it as an umbrella term. I like having a word that I identify with. It’s nice to know that there’s like community.”

Here, it’s important to note that both Grey and Emilia acknowledged that community as an important part of their queer identity. Cornelius specifically likes to use queer as an identifier for their sexuality in addition to bisexual because:

“most people here who are like on the queer spectrum don’t really use that word um I think mainly because it’s a more conservative state. So um even like LGBT people here don’t generally like use that as like a self-identifier. So I kinda like it because it’s something that people are still more like cautious about.”

Here, Cornelius highlights one instance of the difference and overlap between identifying as queer and identifying as LGBTQ+. Although other individuals in their geography might identify as LGBT, many avoid using queer as an identifier whereas Cornelius embraces it precisely as a mark of difference or deviance. Ira feels similarly to Cornelius when considering their queer identity in that:

“looking back over my life I realize how that definition of queerness like has played into everything that I’ve done, every single thing that I’ve ever done has been an attempt to deviate from what was expected or. . . what people thought originally.”

Although each participant experiences their queer identity and practices queerness differently, there were overlaps between the interviews in that queerness oftentimes extends beyond sexuality and gender to an overall way of being. Queerness is often used by these participants as an umbrella word that feels most affirming as a term to describe their gender and sexuality or in

an attempt to deviate from expected norms, even within the LGBTQ+ community. Despite this, community was still an important aspect of queerness that many participants acknowledged.

Defining Veganism, Practicing Veganism

When asked to give their definition of veganism, a number of interviewees cited the traditional definition in which veganism is meant to abstain from animal exploitation and cruelty in all ways practical and possible (qtd. in Griffin, 2017). However, many participants went on to elaborate on a more flexible definition of veganism than is often promoted by the mainstream vegan movement which promotes notions of perfection and purity (Nguyen, 2017). Emilia said that “even if you still have to use a little bit of animal products in whatever way or you have to buy this certain product that is tested, like as long as you’re doing what you can and it’s within your ability um I would say that’s vegan.” Joan agreed with Emilia’s statement and went even further to say that:

“I like to look at it in a more utilitarian way so like um if I order a dish at a restaurant and it comes with egg but I didn’t know about it, I’m still gonna eat it um because that means if I don’t eat it that means they’re throwing it away.”

This may be considered to be a rather controversial statement in the mainstream vegan movement, but Joan was not the only queer vegan that expressed sentiments like this. For instance, Ira remarked that, “I’ve eaten oysters since I’ve been vegan and I don’t consider that a breach of my veganism.”

This is not to say that Joan and Ira are advocating for people to “break” their veganism or to actively seek out animal products, but that they understand that they cannot hold themselves to standards of unachievable perfection in a world which hardly allows for a one hundred percent vegan diet or lifestyle. Many of these queer vegans employed a modified definition of veganism

in their everyday lives, emphasizing the “practical and possible” aspects of the mainstream definition of veganism. This modified practice of veganism includes forgiveness, understanding, and compassion for themselves. It also allows for space to be able make mistakes while still claiming veganism as a prevalent identity even if they are not “perfect” vegans.

Other Identities

Participants were also asked to share any other prevalent identities that may intersect with their queerness or veganism. Here, many themes about geographic relations or origins emerged. At the time of her interview, Hayley was studying abroad in India and noted that her identity as a white American was especially salient. Emilia identified the west coast/east coast divide as being a reoccurring theme in her everyday life as a westerner attending school on the southeast coast. Grey acknowledged his status as an international adoptee as being very personal and important in his life. Finally, Cornelius named being transgender as an important identity for them in addition to being vegan and queer.

Race and Class

In an attempt to incorporate a more intersectional lens into this project, participants were also asked to reflect on how race and class impact both their queerness and veganism. As veganism is often associated with whiteness or class privilege, I found it important as a researcher to inquire as to how queer vegans interact with those dominant frameworks. Grey talked extensively about being a person of color who is “just barely scraping by on the poverty

line.” As a result of this, Grey reflected on his difficulty adhering to a strict vegan diet and described how he sometimes eats vegetarian food on a basis of necessity. Grey said that:

“I probably could find a way to be vegan but at this point in time lately, I don’t have the resources and I don’t have the money and that ties in with class and that ties in with race as well because you know, um I don’t make enough to do the things that I really wanna do.”

Cornelius expressed similar difficulties in their experience of being a mixed-race person who in their own words, is not very well off and identifies as a “beans and rice vegan”. Cornelius mentioned feeling frustrated at how veganism is often conflated with whiteness or class privilege, and said that these confluences lead to an erasure of all of their intersecting identities. Working in a fast food restaurant with many other people of color, Cornelius often encountered situations in which their coworkers would perceive Cornelius to make a higher wage than them based solely off the fact that Cornelius is vegan. Cornelius said that:

“there’s been a few times that I’ve had to like tell my manager cause he was like ‘well being vegan is expensive.’ And I looked at him and I was like ‘dude how much do you think I spend on food? How much?’ And he was like ‘I don’t know’ and I was like ‘I spend like \$30 a month on food. Calm down.’”

Class is not the only erasure of identity that Cornelius experiences as a result of being Vegan. According to Cornelius, their identity as a person of color often gets discarded when people find out that they’re vegan. Cornelius has experienced people saying things like, “veganism is like a white thing so you know, you must identify more with your white side.” Despite these difficulties navigating veganism as people of color, both Grey and Cornelius still remain proud and vocal about their veganism.

Relationship with Food Growing Up

In being that none of the participants were raised vegan, I also inquired about what their relationships with food were like while growing up as well as how they ultimately made their way to veganism. While a few categorized their relationship with food as good or healthy while growing up, others mentioned disordered eating patterns, especially relating to their body image as queer individuals. Nearly all participants said that their relationship with food has improved since going vegan, that they are now more thoughtful about their consumption, and that they are able to enjoy eating more now that they are vegan.

An interesting theme that emerged was that many participants classified their relationship with food prior to going vegan as what is usually constructed as traditional, average, or normal. Joan said that, “every day I’d have a big glass of milk at dinner and I would eat cereal with milk every morning, I would have like a grilled cheese for lunch.” Grey said that, “growing up it was just hot dishes and casseroles and meat probably, chicken of some sort cause that’s all we really ate as far as meat went. Um, but yeah I guess normal for lack of a better term, average.” This association of eating meat and other animal products with normalcy and veganism as a deviance from that normalcy is an important point to take note of.

Coming Out

As noted by Simonsen, “declaring one’s veganism to the world can almost be compared to the act of coming out for queer-identified individuals (2012),” so I made sure to inquire about the coming out process as both queer and vegan. Each participant has a unique coming out journey as some of them became vegan before coming out as queer and some of them came out as queer before transitioning to veganism. Oftentimes though, it was either through queerness or

veganism that these participants found their way to the other identity. Hayley shared with me an anecdote of her first week in college in which a cute upperclassmen girl ordered a vegan meal at a restaurant, so Hayley followed suit and transitioned to veganism soon after as a result of that interaction. On the other hand, Grey talked more about the negative side of “coming out” as vegan:

“ I’ve probably been laughed at for being vegan more times than I can count and like you’d think it’d be flip flopped, you know? Like you’re coming out as queer let’s like ridicule you for that, but no you come out as vegan and you’re doing something good and the whole world decides to lose their shit and like mock you for it and laugh at you and think you’re like, crazy, you know?”

When dealing with young adult, queer vegans parents seem to be especially relevant people to mention as far as the coming out process goes. Every single participant mentioned their relationship to their parents when discussing their coming out experiences, both as queer and as vegan. Some parents have been relatively accepting of their children’s veganism, and will even go so far as to eat vegan around their child, such as Joan’s parents, or to go entirely vegan themselves, such as Hayley’s parents. Others such as Ira’s, Grey’s, Cornelius’, and Emilia’s families have had a more difficult time with this transition. Interestingly enough, these families also seemed to be the most unwilling/unable to accept the queer identity of their child as well. Ira remarked that “basically I knew and still know to this day that there’s no way I can tell my mom’s side of the family” about their queerness. Grey remarked about his transition that,

“I get really angry because my parents feel like they’re entitled to an explanation and it’s not that I’m not willing to give them one, because I absolutely will, but it’s the fact that they feel like they’re entitled to it.”

All of the participants have had and are having drastically different coming out experiences.

Some participants have been out as queer for years, while others are still in the beginning stages

of coming to terms with their queer identity and sharing that with those around them. Some have been vegan for years, while others transitioned to veganism less than a year ago. Overall, there were remarkable similarities noted between the coming out process as queer and the coming out process as vegan, although many participants felt more comfortable “coming out” with their vegan identity rather than their queer one.

Queerness in Vegan Spaces

Many participants pointed out the prevalence of queerness that they’ve noticed within their vegan communities, although it may not always be explicitly acknowledged. Cornelius, Grey, Hayley, and Ira all noted how they’re able to identify other queer people in vegan spaces that they frequent such as restaurants or grocery stores. One of Hayley’s favorite cafes is run by a lesbian couple, while Cornelius made note of a cute, visibly queer cashier at the grocery store that they frequent. Grey has worked for a number of vegan businesses and organizations, and noted the prevalence of queer people in those organizations, especially in management positions.

The vegan spaces that Ira often used to find themselves in were embedded in the punk music scene. It was here that Ira was first exposed to ideas about vegetarianism and veganism. They transitioned to veganism soon after their entrance into the punk scene, and quickly realized the amount of queer people that were also involved in the militant vegan, punk music scene. Ira said that,

“I hit the like militant like vegan subculture within there and then all of a sudden it was like look at all these queer ass people. . . you know that my first experience with a trans person was in that community? A trans man like led a like militant vegan grindcore band and I was like wow and nobody’s even like giving him any flack or you know like nobody’s even saying is that a boy or a girl, like nobody’s doing that thing that people have done forever.”

On the other hand of these positive affiliations with queerness in vegan spaces, Emilia expressed a sense that openly queer individuals were not well represented in her vegan spaces. Although her local animal rights activist group indeed advocates for LGBTQ+ rights, queerness is not a topic often explicitly mentioned in group meetings or events. While Emilia said that many of her closest friends are either queer, vegan, or both, she said that many of them are scattered geographically and she feels that queerness is “fractured” from her more mainstream vegan communities.

Veganism in Queer Spaces

It was difficult to discern in which situations queerness was presenting itself in vegan spaces, and in which situations veganism was presenting itself in queer spaces because the experiences seemed rather interchangeable to many participants. To many, their queer spaces were their vegan spaces and vice versa. Just as many interviewees noted the importance of community as far as their queer identity goes, they also noted the importance of having other vegans and specifically queer vegans to commune with. Cornelius made note of how their veganism was openly welcomed in their gay straight alliance (GSA) in high school. Cornelius also emphasized the importance of their relationship with their girlfriend, who is also vegan, saying that, “she’s the person I’m most comfortable with.”

Having rather recently realized their queer and nonbinary identities, Ira has had an interesting time navigating queer spaces so far. Ira does not feel comfortable in many queer spaces such as bars or pride events, but according to Ira, “I found my queer spaces that I felt comfortable in through veganism, like that cafe that I talked about. You know, I definitely love

that there are queer people there, but it wasn't a place that focused on like sex." Conversely, Joan feels as though being vegan in queer spaces magnifies their sexuality in a way saying that "I definitely think it (being vegan) gives me a certain status or like I mean it's always on everyone's mind - you know, sex - like I'm vegan so I taste good. . . even though people know that's not necessarily like a fact about all vegans."

Although it seems as though most participants felt as though their veganism was well received or even celebrated within queer spaces, that has not been everyone's experience. For example, Hayley feels as though her veganism has often been contested in queer spaces, saying that,

"there's definitely moments where I'm in queer spaces where I'm like that white, cis, vegan gay gal and I think that people make some assumptions about my politics which are not accurate based on that and it's uncomfortable to feel like I'm making other people in that space uncomfortable because of a choice that I feel like could really heighten the movement ."

Here, Hayley reveals her desire for veganism to become more accepted within queer spaces as she feels that a vegan praxis could help elevate queer politics and the movement overall.

Analysis

Before attempting to analyze the data that I've presented here, I'd like to address my own positionality first. Keeping strong objectivity in mind in an attempt to acknowledge and minimize my biases, my own experiences and opinions have ultimately colored the ways in which this project has been carried out and will be circulated. In order to understand how I interpreted and represented the data generated by my six participants, I find it a necessary tenant of feminist research practices to share some of my own experiences as a queer vegan researching

other queer vegans in order to keep in mind my own positionalities and privileges that have impacted this research.

I've known that I was LGBTQ+ for nearly my entire life, but it wasn't until a few years ago that I truly began to resonate with the term queer and the multiplicity of meanings that queerness represents. The time during which I started publicly coming out and "branding" myself as queer to important people in my life was around the same time that I started transitioning to veganism. As a young teenager, these two identities were very formative for me and dictated many of my decisions and relationships. I was privileged in being able to publicly come out as queer, and while I've encountered certain difficulties because of it, my coming out "process" has mostly been a smooth one and undoubtedly has a lot to do with my status as a white, middle class person, with two college educated parents.

As time progressed and my queer and vegan identities continued to remain at the forefront of my personality, I began to notice that the people that I automatically gravitated towards in friendships and other relationships were often also queer and/or vegan. I got the sense that queer individuals seemed to be vegetarian or vegan at a higher rate than cisgender and straight people, and whenever I entered into vegan spaces such as restaurants, animal rights groups, or vegan meet ups I was almost always able to identify other queer people there. This was definitely not the case when I went into nonvegan restaurants or other nonvegan spaces. Nearly everyone that I've met that shares my identities of being both queer and vegan has expressed a similar feeling, which has increasingly spurred my interest in this project. Ira remarked that, "the whole point in us doing this interview is because you've noticed that there is an intersection between queerness and veganism and my experiences tell me the exact same

thing.” My own experiences and dialogue with other queer vegans have affirmed that there does indeed seem to be some connection between the identities of queerness and veganism as social locations. I understood this project as an opportunity to articulate exactly what some of those connections are, as well as to inquire about why they exist in the first place.

In addition to the connections that I’ve personally recognized between my queerness and veganism, I’ve also experienced a certain amount of disconnect between these identities. Oftentimes I’ve felt as though mainstream veganism focuses entirely too much on animal rights and fails to recognize the environmental implications and potential for human rights that veganism holds. I would personally note this as a lack of intersectionality within mainstream veganism. As Emilia put it, “I do think the vegan movement needs to get educated about other stuff cause if it keeps going like it is, it’s not gonna go far.” Additionally, many of the advertisements and campaigns that originate from vegan/animal rights groups often center white, cisgender, heterosexual, and otherwise normative people or attempt to make uncritical connections between human suffering and animal suffering as groups like PETA have often done with slavery or the Holocaust (Bailey, 2007).

Due to these reasons and more, it has been my experience that veganism oftentimes has somewhat of a bad reputation the precedes it in queer or social-justice oriented circles. As Hayley put it,

“especially in social justice spaces people can get a little bit carried away and instead of saying like okay, like in what ways is there like classism, and racism, and sexism within the vegan community versus like veganism is inherently classist or sexist or racist.”

As with nearly everything else, of course veganism has the potential to demonstrate classism, racism, or sexism. However, as Hayley pointed out, this does not mean that it is veganism itself

that is prone to these problematic ideals. Unfortunately though, I've noticed that a number of queer people who aren't vegan are under the impression that veganism itself is what is problematic which then leads them to shun or mock veganism in queer spaces. Personally, I believe that queerness and veganism each have valuable lessons that they can learn from each other. This is exactly why I've set out to queer mainstream notions of veganism in order to illuminate how many different individuals with intersecting marginalized identities can resist and subvert normativity through both their queerness and their veganism.

With all of this in mind, I can now begin to analyze the results from my interviews primarily using the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, the shared deviance of queerness and veganism, and the queer art of failure. From the demographics featured on page nineteen, it is hopefully clear that many different individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds are capable of implementing a vegan praxis. This resists normative notions that veganism comes solely as a result of privilege of race or class. Continuing to further the notion that veganism is a practice only attainable for the most privileged in society serves to erase the queer, lower class, people of color that implement a vegan praxis every day. According to Cornelius, "I think definitely being a member of more than one marginalized group like helps people go vegan. I think because it's like easier to see the world and it's problems when you aren't like flooded with privileges."

Although the participants all occupy varying categories of privilege, they all share the marginalized identity that is being LGBTQ+. Many participants constructed their sexualities and gender identities as inherent characteristics about them that they came to discover as they navigated young adulthood. Many discussed notions of looking back and being able to better contextualize experiences of the past by using the queer perspective of the present; for instance,

Ira remarked that, “I look back and I’m like it’s interesting that all the bands I liked had really cute singers, huh?” and Hayley reflected on being an “overly committed straight ally” in high school that just hadn’t come to terms with her sexuality yet.

There is a saying that “queer existence is resistance” and I believe that my participants exemplify this notion. Upon realizing that the existence of their sexualities and gender identities diverged from the norm, they began resisting heteronormative ideals through implementing queerness as artistic exploration, political practice, and overall ways of being. As Hayley put it,

“I feel like being queer begins with a questioning, like questioning your sexual identity and then you never really stop questioning like even when you feel like you arrive on something with your sexuality or your identity. . . . The questioning never ends and you just question everything. . . first I question sexuality, and then I question gender, and then I question capitalism, and I question patriarchy, and it’s (being queer) just like a questioning, I think.”

Upon questioning gender and sexuality in this way, many participants struggled to discuss their queerness with non-queer family, friends, and other important people in their lives as many of them understood their sexuality or gender as an inherent quality to their being, one that they had no choice in making. As Ira noted,

“that kind of thing that would be very emotionally charged for me, that would feel very personal, that would be a very vulnerable spot to hit. Like I would feel very upset about that whereas with veganism or vegetarianism I looked forward to that interaction.”

In this way, veganism acts a chosen identity that participants took on to resist normative expectations of what existence in a capitalist, patriarchal, heteronormative society usually consists of, namely eating meat and other animals products in this case. Being vegan provided participants the opportunity to resist normativity in a way that didn’t feel quite as personal as their queer sexualities and gender identities. This is not to say that veganism isn’t personal for

the participants, or that it is somehow less personal than their queer identities, but that given the opportunity to autonomously come to veganism on their own terms has often allowed for participants to more easily engage in conversation about veganism than about queerness.

It seems that this may be true for the participants that found their way to veganism after realizing that their sexualities and gender identities diverged from traditional heteronormative ideals, but what about the participants who went vegan before they necessarily realized that they were LGBTQ+? It turns out that for those who were attracted to vegan spaces before acknowledging their queer sexuality or gender identity became exposed to other queer individuals through veganism which helped them to realize and process their own queerness. I assert that on some level, perhaps these individuals realized that they were in some way different or deviant even if they didn't explicitly acknowledge their queer identities at the time. Veganism acted as a practice that allowed participants to deviate from expected norms in a way that was entirely of their own choosing, and introduced them to other queer people that ultimately helped them acknowledge their "deviant" sexualities and genders.

These findings confirm Rasmus Simonsen's theory in "A Queer Vegan Manifesto" that veganism and queerness are a form of shared deviance in that veganism deviates from expected norms of eating animals and their byproducts and that queerness deviates from heterosexual and cisgender ways of being. While all participants seemed to celebrate and revel in their statuses as queer and vegan, many interpreted their veganism as a form of deviance easier to talk about or defend than their queerness (at least in the face of more normative ideals). In this way, veganism could be considered an embodiment of one's queerness, one that gives queer, vegan individuals an increased sense of autonomy and decision-making power.

In dealing with the difficulties that come with navigating the world as queer, vegan people, participants acknowledged the importance of having a community of other queer, vegan people. Many respondents classified some of their closest, most comfortable relationships being with other queer people, and especially with those who are also both queer and vegan. Joan reflected on his experience being one of the only queer individuals on his sports teaming, saying that,

“There’s a lot of like straight people on my team um straight, cis people and like they’re all really cool um but sometimes they can get weird about like the queerness on my team. . . . I still have a fear that um I can’t get as close to my friends as maybe I would want to um physically and emotionally because like there’s that barrier.”

When asked if those fears were present in his relationships with other queer people, Joan clarified that his fears and barriers only seemed to be present in relationships with straight and cisgender people. LGBTQ+ people - and especially those that employ queerness in their everyday lives and practices - have a demonstrated tendency to gravitate towards each other to foster a sense of community and solidarity against a world which has systematically tried to ignore us, profit off of us, or exterminate us. It’s been another of my findings that queer vegans experience a heightened desire for and celebration of community, being that their practice of veganism may deviate from expectations of mainstream veganism and that they may experience difficulty fostering community with cisgender and heterosexual vegans.

Why does this difficulty fostering community with straight and cisgender vegans exist? Mainstream veganism often seems deadset on enforcing harsh binaries and boundaries around who should and should not be considered vegan. This discourse echoes ones in queer communities of not being “queer enough.” Oftentimes if someone does not implement a “perfect” practice of veganism, or if they are not vegan “enough” they may be subject to

harassment or exclusion from vegan communities. These binaries and boundaries are inherently oppositional to queer existence, as queer people often spend much of their time exhaustingly navigating and resisting these boundaries in their everyday lives as it is. For queer vegans, I argue that their veganism is an embodiment and celebration of their queer identities and thus should not be subjected to harsh binaries.

This celebration of queer identity and “failing” at the notions of purity and perfection that are often present in mainstream veganism (Nguyen, 2017) connects to low theory as coined by J. Halberstam. According to Halberstam, “failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well (2011).” Queer individuals already “fail” at being heterosexual and cisgender, so the queer art of failure arguably becomes an entire way of being in which queer people navigate the world. While many of these participants may be considered “failures” by the mainstream vegan movement, whether it be because they eat the occasional egg or tried oysters on a single occasion, they have found community amongst each other and still strive to live the most ethical and compassionate lives that they can, extending to animals, the planet, and themselves.

Discussion

So the question then remains, where do we go from here? This thesis is titled “The Disruptive Potential of a Queer Vegan Praxis” because it is meant to represent a practice (as opposed to just theory) of queer veganism as informed by intersectionality and queer theory. I argue that queerness and veganism can both be used to disrupt normative notions of gender and sexuality, and that the data generated by my interviewees illustrates a number of ways in which

that disruption can be carried out. In the future, I hope to expand my pool of participants and to conduct interviews with even more queer vegans with an improved protocol. Additionally, there a number of other research ventures that I can imagine coming as a result of this thesis.

Both respondents of color had nuanced and complex contributions to make about how their race intersects with their queerness and their veganism. In the future, I would love to see a project focus more particularly on these intersections rather than the intersections of queerness and veganism. Since my project also specifically focused on young adult, queer vegans I think a comparative generational study between older vegans and younger vegans may serve to unveil the queer roots of veganism as a movement oppositional to mainstream expectations. However, these are projects for the future. What can (and perhaps, should) be done in the here and now?

It is my hope that this data will be used to mutually improve both queer spaces and vegan spaces. The mainstream vegan movement as a whole desperately requires a more nuanced, intersectional approach. This thesis is a good starting point as to how queer vegans can be better represented in the vegan movement and how arbitrary vegan-nonvegan binaries and notions of purity and perfection can be deconstructed using a queer framework. Further, this data will hopefully be used to show how veganism stands to contribute to the queer movement and add a heightened layer of intersectionality to queer existence and activism. This is not to promote veganism as a practice accessible to or practical for everyone, but rather, to show the *potential* that veganism holds to further disrupt the normativity and binaries that the queer community is already so dedicated to dismantling.

Conclusion

Six semistructured interviews with young adults between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four who self-identify as both queer and vegan were conducted for this project in order to answer the research question “how do young adult, queer vegans experience connections and disconnections between their queerness and their veganism?” It was illustrated that a wide variety of individuals speaking from a number of different backgrounds and intersecting identities are currently implementing a queer vegan praxis. Subsequently, they are using their queerness to disrupt normativity within mainstream veganism and their queerness to disrupt normative notions of gender and sexuality that involve the consumption of animal-product laden foods. Queerness and veganism thus comprise a “shared deviance” of sorts in which queer vegans experience a heightened sense of community and solidarity when in relation with other queer vegans. This community and solidarity stems from the fact that queer vegans may feel ostracized from mainstream vegan movements that are all too focused on perfectionism and the enforcement of harsh binaries.

This project served as an exploration of two identities that have rarely been examined together. Being a very personal project for me as I also occupy both of these identities, this project was an embodiment of queer and feminist research practices including interviewing my own friends, and employing strong objectivity. This research could in no way be constructed as empirical, “value-free” research, nor would I want it to be. At one point during our interview, Grey remarked that, “unfortunately, that’s one of the hardest parts is you will find people who just don’t care. And that’s one of the hardest parts about being vegan.” Conversely, one of the

best parts of being both queer and vegan is finding the people that do care and this project allowed me to do exactly that.

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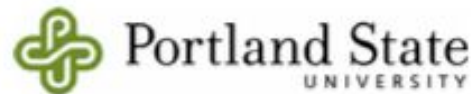
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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. What does identifying as queer mean to you?
2. How does being queer manifest in your everyday life?
3. How do you define veganism? Can you describe what your practice of veganism is like?
4. What led you to become vegan?
5. Are there any other identities that you would use to describe yourself?
6. How do race and class inform your queer, vegan identity?
7. What was your relationship with food like growing up? How has that relationship changed to where you are now?
8. When and how did you come out as queer and/or vegan? How were your queer and vegan identities received by others when you came out?
9. How do important people in your life view and understand your queer/vegan identities now?
10. How has your queerness been received in vegan spaces? Your veganism in queer spaces?

Appendix B: IRB Approval



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Date: February 28, 2018

To: Miriam Abelson / Naomi Kolb-Untinen, Women's Studies

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsey Wilkinson'.

From: Lindsey Wilkinson, IRB Chair

Re: IRB approval for your protocol # 184521, entitled: "(Dis)connections Between Queer and Vegan Identities."

Approval-Expiration: February 28, 2018 – February 27, 2019

Notice of IRB Review and Approval - Initial Review Expedited Review Categories 6, 7; as per Title 45 CFR Part 46

In accordance with your request, the PSU Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects Research Review Committee) has reviewed and approved the project referenced above for compliance with PSU policies and DHHS regulations covering the protection of human subjects. The IRB is satisfied that your provisions for protecting the rights and welfare of all subjects participating in the research are adequate. Please note the following requirements:

Approval: You are approved to conduct this research study only during the period of approval cited above, and the research must be conducted according to the plans and protocol submitted (approved copy enclosed).

Consent: You must use IRB-approved consent materials with study participants.

Changes to Protocol: Any changes in the proposed study, whether to procedures, survey instruments, consent forms or cover letters, must be outlined and submitted to the IRB immediately. The proposed changes cannot be implemented before they have been reviewed and approved by the IRB.

Continuing Review: This approval will expire on 02/27/2019. It is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that a *Continuing Review Report* is submitted to the IRB two months before the expiration date, and that approval of the study is kept current. The *Continuing Review Report* is available on the Research Integrity website.

Adverse Reactions and/or Unanticipated Problems: If any adverse reactions or unanticipated problems occur as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Research Integrity within 5 days of the event. If the issue is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending an investigation by the IRB.

Completion of Study: Please notify the IRB as soon as your research has been completed. Study records, including protocols and signed consent forms for each participant, must be kept by the investigator in a secure location for three years following completion of the study (or per any requirements specified by the project's funding agency).

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Research Integrity office in Research & Strategic Partnerships at hsrrc@pdx.edu or (503) 725-2227.