

**Common Themes in the Vegan YouTube Movement: Community, Health, Ethics,
Regret and Education**

By

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ABSTRACT

In North America, there are countless different diets and lifestyles revolving around food choices. What we choose to eat, or what we choose to *avoid* eating can affect relationships with others. Food choices can make people feel judged or insecure about their preferences. Vegans, people who avoid using and eating animal products, can often feel ostracized by their direct communities as their core beliefs are opposed with great force. Challenging the normalized belief system of eating animal products called Carnism (Joy, 2009), can lead vegans to feeling unaccepted and anxious with a desire to find a sense of belonging in society. Many vegans choose the Internet as a safe place to acquire knowledge and provide life advice about the vegan lifestyle and how to deal with a primarily omnivorous society. The researcher chose seventeen different YouTube video diaries (vlogs) to examine and understand the online world of veganism. This netnography found five major themes that emerged within the online vegan community: (1) Feelings or fear of loss of community (2) Increase in physical and mental health (3) A sense of moral alignment with actions (4) Sense of remorse from past actions and (5) Educating themselves about veganism. This thesis will examine the main themes that emerge from the Vegan YouTube community and relate them to other social and subculturemovements through an interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: *vegan; carnism; vlogs; stigma; netnography*

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work to my wonderful vegan friend Chelsey Moffat, who has dealt with her fair share of judgments from her lifestyle choice but, without fail, consistently matches her values with her actions.

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INTRODUCTION

As provided by the Vegan Society (2016) “veganism is a way of living, which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (p. 1). Vegans can face stigmatization in a primarily omnivore society and often have experiences of exclusion and disapproval from peers (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2015). Rebelling from the invisible ideology or hegemony of eating animal products, can place vegans into unwanted margins in society. Cole and Morgan (2011) claim that being targeted for stigmatization robs vegans of their decency and has been shown to be deleterious to psychological and physical health. Choosing to identify as a vegan often stems from three of the many important moral standings within veganism. Firstly, many vegans, some of whom prefer to refer to themselves as “plant-based eaters”, have switched to a vegan diet for health reasons alone. Secondly, many vegans transition away from eating animal products to help preserve the environment. And lastly, and probably most related to the ethics within veganism, to embrace animal welfare. Transitioning and maintaining a vegan lifestyle can often be challenging for those who do not have a strong social support system; differences in beliefs can sometimes lead to conflict: “Conflict is not only perceived as destructive and harmful and requiring resolution, but also as constructive, challenging and dynamic, acting as a catalyst for change” (Stewart, 1998, p.7). These types of interactions can be detrimental to maintaining established relationships and can lead people to seek more understanding friendships.

The vegan movement has increased in popularity drastically over the past six years and since 2009 has doubled in size reaching six million in the United States (Gallup, 2012). Although the vegan movement is gaining momentum, vegans have often come across as extremists to the rest of society. This misperception may be because the practice of not eating animal products encompasses more than just dietary behavior and often becomes an important aspect of identity (Jabs, Sobal, & Devine, 2000): “As marginalized individuals, vegans [seek] the comfort of solidarity in fellowship with others who feel as they do” (McDonald, 2000, p. 17).

Such a quest for like-minded people may be an explanation as to why so many vegans find community not around their physical world but on YouTube.

Statement of the Problem

The vegan movement is on the rise and will only continue to grow with the increase in awareness of ethical, environmental, and health impacts that the animal agricultural industry is having on our planet (Sareen, 2013). Although this movement has grown significantly in size, it is still only representative of about 1% to 3.4% of the US population (The Vegetarian Resource Group, 2011; Vegetarian Journal, 2009). The number of vegans worldwide has not yet been established, although research indicates that this number is on the rise, especially in more affluent countries (Key, Appleby, & Rosell, 2006). In fact, Google searches of the term have been steadily increasing since 2012 and had its largest surges of searches in December 2016 (Google Trends, 2017).

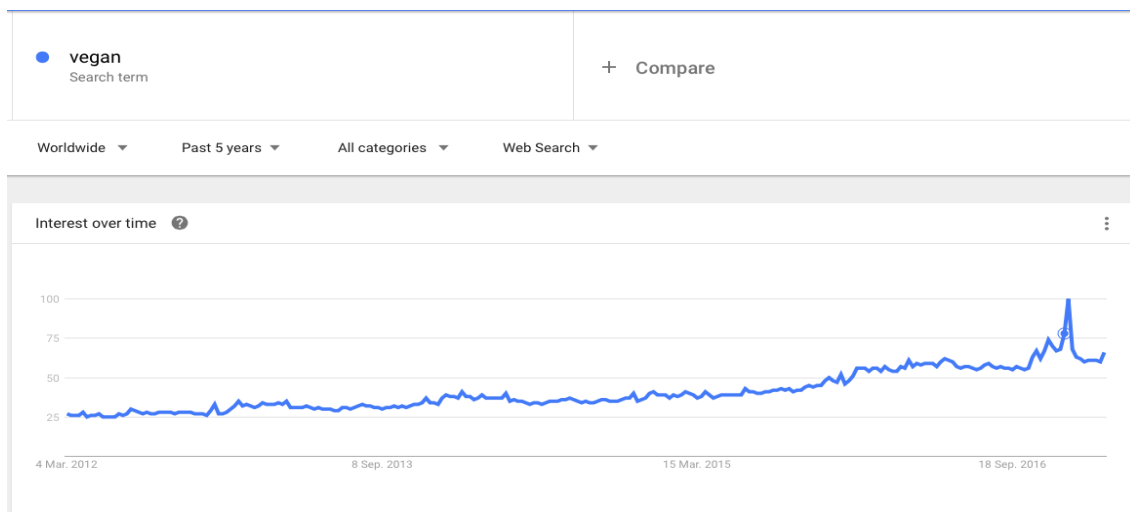


Figure 1. Interest Over Time. (Google Trends, 2017).

The mainstream North American diet heavily incorporates animal products in most foods, even without much awareness from the public. Many mainstream products found in local grocery stores probably contain some type of animal products, such as most sweet candies, which contain gelatin. Gelatin is a mixture of peptides and proteins extracted from the skin, bones,

and connective tissues of animals such as cows, chicken, pigs, and fish (Ward & Courts, 1977). The belief that eating *some* animals is acceptable and normal is the dogmatic practice of carnism. This term, coined by Dr. Melanie Joy (2003), describes how our society has normalized killing certain species for our personal use, while praising other animals and calling them family. On the other end of the spectrum lie vegans who are often criticized as being extremists for standing against any animal cruelty on several fronts. Often ostracized and singled out for being different, vegans face feeling left out by much of their community. Vegans can become depressed or overrun with grief when connections with unsympathetic friends or communities are broken and many vegans feel lonely when they lack important relationships (Leary, 1990; Tambor & Leary, 1993). It is “suggest[ed] that belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food and that human culture is significantly conditioned by the pressure to provide belongingness” (Bowmeister & Leary, 1995, p. 498). Depression is on the path to becoming the most burdensome illness in the developed world (Mathers & Loncar, 2006). If, then, individuals who are trying to better their health, the environment and to align their ethics with their actions cannot feel a sense of community with their family and peers, they may be left feeling isolated and alone. Often these minority groups or subcultures turn to the Internet for support and many vegans have joined YouTube to connect, learn, and find community with other like-minded individuals. Understanding the relationships that form online and the support needed for these individuals is important if we eventually want supportive, real life communities for these supposed extremists called vegans.

Purpose of the study

This study will aid in better understanding the YouTube vegan community. If we can consider this online world and take examples of the type of information they need to lead a healthy life, both nutritionally and mentally then there could be more acceptance of the movement which could result in a healthier overall population (Campbell II, 2004) less CO2 emissions (Wendel, Corry & Boon, 2011) and less overall animal cruelty (Monson, 2010). The focus of this study will help communities implement educational programs that refrain from discouraging veganism, and on the contrary, could teach the benefits of refraining from consuming animal products.

Significance of the study

The benefits of this study come from uncovering the invisible ideology of carnism, and how it alienates vegans who are trying to align their actions with their morals. By knowing why people turn to the Internet for support we can better put in place systems that will better tolerate their lifestyle in an omnivore driven world. Knowing what kind of assistance vegans need in maintaining their lifestyle will help create fewer stigmas around their dietary choices. In addition, the general population could benefit from understanding why vegans choose this path in life and what types of improvements they could see if they followed the same model. Vegans should not have to feel ashamed to tell people that they are vegan, should it come up; vegans should feel proud of their morals and not succumb to the discourse around consuming animal products.

Theoretical Perspective

The researcher bases this qualitative study on theoretical perspectives such as social conflict, social constructionism, hegemonic language and behavioural change. A sense of belonging and to a community is vital to self-actualization and mental health as people *need* to love and be loved (Maslow, 1943; Wubbolding, 2015). Vegans can feel a sense of social conflict during a dinner that is centered around pork/pig and (Twine, 2014). This type of situation may be found offensive and against vegan moral standards; however, sometimes the feeling of belonging can be so strong that they might try and mute their beliefs to fit in (Bird, 1996). The general discourse among omnivores might be so interwoven that they do not even realize how offensive their actions or choice of words can be to a non-meat eating dinner guest. These hegemonic behaviours can lead vegans to feel like ascetics, faddists, sentimentalists, or in some cases, hostile extremists, even when surrounded by family and friends (Cole & Morgan, 2011). In many cases, this feeling of being an outcast or misunderstood will drive minorities to find groups online who can better understand their struggles, beliefs and attitudes.

Research Method

This qualitative research paper explores the online vegan community on YouTube and gathers similar shared themes that are expressed in video format to the public. This type of

ethnography, referred to as netnography (Kozinets, 2010), attempts to truly “understand the phenomenon of interest from the participant’s perspective, not the researcher’s” (Merriam, 1998). In addition to this ethnographic type of data collection, the research also relied heavily on narrative qualitative research as many of the videos that were used told a personal story that related to the problem of vegan triumphs and struggles to belong.

Definition of Key Terms

Carnism: is the invisible belief system, or ideology, that conditions people to eat certain animals (Joy, 2003).

Vegan: A philosophy and way of living, which attempts to exclude all forms of cruelty or exploitation of animals; this means avoiding many foods, clothing, cosmetics, and entertainment using animals (McDonald, 2000; The Vegan Society, 1979).

Hegemony: is the social, cultural, ideological or economic influence exerted by a dominant group. (Merriam-Webster.com, 2017)

Delimitations

YouTube offers a space for discussion in the comment section below each video. Although these comments are important when understanding the entirety of the online content of veganism it was out of the scope of the research. In addition, the researcher did not view videos that were over ten minutes in length as to involve more participants.

Limitations of the Study

Certain limitations arose during the research phase. Such limitations included not being able to ask specific questions to the participants for clarification and being limited to merely observing and documenting their broadly narrated vegan stories. In addition, the researcher noticed that there were a few YouTube channels that were satirical in nature. In these videos, self-proclaimed vegans acted as though they were quitting veganism and discussed common reasons why omnivores are afraid of the vegan diet. Such claims included feeling a lack of energy from protein deficiencies, lacking calcium, and other associated nutritional matters. These videos were out of the scope of the researcher’s line of interest; however, they are important to note. Additionally, there were six videos that were first watched and then when

the researcher went back to transcribe, had been deleted. This is particularly interesting; however, it was also out of the researcher's scope. The limits of YouTube also assure that the whole of the Internet is not analyzed, as there are many other online platforms where vegans find a sense of community. Finally, this type of narrative qualitative research allows for differences in personal interpretation of the data.

Summary

Minority communities can seek refuge from cultural hegemony on YouTube (Green, Bobrowicz & Ang, 2015). The stigmatization felt often by these vegans has created a need for an online community where vegans can share their struggles and benefits of the lifestyle and teach others to follow in their footsteps. There are many different disciplinary lenses to observe vegans through. The researcher's focus will be highlighted through the disciplines of Anthropology, Health and Communications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review is divided into three disciplinary sections: Anthropology, Communications and Health. Within the Anthropology section the researcher is mainly focused on understanding the culture of veganism and the discourse within. The Communications section includes how communication within the vegan community can be formed online to improve the quality of life and sense of belonging for vegans and other subcultures. Under the Health section, two aspects are clearly noted when discussing the health of vegans: first the health of the body and secondly, the health of the mind. Even though veganism is a relatively new area of study there is a plethora of valuable research that must be mentioned.

Anthropology

Culture of Diet

An important aspect within the discipline of Anthropology is the culture of diet. What and how

people come together to eat is becoming increasingly important as individuals have a greater choice in food preferences and because food is central to our identity (Bisogni, Connors, Devine & Sobal, 2002; Fishler, 1988). Within Anthropology the consumption of food is viewed as important to the formation of social identities and lifestyles (Mintz & DuBois, 2002; Southerton, 2001; Sneijder & Molder, 2009; Tivadar & Luthar, 2005). Vast amounts of research exist on the North American standard diet, including the significant changes since the 1950's, such as greater abundance and accessibility to calorie-dense and nutrient poor foods (Grotto & Zied, 2010; Levenstein, 2003). The phenomenon of crash diets is also discussed in the literature such as experiences of psychotic episodes after following a crash diet (Robinson & Winnik, 1973), the gluten-free trend (Kent, 2013), high-protein/low carbohydrate diets (Stein, 2000) and issues of long-term weight loss, and safety (Moyad, 2005). Craig (2009), among others like Key, Appleby and Rosell (2006) and Hanninen, Rauma, Kaartinen and Nenonen (1998) have researched into the health aspects of a vegan diet, however, there has been very little research on vegans as a culture.

The Culture of Veganism

Little research exists examining the culture of veganism. On the other hand, the vegetarian movement has been more widely studied. Such studies, described below, have examined reasons behind becoming vegetarian, their common practices and beliefs and differences between them and omnivores (Ruby, 2012). Additionally, work by Ruby, Heine, Kamble, Cheng and Waddar (2013) explored cultural differences within vegetarianism; Rothgerber (2014) procured an article that discussed the differences between flexible and strict vegetarians; and Dimitrievski (2014) inquired into the moral reasoning behind becoming vegetarian and issues of self.

Veganism, as a dietary and lifestyle practice, is rare among the public. In the United States only about one to three percent of adults are vegan (The Vegetarian Resource Group, 2011; Vegetarian Journal, 2009). This subculture is contrasted by the hegemony of Carnism (Joy, 2009). Carnism, a term coined by Dr. Melanie Joy (2009), is a dominant ideology that conditions people to eat certain animals. Understanding that vegans are challenged against a

mainstream invisible ideology is important when understanding why so many vegans have found support with others online, instead of in person. Very little research has been conducted that explores the process of becoming (Larsson, Rönnlund, Johansson, & Dahlgren, 2003) and remaining vegan (Hirschler, 2011). Clearly, more research is needed to understand the experience of being vegan because it may help both those contemplating veganism and those currently vegan in knowing they are not alone. Additionally, understanding this phenomenon may help decrease the number of people who transition back to meat eating (Hirschler, 2011). Many people have a difficult time becoming and remaining vegan because they fear being criticized or harassed. As a reaction to that prejudice (Swim & Stanger, 1998), vegans might also lead to the tendency toward conformity (Hirschler, 2011). Those who do become vegan, and continue their life without the involvement of animal products have “connect[ed] the food with the individuality of the animal and, instead of thinking of meat as food, they reorganized it as the remains of a recently living, sentient being who had a personality, desires, and life history that came to a violent end” (Hirschler, 2011, p. 168). Veganism is a way of reducing cognitive dissonance, which synchronizes beliefs, such as loving all animals, with actions (Festinger, 1957).

Vegan Choice and Privilege

Although vegan numbers are rising, it is often those who have a higher socioeconomic standing that have the luxury of food choice. Low-income urban black Americans in the USA understand that it is nearly impossible to achieve a holistic plant-based diet (Dubowitz, Heron, Bird, Lurie, Finch, Basurto-Davila, Hale & Escarce, 2008). Not only is there a small percentage of vegans (Suddath, 2008 & Cherry, 2006) but there also seems to be a lack of diversity within the group itself. Although it is important to discuss the exclusion of those with less income or access to health foods Greenebaum (2016) discusses the importance of veganism as an inclusive lifestyle:

Vegan scholars and activists who critique vegan privilege, often work within the field of Critical Animal Studies and insist that veganism needs to move beyond a limited focus on equality and justice for animals and broaden our circle of compassion to people. They critique the campaigns, strategies, and foci of the mainstream animal rights and vegan movements. They remind vegans that although the plight of animals

may be the primary concern for ethical vegans, animals are not the only ones that suffer and are exploited by the capitalist industrial food complex. They urge vegans to go beyond an individual and collective boycott of non-vegan products and goods and promote an “engaged veganism” that is “committed to minimizing violence against all (human or nonhuman) animal life” (Jenkins & Stanescu, 2014, p. 77). Veganism must be a movement that challenges normative mindless eating, which fosters the exploitation of nonhuman animals, poor and marginalized human animals, and the environment. (p. 4)

Vegans are often scrutinized about the notion of ‘vegan privilege’, which can be seen in blogs across the Internet (Greenebaum, 2016). “These bloggers debate whether veganism requires affluence, whether it assumes whiteness, first world privilege, and cultural insensitivity, and whether it encourages self-righteousness and condescension towards non-vegans” (Greenebaum, 2016, p. 2). Veganism is a minority food culture, and within the choice to be vegan often come prejudices and feelings of exclusion. This could be because many vegans now commonly equate horrible actions in society that are situationally different, such as animal abuse and death to issues of human rape or slave trade (Prince, 2016). Equating these human actions to those of animal lives, does not stand well for those who have been victimized by similar demeaning scenarios. “How can people of color ethically enter into a foodways practice that is popularly associated with violence against themselves?” (Polish, 2016, p. 274). According to Polish’s (2016) findings, veganism is viewed as a choice, but once vegans find out the truth about the cruelty within the animal agriculture business many that they no longer *have* a food choice; they must be vegan to live a morally aligned life.

Communications

The Internet, Community and YouTube

There has been a vast amount of research performed in communications and social media. “In the decade between 1994 and 2004, the number of U.S. adults using the Internet increased from 15% to 63%, and by 2005, stood at 78.6%” (Moteff, Kruger & McLoughlin, 2001, p. 1). Many different papers have focused on the main themes for online platforms such as issues of identity (Livingstone, 2008), friending, motivations for usage (Joinson, 2008), disclosure (Boyd, 2007), privacy (Larsen, 2007) and ethics (Griffiths & Light, 2008). Many communities have found

refuge on YouTube and other social media sites as their communities may not understand or geographical location may be an issue. For example, the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community is a group that has created a large community online through YouTube. “YouTube users do not see YouTube as a place to simply broadcast content, but as a community where they can communicate and interact” (Rotman & Preece, 2010, p. 333). In many ways, YouTube has become a site for communities to come together, share ideas, and meet, which otherwise would not be able to due to geography.

YouTube has only been around for twelve years (Cheng, Dale & Liu, 2007), and yet accounts for more than 72% of all video watched online (June, 2009). Just eight years ago, in 2009, it was estimated that twenty hours of video were uploaded to YouTube every minute (Arrington, 2009). This avenue of sharing is important for understanding how communities can form despite huge physical distances between users and is very prevalent as many hundreds of millions of Americans are viewers of YouTube (Arrington, 2009). A community has been establishing on YouTube for over a decade has been creating a reality for many individuals; this is especially true for the LGBT community (Green, et al, 2015). In their comprehensive article, Green et al (2015) describe that the LGBT YouTube community has turned their videos into a substitute reality and that they become a type of life confession. A survey by The Forum Poll in 2012 gathered that only about 5.3% of Canadians said they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. Although this is a minority of the population it is relevant as there is a similar percentage of vegans (The Vegetarian Resource Group, 2011), a group that is subject to prejudice (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015). Keep in mind that veganism is a choice, and sexual orientation is not. Although the LGBT community finds refuge on YouTube for many different reasons than vegans do, they both share some similar themes, yet not to the same degree. As there is little research in the realm of veganism on YouTube, the LGBT community can be used as a platform for better understanding groups facing prejudice.

Veganism Online

The research that has been conducted around online veganism is scarce. However, there has been some research into the online vegan forum community by Sneijder and Molder (2009)

who use “discursive psychology to explore the relation between ideologically based food choice and identity in an online forum on veganism” (p. 621). Unfortunately, there are no relevant articles that discuss the YouTube vegan movement. This lack of information shows that a gap in the research exists and that it is important to better understand this popular movement.

Health

The Health of North Americans

The general health of North America needs improvement; as medical bills are rising so is the weight on the scales. “Rapid changes in diets and lifestyles have occurred with industrialization, urbanization, economic development and market globalization, [and] have accelerated over the past decade” (Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation, 2003, p.1). These huge changes are easily spotted in modern life today: humans walk with extra fat on their bodies while eating their processed meal high in sugar and fat. These health habits are having detrimental impacts on the health of entire populations, especially those in developing countries and those in transition (Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation, 2003). This problem is massive and extremely prevalent as more than half of Americans suffer from one or more chronic diseases (DeVol, Bedroussian, Charuworn, Chatterjee, Kim, et al., 2007). Tusso, Ismail, Ha and Bartolotto (2013) identify that the risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases, along with their foreboding complications such as behavioural health and quality-of-life problems, often go together and are tightly knit with the lifestyle choice of diet. Of the plethora of diets recommended over the previous decades to help in conquering these chronic illnesses the best, yet least common, are those that are plant-based (Tusso et al., 2013). Knowing that diet plays a huge role in reversing and preventing disease more people should have a higher concern about what foods they put into their body.

Health for Vegans

The health aspects of the vegan diet have not been researched for very long. Many different scholars and doctors suggest that the healthiest diet is one that does not include any meat, dairy or egg consumption (Campbell, 2004; Hu, 2003, Tusso et al., 2013;). Meat consumption is very

high in the United States and is a major source of saturated fat and calories and the only source of dietary cholesterol (Walker, Rhubart-Berg, McKenzie, Kelling & Lawrence, 2005). In contrast, the American Dietetic Association states that an “appropriately planned vegetarian diet including total vegetarian or vegan diet are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases” (Craig & Mangels, 2009, p. 1266). Degenerative diseases like heart disease, type two diabetes, and several forms of cancer can almost always be prevented and in many cases reversed by adopting a whole-foods, plant-based diet (Campbell & Campbell, 2005; Esselstyn, 2009). “Vegans tend to be thinner, have lower serum cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease” (Palmer, 2016). There are several reputable studies like EPIC Oxford, Adventist health study 1 and 2 and GEICO Study that produce distinct advantages of plant-based diets compared to diets containing animal products (Appleby, Thorogood, Mann & Key 1999; Davey, Spencer, Appleby, Allen, Knox & Key, 2003; Le & Sabaté 2014; Mishra, Xu, Agarwal, Gonzales, Levin & Barnard, 2013; Tonstad, Stewart, Oda, Batech, Herring & Fraser, 2013). A positive example of an advantage to plant-based eating is its high efficiency for weight loss, which was concluded by Berkow and Bernard (2006) after reviewing data from eighty-seven published studies. Obesity is associated with chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and certain cancers (Berkow & Bernard, 2006).

Overall, the health of vegans surpasses the omnivorous diet; however, there are some areas for concern. Although many vegan advocates believe that the vegan diet is the healthiest for optimal prevention and reversal of many health concerns such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, there are some necessary nutrients that must be monitored to ensure optimal health (Campbell, 2004). Some of these nutrients are often deficient in the vegan diet include vitamin B12, vitamin D and long-chain omega-3 fatty acids (Craig & Mangels, 2009). “Since vegetarians consume widely divergent diets, a differentiation between various types of vegetarian diets is necessary. Many misunderstandings concerning vegetarianism are due to scientific data from studies without this differentiation.” (Wirnitzer, Seyfart, Leitzmann, Keller, Wirnitzer, et al., 2016, p. 2). Often vegetarian or vegan diets have been noted as

deficient in several nutrients including B12 (Gilsing, Crowe, Lloyd-Wright, Sanders, Appleby, Allen & Key 2010; Obersby, Chappell, Dunnett & Tsiami, 2013) iron, zinc, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids and iodine (Key, Appleby & Rosell 2006). Although studies show that vegans must be cautious of their nutrient intake, many studies have showed that these deficiencies are usually due to poor meal planning (Leitzmann, 2005).

Psychological Health

Sense of belonging is defined by Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992) as “the experiences of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment” (p. 173). The authors proposed that a lack of sense of belonging consequently could result in depression. The lack of sense of belonging is hypothesized to be a stimulant or vulnerability factor for depression (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995), and subsequent studies have supported this hypothesis (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996; Hagerty & Williams, 1999). A study by Hagerty et al. (1996) showed that sense of belonging was related to both psychological and social functioning, with a higher sense of belonging promoting better functioning. Moreover, Hagerty and Williams (1999) revealed that sense of belonging had a direct effect on depression whereas social support had only indirect effects. According to these findings, sense of belonging is likely to have a mediating effect on the relationship between stress and depression (Choenarom, Williams & Hagerty, 2005). Experiencing a sense of belonging to a group of people is imperative to a healthy overall life.

Mental health is an important subject to better understanding quality of life. Dwyer, Kandel, Mayer, and Mayer (1974) discovered that in the United States 60% of young vegetarian adults felt as though they were experiencing a more positive mindset since adopting a vegetarian diet. Additionally, Beezhold, Johnston and Daigle (2010) reported that vegetarians felt less negative emotions than omnivores did as measured by mood scales. In addition to physical health, vegetarians and vegans also report less anxiety and stress than omnivores (Beezhold et al., 2014). Even if vegans feel an overall more positive mindset “scholars in other fields have suggested the existence of “vegophobia” (Cole & Morgan, 2011), which literally translates to

fear of vegans. MacInnis & Hodson (2015) have provided social psychological evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans. They state that as the interest for healthy diets like vegetarianism and veganism continue to grow, these biases will likely become increasingly unacceptable to express. With this knowledge in hand, the field can now recognize and explore this bias (Crandall & Warner, 2005), which will help to reduce bias in the future (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015). Vegans, like any other group, deserve to have a fair trial, without prejudice or vegophobia. This constant sense of being judged can lead to a vegan feel as if they do not belong.

Conclusion

Little research exists about veganism in the disciplines mentioned above. However, the information that the researcher needs can be found by interpreting other similar social and health related movements and by a process of extrapolation. Overall this paper will attempt to increase overall knowledge around the culture of veganism and the importance of belonging, health, and ethics.

Review of Related Research

A similar study by Green et al (2015) looked at 150 different videos within the LGBT YouTube community and discussed the importance of sharing experiences, building community and dealing with bullying in real life. The study examines how easily these individuals share personal information about themselves and concludes that it is to find friendship, support and empathy. This study is important within this research as it investigates the importance of YouTube communities for minorities.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This section discusses the researcher's worldview and philosophical position with regards to ontology, epistemology and methodology. The context of the study has been heavily affected by the worldview of the researcher. To conceptualize the entirety of the research questions, the mechanics of the research process will be examined. The study can be understood in terms of

the researchers ontological and epistemological lenses. The methodology section is organized into phenomenology and netnography categories. Finally, the detailed methods are distinguished for basic understanding of the entire qualitative data collection process.

Research Questions

This study seeks to understand the online vegan community and the common themes that are shared amongst the group to better understand the struggles and triumphs that online vegans share with each other and the online world. The central research question is: *What are the common struggles and triumphs of vegan YouTubers?* Towards this goal, the researcher compiled a list of ongoing questions that further encouraged critical engagement, which are as follows:

1. In what ways do vegans struggle to integrate into society?
2. In what ways are vegans discriminated against?
3. What are the main trends and themes of turning vegan?
4. What similar themes do vegans face when living in a predominantly omnivorous society?
5. What are the social media trends of veganism, and are they playing a role in conversion to and maintenance of the vegan lifestyle?
6. How does social-media help or hinder Vegans in the maintenance of diet and lifestyle?
7. How has veganism changed these lives?

With these questions outlined, it is now important to understand the philosophical view of the qualitative research that was performed for this study. As this qualitative research examines the personal lives of vegans on YouTube, the nature of being must be understood through ontology and how knowledge is acquired through epistemology.

Ontology and Epistemology

The paradigm with which we focus on different aspects of life is important to understanding both general concepts of life and the views and opinions formed from the eye of the beholder. Understanding how individuals view life and other people can help explain how their true knowledge is formed, which is known as ontology (Gruniger & Lee, 2002).

Ontological Relativism relates to understanding that truth is non-stagnant because of many different variants within the world (Siegel, 2013). Relativism suggests that there is more than one truth and that these truths can ultimately change at any point in time depending on the meaning or context; essentially, this philosophical view cannot generalize phenomenon. People's views and interpretations of life events will vary depending on a range of distinct qualities and life experiences. Additionally, life experiences will be different for everyone involved as prior scenarios are instrumental in shaping the world-view of each human. From understanding relativism and the underlying ideas within, the researcher took an emic epistemological approach towards acquiring knowledge. Emic thinking suggests that most experiences are subjective to the specific person and event. Essentially, an emic approach attempts to examine native principles from *within* a cultural system (Berry and Dasen, 1974; Sturtevant, 1964; Xia, 2011). Kukla (2000) argues that reality is constructed by every individual's activities, and that individuals, as part of a culture, invent the properties of the world.

Theoretical Perspectives

Two theoretical approaches remained the focus throughout the interdisciplinary understanding. These two different theoretical approaches were phenomenology and netnography.

Phenomenology

Before the researcher began the initial research phase, bracketing was discussed with the researcher's supervisor Dr. Florriann Fehr, using Polit and Beck (2008) for further guidance. Parameters were applied such as keeping distance as a researcher, dispelling biases and *viewing* instead of interacting with the subjects. Within the phenomenological perspective, this action is called bracketing. Bracketing is a fundamental methodological principle of phenomenology that assumes that the researcher's world-views are held aback to ensure that their assumptions and preconceptions do not shape how the data is collected and organized (Crotty, 1996; Polit & Beck, 2008). Distancing the researcher's world-view allows for a more accurate representation of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Understanding and exploring the basics of reality and consciousness is essential to this theory.

Phenomenology leads to questions concerning what the *experience* of vegan YouTubers entails. The researcher uses YouTube videos which answer one broad and open ended question which is: “What is your vegan story?” YouTube is an interactive community with room for comments, likes, follows and response videos. The researcher decided not to interact with the YouTubers in ways like this due to time management and the scope of the project. This meant that no questions were ever asked of the YouTubers for further clarification or probing. Phenomenology allows for the understanding that experiences are only for one individual and cannot be generalized to the public.

Netnography

Netnographic research is closely linked to the better-known research method of ethnography. As Maanen (2011) describes, ethnography is fieldwork within a specific group of people, which is later transcribed into a written representation of said culture. Ethnography decodes one culture or sub culture while recoding it for another (Barthes, 1972). Although ethnographic research has been useful in many regards throughout social science history, netnography is a new, yet similar method that understands that our social worlds are increasingly digital (Kozinets, 2010). “YouTube has over a billion users — almost one-third of all people on the Internet — and every day people watch hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube and generate billions of views” (Statistics, 2017) and two million videos are uploaded to the Internet per minute (Lavaveshul, 2012), which implies that this popular culture is worth investigating further. Netnography will be an important form of study as the Internet continues to grow in popularity and normality. Howard Rheingold (1993) discusses virtual communities as social cluster that forms from the Internet when people have public discussions long enough, with enough emotion to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. This research method allows for the researcher to be an active participant in the culture of vegan YouTube and additionally enables a larger selection of vegans from around the globe. The community of YouTube is held up by the content but also the viewership, likes, comments and subscriptions. The researcher decided to employ netnography instead of ethnography as the vegan movement is gaining momentum on YouTube from the media. As there are between 1.5 million (Cherry, 2006; Herzog, 2014) to 2 million (Suddath, 2008) vegans in the United States, qualitative

information may be easier to find in a community online rather than in a nearby neighbourhood. Furthermore, netnography has allowed for the researcher to engage in this community as well, listening to the stories and contributing to ‘views’ which is a count of how many people watch a certain video on YouTube. Netnography is a type of qualitative research where its data frequently consists of direct observation and in-depth interviews, although materials such as art forms, like YouTube are useful as well (Yates & Leggett, 2016).

Limitations of theoretical approaches

It takes many hours to listen to peoples’ vegan stories and gather their thoughts and experiences in written form. Additionally, the analysis and interpretation of the data can be difficult. Even though the researcher attempted hold back opinions there was still no way to ensure that biases were not present when gathering and interpreting the information. Furthermore, it is important to understand that there are limitations in understanding this phenomenon, as there are only seventeen videos gathered for this study. Therefore, it is not practical to assume that the experiences felt by these participants can be generalized for the entire vegan community.

Procedure

Horizontilation is a process whereby significant statements are taken from the transcripts to describe elements that the participants experienced (Flanigan & Babchuk, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). These statements are identified as quotes throughout the next chapter. Clusters of meaning (Cresswell, 1998) are the headings for each of these significant statements; which, in the case of this study, are the five themes gathered from the vegan YouTubers. Clusters were formed as common themes emerged from the YouTubers’ stories. Each video referred to at least one of the five themes shared amongst the participants, but most touched base on many of the themes.

Setting

The participants found for this research were all online account holders of the popular video-sharing site YouTube. These participants were easily found and their videos easily gathered as they were all publicly shared. Youtube was an easy platform to find many different self-proclaimed vegans explaining their stories to an audience, of their own free will as “My Vegan

Story” has become a popular “tag” on YouTube within the past few years. A “tag” is a simple way of labelling something on the internet to create a story which makes it easier to find messages with a specific theme or content. This type of qualitative research was easier for the researcher in terms of time, place, and convenience. All videos were watched alone and without influence of other spectators.

Population

The participants chosen for research had to have had uploaded a YouTube video regarding their vegan story of their own free will. In each video the participants either state that they are vegan within the video title or say it directly to the audience. The researcher began by using the search engine in YouTube with the following search terms: “vegan;” “my vegan story;” “why I am vegan”. The researcher then picked videos to watch that were under ten minutes in length to allow for more variety in the sample. Seventeen videos were used in the final report, however, an additional six were watched and later found deleted by the YouTuber. The researcher chose videos sequentially scrolling down the YouTube page, and then additionally YouTube would offer recommended videos on the right-side bar, which is a type of virtual snowballing. If these videos matched one of the three searched titles above, the video would be chosen for viewing. Demographics such as race, or education were not variables in this study, and familiarity with the participant was non-existent. As there were no questions asked to the vloggers there was no unwillingness or discomfort on the part of the participant. Ethics approval from Thompson Rivers University was not required as these were all public sites.

Research Design

All seventeen videos were watched in entirety to see if it had relevance to living a vegan lifestyle. The videos were then converted to an Mp3 file as to allow for easier transcription. Then each video was inputted into a Word document, which would house all the raw data for each interview (see Appendix). This step was important in ensuring all the links and YouTubers’ information was kept in one place. The video was then listened to a second and sometimes third time while transcribing the words of each video. The researcher used YouTube, YouTuber Converter, iTunes, and Word document to transcribe each video. To

ensure that the words were transcribed correctly, the researcher would watch the video once more while reading the written words.

Data Collection

Data was collected from the public website YouTube and from public users' accounts. The materials necessary to complete this type of qualitative research included a computer with Internet access, YouTube.com, YouTube converter, iTunes, and Word. The data was transcribed into word directly from the videos. After finalizing the transcriptions quotes were extracted and categorized under each significant theme that emerged.

Data Analysis Strategy

The researcher transcribed each YouTube video. The researcher then began to compile themes that were discussed throughout the videos. Through this process, five themes emerged as significant and reoccurring. During the final stage of listening to the video the researcher would highlight sentences or ideas that the individuals explained, each colour pertaining to one of the five different themes that began to emerge before saturation (see Appendix). Then each sentence would be categorized under each theme. These themes were determined if many of the vegans expressed similar feelings or stories. These common themes were regarding community, health, ethics, regret and self-education.

FINDINGS

Common Themes for Vegan YouTubers

The researcher transcribed the words from seventeen vegan YouTubers and several themes emerged as a result. The themes that became were both negative and positive attributes within a vegan lifestyle for YouTubers. The commonplace themes were: (1) Feelings or fear of loss of community; (2) Increase in physical and/or mental health; (3) A sense of moral alignment with actions; (4) A sense of remorse from past actions; and (5) Self education about veganism. Within the following pages the words and stories of these YouTubers will be categorized and related to disciplines of health, anthropology and communications, the three sections examined earlier in the Literature Review section.

(1) Feelings or fear of loss of community

Day-in-and-day-out people feel the need to fit in, to feel a sense of belonging within a community. From the shoes that they purchase to the homes that they work so hard to pay for each year; people want to foster healthy relationships with their peers. A sense of belonging can be health promoting in communities that offer social support (Berkman, 1995) and belonging is a universal characteristic of human beings and is a basic human need (Maslow, Frager & Cox, 1970). To ignore this need could leave the vegan community never reaching a level of acceptance within the omnivorous society, in which they can already struggle. The vegan community challenges the interpellation of eating meat. This daily stance can make keeping and forming relationships tricky. When one challenges such a supposed vital part of life, feelings of exclusion can result in losing communities and friends. “In a multicultural society, foods and eating experiences offer opportunities for maintaining indigenous and international cultural practices and sharing aspects of such practices with the wider community” (Kenny, 2015, p 647). The act of eating is often a social one that brings people together, and as vegans challenge the center of the meal they can often make people re-think their own morals, which can be uncomfortable for many individuals. The general population could feel threatened that someone might disagree with their ethical standpoint and then feel uncomfortable while eating animal products around a vegan. These disagreements can be the beginning of many of the broken relationships that vegans often fear or experience while transitioning or maintaining a plant-based diet. One YouTube video subject (V2) explained her sense of anxiety over telling her peers that she was vegan:

(V2) “It was about health for me, and in the beginning that really helped me to, sorta, come out to my friends as a vegan because I had a lot of anxiety over the social aspects of telling people that I was vegan. And so, it’s funny how even today I tell someone that I’m vegan and they immediately seem almost, like, put off by it and then they start asking about it and I say, ‘oh, well I had this joint pain issue and this has resolved it’ or whatever and it’s like they immediately feel better about themselves because it’s not something that I originally did for, um, the moral side of it.”

Here, V2 discusses her feelings of anxiety over the social aspects of coming out to her friends

and community as a vegan. For someone who has gone their whole life fitting in with her peers the idea of being an outcast or minority can be terrifying. Her fears are normal, as vegans challenge the social norms of the everyday person, which can sometimes lead omnivores to question their normalized and automatic behaviours. By explaining to her friends that she did not turn vegan for ethical reasons she is able to put them at ease as it may be easier to understand someone changing their diet for health reasons as opposed to ethical ones.

Discussing veganism can often be a touchy subject for some people and such was the case for V4 who felt as though she was annoying her friends and family with veganism:

(V4) “Veganism is a very big part of my life. If anyone knows me in person, it’s all I ever talk about, so I figure rather than annoying everyone in my personal life I could make videos about it because there [are] people that are interested online...I guess!”

V4 discusses her reasons for sharing her veganism online instead of in her “real life” as she does not want to annoy any of her family and friends by constantly talking about veganism. Being able to talk about her passion, diet, ethics and environmental concerns is vital to her happy existence and luckily for V4 there are options on the Internet through social media platforms including YouTube to find like-minded people. YouTube users see their content as more than simply broadcasting media, they view it as a community where they can communicate and interact (Rotman and Preece, 2010). Although this is particularly important to thousands of vegan YouTubers around the globe, many vegans struggle to maintain a social presence with their peers in real life. Food can often be the center for social gatherings which may lead some vegans into feeling alone.

V6 describes how sometimes it can be more challenging eating out as an outcast:

(V6) “Oh ya, I also get questions whether it is difficult to eat out when you’re on a vegan diet. Or you know eating with friends or social aspects like that. And ya, it can be a little bit difficult; especially for me since I don’t, I don’t even know any vegetarians, much less vegan eaters. So, I’m pretty much a lone ranger wherever I go. But you know I just have learned to be a little creative and I try not to make a big deal

of it.”

V6 realizes that she has made a personal choice not to consume animal products and even though it has left her feeling alone sometimes, she tries not to “make a big deal of it” and continues with her vegan lifestyle. This vegan accepts the fact that she is within a minority food culture but that does not mean that she has given up on socializing with her omnivore friends. Her positive outlook on her veganism makes feeling like a lone ranger doable. Feeling like an outcast can also come from hegemonic narratives within the omnivore culture.

V7 describes a certain ‘hatred’ that the dominant culture presents towards veganism but despite her experience she keeps an open, positive mind about educating people when they ask about diet and lifestyle:

(V7) “Um, ok, I just wanted to talk about um, social pressures with being vegan. Um, you know obviously having a vegan diet isn’t the norm these days it’s not the standard diet and a lot of people seem to be quite concerned and raise questions when you say that you are vegan. I don’t think that it’s them targeting you or you know having hatred towards the diet, but they may not believe in it they may not believe it’s healthy because they simply don’t have, you know, the right knowledge. They don’t know enough about being vegan. Most people who follow a standard diet think we eat, you know, lettuce and rabbit food. Like you know they have no idea that we can eat anything but made from plant-based foods.”

V7 understands that educating the public about veganism, and changing their views on vegans into neutral or positive ones could help vegans live in a more accepting community. Education here is key not only for vegans to understand the fundamentals of a plant-based lifestyle but for omnivores to better welcome vegans into their social spheres.

Some people might not understand veganism, they simply believe that one *needs* animal products to survive, let alone thrive. Concerns over health come from lack of knowledge about nutrition. One can be alienated from their peers if there is a lack of understanding from both parties. V7 explains that regardless of what people think or say about veganism, even if

seemingly hurtful in tone, that in the end it doesn't matter because you are what matters.

(V7) "Believe that what you are doing [being vegan] is right and that you know what you're doing. At the end of the day it doesn't matter what people think or people say anyway!"

V10, spoke about vegans themselves making fun of ex-vegans and states how inappropriate this can be, especially for the vegan movement.

(V10) "And first I want to say that I am completely against the public shaming of ex-vegans from some vegans. I think that is really shameful and I don't think it really does anything to help veganism, the vegan movement. Instead it kind of legitimizes the stereotype that vegans are militant unsympathetic assholes."

Here V10 confirms the stereotype that vegans have a bad reputation amongst the rest of society. She does not want this stereotype to continue as it gives the vegan lifestyle a bad reputation and less momentum. This narrative about vegans has to change within the hegemony of carnism, and if vegans themselves are shaming ex-vegans a battle will remain against the two food-cultures.

It appears many vegans feel ostracized although some try to avoid those negative feelings like V13a:

(V13a) "Well, I guess being vegan is definitely really different from other people. And I didn't really realize that until I was around 15 or 16 because everyone would go out and eat pizza and I would be like oh wait I don't eat like that but to me I love it because it's good for the environment, its good for my health and its good for animals, so it's basically just a win win. I think."

Her twin sister also related to this statement by saying:

(V13b) "There were a few instances where people would kinda make fun of us for what we eat. But I mean, really anything that's different out there, I guess people can find something different about someone and think it's weird or make fun of them for it but I think it's cool to be different."

These sisters have been vegan since birth. They understand that being vegan is different but they have had put a new twist on their own narratives to feel accepted within their peer group. They describe veganism as weird, but insist that being different is “cool”.

Being vegan may sound like a huge chore that is wildly restrictive to both the individual as well as those surrounding them. For instance, V14 considered delaying her transition to veganism as she did not want to inconvenience her host mother in France.

(V14) “I’m going to France next April to stay with my exchange student Margarie and um I just thought it would be easier on their family if I was just vegetarian and not vegan...”

Although she considered the nuisance, V14 could no longer accept eating animal products after being exposed to the standard animal cruelty practices in animal factories and had to make a change.

(V14) “Um, I woke up the next morning and I was just like ‘Mom, nope, I’m vegan now.’ So, she was pretty mad to start with because she thought it would be such an effort for me to be vegan.”

V14 states that her mother was initially mad about her lifestyle change as it presumably would make her life more difficult, especially while on an exchange in France. Her decision, however, was hurried when she made a moral connection between her food and the animals that were killed for her meal.

Belonging is a series of interactions often pleasant or neutral that occur within continuous relationships that have seemingly mutual caring toward one another (Baumeister, Dale & Muraven, 2000). When encounters begin to feel negative or too difficult to care for any longer they disintegrate into nothingness. To comprehend how and why vegans can feel a sense of exclusion in the mainstream is important to changing the future views and acceptance of these individuals for their social well-being. It is important also to understand the common narratives that surround vegans, and how this can affect their sense of belonging within society.

(2) A sense of increase in physical and mental health

Some negative attributes to veganism are social isolation and potential health deficiencies. Such deficiencies include vitamins such as protein, calcium, iron, B12 (Rizzo et al., 2013; Appleby et al., 2007; Deriemaeker et al., 2010). However, with a well-planned vegan diet many vegans can feel an increase in general health. Although there are reported vitamin deficiencies within a plant-based diet, vegans have suggested that their physical and mental health have improved since adopting the lifestyle.

Experiences of physical changes such a healthier skin was noted by V1 when she discusses her change in diet:

(V1) “THANK YOU, thank you naturopath lady! You changed my life! I did that (stopped eating dairy and gluten), and my skin went back to normal within three months, and with that - mentally I felt amazing. I had so much energy – I wanted to see people, I wanted to do stuff. I was just a really positive person!”

V1 also discussed an increase of energy as well as the desire to socialize again. V1 acknowledged that prior to quitting dairy and gluten she would remain in bed and not want to socialize at all due to her lethargic energy. Many vegans also reported a weight loss after adopting a vegan diet which coincides with studies of Western vegetarians who have consistently reported that meat-free eaters have a lower BMI than comparable omnivores at a mean of 1kg/m² (Key et al., 1999) and additionally the proportion of vegetarians who are obese is correspondingly lower than that among non-vegetarians (Key & Davey, 1996). Similarly, 35% of the YouTube subjects reported weight loss due to their veganism.

(V2) “And then give another couple of months after that and I had lost quite a bit of weight, I was starting to feel really really good, I had gone to the Fruit Festival, I had gotten a bike, all that sort of thing.”

V2 and V5 share similar experiences of being happy about their weight after eliminating animal products. Additionally, V5 discusses how she does not have to worry about things like monitoring food quantity; she eats however much she wants as long as it is whole-food plant-based.

(V5) “The food started tasting so much better, I love food so much more now. I can eat food so much more now; I don’t have to worry about weight or stuff like that.”

V8 and V9b both state that a healthy weight loss occurred during the vegan transition:

(V8) “I lost 18kg transitioning to vegan.”

(V9b) “Um when I was first vegan ya I lost like thirty pounds. I just kinda loafed on it. So I’m just trying to you know lose some more weight now.”

Maintaining a healthy weight seems to be a positive influence from the plant-based diet.

Not only is there a significant pattern of lower BMI and weight on a vegan diet but there is also an increase in performance under a vegan diet. This seems to be a factor for V9a:

(V9a) “And I said to myself well if I’m going to become a bike messenger I might as well become as healthy as possible. So I started adopting a vegetarian diet at first and then I implemented a vegan diet as well and the vegan diet helped me lose weight, it helped me recover faster because I was riding 80-100 km a day as in any weather.”

Meat-free eating patterns sustain training and performance; an omnivorous diet can as well, so long as an athlete’s calorie and protein needs are met (Rodrigues, DiMarco & Langley, 2009).

V17 also discusses exercise and the vegan diet:

(V17) “My weight hasn’t moved, like I have been at a consistent like thin weight for like 6 years. I have not gained weight. I get to eat more and work out less and look the same. Which is incredible for someone like me who does not enjoy working out.”

V17 suggests here that prior to being vegan she struggled with maintaining a desired weight, and since becoming vegan she states that she stays at a manageable weight without working out. This can be a drastic change in someone’s life as food stress is an all too real mental challenge for many people. A study by Beezhold, Radnitz, Rinne, & DiMatteo (2014) suggests that due to their findings regarding mood increase within a vegan diet, further studies investigating the efficacy of a plant-based diet for reducing anxiety and stress may be warranted. V12 expresses feeling less tense since adopting a plant-based lifestyle.

(V12) “So once I made the switch to high fruit diet my health started to improve I started to lose weight I bought a bike, I started running and I was feeling great and over

time, I mean I've been vegan now for three years nearly I've learned a lot, I've become way more relaxed."

V12 talks about how he has become more relaxed in general since adopting his vegan diet. He implies that becoming more relaxed has increased his overall quality of life. Many of the other YouTubers also discussed increased mental states:

(V6) "Because it's definitely changed my life for the better."

(V8) "Veganism saved me from my depression, my anxiety."

(V16) "I immediately felt so much more vibrant and energized now that I wasn't eating any animal products at all."

"Striving to eat a more plant-based diet with lower intake of animal fats may be linked to better mental health" (Beezhold, et al., 2014, p. 295). Mental health is important in understanding overall quality of life. Not only have these specific vegans reported improved mental health, many have reported other positive health impacts as well.

The vegan diet has also improved many negative health impacts that were previously felt eating meat and other animal products. V5 explains how her daughter's health improved since quitting animal products:

(V5) "My daughter used to get fevers like every two weeks when she started school because obviously there's a lot of kids around all the viruses and everything. And she was given cow's milk every single day, ever since she turned vegan she has not had fevers since. And it's been almost a year now, how awesome is that?"

V12 experienced an increase in overall energy from adopting a plant-based diet:

(V12) "It wasn't long after that that I saw Durian Rider and saw him promoting a high fruit diet and this appealed to me because I've always been a big fruit eater; it did seem strange at first to eat ten bananas at one time and so I gave it a go for a week or so and my energy was through the roof, I felt great I started to get more serious about fitness."

V13 and her sister explain that their family went vegan in order to cure her mother from a rare autoimmune disease:

(V13) "So why are we vegan? Um, actually our mom had a rare autoimmune disease

she had it twenty years ago, so we've been raised vegan. By changing her diet, she actually got rid of the disease its called relapsing polychondritis"

A plant-based diet has been associated with the reversal of many diseases (Campbell II, 2004). This point is important when looking at the positive outcomes of the vegan diet. V17 shares her experience getting rid of her problematic acne disease:

(V17) "But eventually cutting out the dairy helped. So he suggested actually that I get rid of all animal proteins all together. So I got rid of that and it was within I would say like a couple months my skin turned around like that! Like it went from just the worst acne you could possibly think of to manageable acne."

Generally, V17 has experienced an overall positive switch within her new diet that she has been following for over six years, including better looking skin:

(V17) "Also, most of the time I have tons of energy, I feel really vibrant. Like my skin feels brighter and more clear, I don't break out on a regular basis anymore."

Overall the increase in mental and physical health after dissociation from animal products seems positive for these subjects. A study by Clarys, Deliens, Huybrechts, Deriemaeker, Vanaelst, De Keyzer, and Mullie (2014) compared nutrient intake and dietary quality of different diet types and found that vegans had the highest diet quality as measured by the Healthy Eating Index-2010, compared to omnivores, who had the lowest quality. The next theme that stood out among vegan YouTubers was a sense of moral alignment with their actions.

(3) A sense of moral alignment with actions

Many people claim to be animal lovers, in fact, approximately 60% of households in America have companion animals (Flynn, 2001). This is a paradoxical position of making moral distinctions between the animals that are permissible to eat or kill and those whom we bring into our lives as intimate members of the family (Cronon 2009; Serpell 1996). In North America, we have separated dogs and cats from pigs and cows, disregarding their sentience and intelligence. Carnism is the opposite of veganism; according to Joy (2011) carnism is the silencing of emotions with excuses so that people feel less empathy to consume a product.

Many have followed diet information blindly and have dissociated meat with a sentient animal being. Bandura (1999) postulates that morality can be altered by sanitizing terms, and jargon that better fits with moral values, however, cruel acts themselves remain the same.

People do not ordinarily engage in harmful conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions. In this process of moral justification, detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy or moral purposes” (Bandura, 1999, p. 3).

As a well-planned vegan diet is appropriate for “individuals in all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence and for athletes” (Craig & Mangels, 2009, p. 1266), the justification for eating animals is necessary for continuing to eat them while still maintaining a sense of good moral living. “Moral agency is manifested in both the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and in the proactive power to behave humanly” (Bandura, 1999, p. 193). Many of the YouTubers in the study would agree with Bandura (1999) in that the distancing of moral self-sanctions from cruel conduct is a problem that is continuing to grow on a collective level, and many of them wish to put a stop to this moral disengagement. By leading by example or sharing their animal activist opinions many feel a sense of moral alignment with their eating and lifestyle behaviours since giving up the meat, dairy and eggs. V2, for example, explains how she had to re-piece together the fact that eating animals means killing them:

(V2) “I really have always felt that we are lucky to be humans but that doesn’t mean we have rights over other living beings. And I’ve always thought that way but I’ve never pieced it together, you know, this idea that I shouldn’t be eating those if I really believed that then I shouldn’t be contributing to the death and torture of those animals.”

There is a sense of realization here that many vegans share after finding out that the animals they were eating are sentient beings that feel pain just like pets do. Many feel relieved in no longer turning a blind eye to the cruelty of the industry:

(V2) “I really have no guilt. Even when I haven’t been at all perfect with what I’m eating. I just know that this is such an easy lifestyle to follow forever. And I know that there are so many reasons that are much bigger than me to stay on the lifestyle. Even if

I didn't love all the food that I was eating I would somehow make it work because I really feel committed to this, for reasons both personal and reasons, like I said, that are bigger than me."

V2 discusses how, although she loves eating vegan food, even if she did not like the taste of it she would sacrifice flavour to keep animals off her plate. This theme that has been gathered relates heavily to the ethical side of choosing and staying with veganism. As V1 elates:

(V1) "And that (going vegan) was the best decision I've ever made! And I'm so grateful! Even though at first I went vegan for health I watch Earthlings and other documentaries and I realized how badly animals are treated. They are being treated like dirt. What has it come to when an animal's life is less important than someone's taste buds?"

V3a also talks about the feeling of choosing a lifestyle that is more ethical:

(V3a) "Something inside of us had shifted. Almost a feeling of choosing something that was ethically right. And that had a very, uplifting."

His wife, V3b expands:

(V3b) "...Liberating feeling! And also knowing that you were now starting to go against the majority, going against the grain, going against the tide for the first time in our lives in many respects. So, that was exciting and it was scary at the same time."

(V3b) "Because until you know the truth you're not actually making any decisions. You're not choosing one thing over another you're just doing what you've been indoctrinated into doing from the day you were born by all of our institutions in society. So you don't make a choice until you have got all of the information and then you can choose the cruelty or the compassion. It's as simple as that. So um, we have been vegan for 3.5 years."

Similarly, V4 felt it was time to change after being exposed to documentaries that explained the standards of the animal agricultural industry:

(V4) "It made me really upset, I think that's what changed me, was an emotional reaction to it. I got really sad and I couldn't.... The images of the animals getting like tortured and stuff is just I couldn't get it out of my head. And then straight away after

watching it.... I can't even explain why, I just said then and there 'that's it I'm going vegan' I didn't even think about going vegetarian because it showed the dairy and like egg industry as well and I couldn't ignore that! I just decided like then and there that night it was like 11:30 at night I decided to go vegan."

V5 also explains a type of sudden switch in mental state after adopting a plant-based diet, one that respected the links between all life on earth:

(V5) "But then, at that moment, it felt like finally we had opened our eyes. And everything became so damn clear. It started to feel great living a compassionate life and living loving and caring about other beings on earth."

As eating animal products is so normal many find it difficult to physically stop eating it, V11 explains how she mentally convinces herself to stay away from eating meat and dairy:

(V11) "I just think of the poor cows. And then, it fucking just, the urge (wanting to eat animal products) goes away."

Many vegans find that once they have made an ethical connection between their food and their lifestyle choices that they incorporate it into most of their daily lives by not buying leather or products tested on animals.

(V16) "And I realized that veganism isn't just a diet it's a lifestyle and it's completely 100% against any animal suffering."

V16 suggests that veganism is not just a diet, but it is a protest, and something that you can stand up for:

(V16) "It just feels really good to be able to take a stand for something that you fully support and I actually decided to go vegan on my birthday this past year and I have been vegan ever since!"

After discovering how cows, pigs, and chickens were treated V17 felt as though she could no longer ignore what she had been taught:

(V17) "I found out what was going on in the meat industry and the dairy industry and what was going into those products and how they treated those animals and that like sealed the deal for me, that was like that's it! I can't now as an educated person go back to what I was doing."

V17 also feels as though eating animal products would be putting bad vibes into her body, and she feels particularly better without the animal products.

(V17) “Another one is ethical awareness. I feel good about what I am eating there’s no guilt there. I feel like I am nourishing my body with only positive vibes, I’m not eating a piece of meat from like a tortured animal it’s taking all my negative energy and putting it into my body and making me angry or sick. So um, I feel really good I’m aware. I feel like I’m making a difference when I eat which a lot of people can’t say that.”

These vegans talk about a certain shift in understanding after being exposed to the animal cruelty and the soft jargon used around meat eating. Their morals felt aligned with their actions after refusing to be a part of the supply-chain of the animal agriculture world. The thought of dissociating themselves from the cruelty and death of animals made these vegans feel more at peace with themselves. Many felt “no guilt” around what they now eat, however, they still can feel guilt from their past actions before veganism.

(4) Sense of remorse/sadness from past actions

Most everyone suffers from the ubiquitous feelings of regret and only a few people are free from its hold (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007). Additionally, “regret and relief are counterfactual emotions that rely on the comparison between a reality that is, and an alternative reality that ‘could have been’” (Van Duijenvoorde, Huizenga & Jansen, 2014, p.926). Counterfactual emotions can be viewed as powerful motivators of choice behaviour with which we attempt to minimize regret and rely on counterfactual information to make better decisions (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007). V3a and V3b discuss a situation prior to turning vegan when they were eating dinner with a vegetarian woman. They express feelings of remorse because of their rude comments towards her odd diet:

(V3b) “We just thought she was a complete freak! We actually didn’t speak very nicely to her,”

(V3a) “We were quite nasty to her;”

(V3b) “Just putting her down. We just thought she was a complete freak! We actually didn’t speak very nicely to her. ‘You don’t know what you’re missing out on. Well that’s

sort of your choice, this is delicious, and I'm hungry'"

(V3a)"We really made her out to be a freak. And we look back now it's one of our biggest regrets.

(V3b) "Our stomachs just drop because we now know what that feels like to have those conversations with people and have people react that way to you and our hearts hurt so if you're watching this: we're sorry. We're really sorry that was an awful moment, and a real turning point for us when we look back."

This married couple is mainly speaking of regret, not about eating animals but about making fun of meat-free eaters when they were omnivores. "Regret is a backward-looking emotion signaling an unfavorable evaluation of a decision. It is an unpleasant feeling, coupled with a clear sense of self blame concerning its causes and strong wishes to undo the current situation" (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007, p.3). V3a and V3b have regret about this situation, especially now that they themselves are vegan and have most likely been targeted by such bullying. A large body of literature suggests that participants in bullying events, including victims, bullies, and witnesses, are likely to report psychological adjustment problems (Pepler, O'Connell, Jimmerson, Swearer & Espelage, 2010). This couple felt as though they were bullies to this vegan. Now, with time between this event and the present, they can more easily empathize with her as they, themselves, have changed their diet similarly.

Other psychological problems were discussed by others including feelings of depression prior to veganism:

(V1) "I followed my doctor's advice and I did start eating a lot of red meat. A lot. I had red meat every single day in huge amounts in hopes to get my iron levels up. And, I did get my iron levels up but I also experienced extreme side effects from eating so much meat everyday. I felt lethargic, I felt tired, I felt in need of naps. I felt, I don't want to say depressed, because I was not clinically diagnosed as depressed but that's the best word I can describe mentally – sad for a very long period of time. I felt like I had no interest in doing anything. I liked sleeping best because I didn't have to go out and do stuff or socialize with people. Basically, I felt like crap."

V1 also felt worse mentally as an omnivore:

(V1) “I felt really bad about myself. It (eating meat) really impacted my self-esteem.”

V1 was a vegetarian before she went to meat eating, and she did this because she fell in love with a man who also ate meat. Since this couple is no longer together she expresses feelings of guilt around her choice to begin eating meat.

V2 expresses her feelings of guilt around food while she was struggling with an eating disorder:

(V2) “I had been someone who really restricted calories and over exercised in order to lose weight, and I’ve talked about this in other videos. And I just felt so much guilt around food; I didn’t have a good relationship with food. I was either restricting or I was binging I had very little control and I just couldn’t understand why it was so hard for me to you know not eat tons of junk food and not feel guilty about food. And I just saw other people who made it seem so effortless for them to stay thin. So that was something that really pulled me towards the lifestyle, not only because I had this big health issue but also the weight-loss results and the overall health that people were achieving on this lifestyle.”

Similarly, V8 explains a similar past:

(V8) “...before I found veganism I was going through a difficult stage in my battle with disorderly eating and irrational behavior around food which is now the loosely used act of binge eating. I won’t go as far as revealing to you that it was a seven-month battle at its worst.”

These vegans talk about their past with negative connotations, however their stories have happy endings as they found veganism which helped cure their eating disorders.

V4 talks about the past and loving meat and how she tried to convince her friend to eat meat:

(V4) “She was vegetarian, and I loved meat. And I used to try and convince her to eat meat again. I’m the devil, I really am!”

This is particularly interesting as we can understand how ingrained meat eating is in the hegemonic culture, even vegans used to try to convince non-meat eaters to indulge in the flesh

if animals.

Many feel such a sense of relief from eating a vegan diet that they wish they had found it sooner:

(V5) “Me and my family have been vegan since last April. The only regret and the biggest regret is that we have not been vegan longer. A few years already I was quite interested in nutrition and health and always trying to be healthy. But the biggest information I missed out on, the biggest truth was, about animal products.”

V16 also expresses regret in not learning about veganism earlier in life:

(V16) “...my only regret is that I didn’t go vegan sooner and look more into the research and I never have cravings for animal products and I never have a desire to eat an animal product ever again. Ever.”

V6 explains that she just felt disgusted with the thought of eating meat and refers to it as “dead animal” or the “insides”:

(V6) “So initially it wasn’t anything to do with like ‘I want to save the animals’ or any health reasons. I just was disgusted at the thought of eating the remains and the insides and the parts of dead animals – it just didn’t sit well with me and I could not do it anymore.”

V6 discusses how eating meat never came naturally to her, even when she did consume animal products she felt it was disgusting.

On a different note V11 looks back into his past and explains a bit of his life before he found veganism:

(V11) “I’m going back from when I was 18, you know I got into a lot of trouble; to the point where I went to jail for a little bit. Um, I went to jail for a little while I spent weekends in jail, cuz I had a job and my boss fought for me to stay out. During the week I still partied, and I, my life wasn’t changing at all and I saw myself going down this downhill spiral and following the paths of people who were close to me, so, you

know the last day of jail I got out and it was party time man.”

V11 experienced a past of heavy alcohol abuse along with a lot of meat eating. He discusses how veganism saved him from this downward spiral. Similarly, V12 struggled with maintaining his health and keeping up with the party scene; for him veganism shifted his life into a health oriented one:

(V12) “And, so you can imagine this was quite taxing on the body, being in that environment; people aren’t into fitness, people aren’t into healthy eating. Um, it’s about having the best time on a Saturday night as you can get. My fitness was non-existent. I was focused on dance music and going out.”

(V12) “I got into brewing my own beer so I got alcohol still and I had vodka on tap anytime I wanted. This was a bad idea because my drinking really increased; it was on tap I could have it any time I wanted it was pretty much for free, so it was very hard to say no. And you know I wasn’t going out at the time I thought um I could be at home and I could have a few drinks and that was fine but it could have turned quite ugly. I didn’t become a professional alcoholic but I certainly binge drunk every single weekend.”

These vegans seem to plug deviancies such as alcohol and drug abuse in the same box as carnism, which could be true in terms of physical and mental health.

V12 also discusses his past actions and feelings towards killing an animal during his childhood, which he explains he did not enjoy:

(V12) “Being from a European family, unfortunately I had to be involved with actually killing animals which is one of those things that I really think doesn’t come naturally to a human and I was helping my Dad it was a big pig or what not and I had to help him and I hated doing it.”

The act of killing a pig had always settled wrongly for V12, but many of his feelings had to be suppressed to comply by the hegemonic norms within carnism.

V16 has an interesting background in veganism as she grew up as a vegetarian and began eating

meat in university because she was dating a meat eater. She expresses a lot of guilt from those meat eating days:

(V16) “But at this point in my life I didn’t really have a lot of self confidence and I wasn’t really sure about myself and I was kind of trying to fit in with the crowd so unfortunately I fell pray to pros of consumerism and the meat industry and I started to eat meat.”

She continues:

(V16) “Ugh! What was I thinking?! And honestly I felt absolutely horrible when I was doing this; I was super bloated I just felt really sluggish and lethargic and I also feel like deep down even though I hadn’t made an ethical connection with not eating animals yet something just felt wrong when I was eating meat like it just, I just didn’t like it, at all...but, ya looking back I 100% regret this decision and wish that I could take it all back. Because now I’ll never be one of those cool kids that has never eaten meat in their life.”

Baird (2008) explains that knowing and feeling that something is morally wrong are not the same things. Generally, most people feel guilt within their lives, and a lot of guilt is found when your morals do not align with your actions. These vegan YouTubers all found remorse in their pasts, but for the most part, they felt more aligned in the present through veganism.

(5) Educating themselves

The standard practices and norms of the animal industry are not broadcasted on commercials and on milk cartons for the public to see, and most likely for good reason. The animal agriculture industry refrains from showing the actual killing of a cow on a commercial, as this might not provide a positive purchase impact. According to Simon (2017), every year U.S. Department of Agriculture-managed programs spend \$550 million to supply Americans with catchy slogans to urge people to buy more animal products, and these slogans are effective at making people buy even more than they need. Vegans can find out about the standard practices within the industry through documentaries, undercover footage often supplied by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) or from user generated content on YouTube. Many of these vegans were exposed to documentaries like Forks Over Knives, Cowspiracy, and

Earthlings, which changed their entire mindset around meat-eating. Others were exposed to vegans on YouTube who talked about veganism and preached the importance of vegan education. Although veganism is steadily on the rise (Google Trends, 2017), many people find a lack of information around the topic and must increase their knowledge about the areas of health, ethics and the environment. Having knowledge about health is a great defense mechanism for avoiding social disapproval from surrounding communities and close friends and family (McNair, 2001). Additionally, vegans can seek out social support from other like-minded individuals and find that many others are knowledgeable about health, the environment and ethics surrounding veganism (McNair, 2001). Learning enables people to improve the ability to connect with the internal and external environment and helps to achieve the stated and unstated goals and objectives (Want, Gray & Meister, 2014). YouTube is easily accessible for most North Americans and is simple way to gather information quickly.

The advances in technology made it possible for individuals to develop content for different learning purposes and make the same available to other learners... YouTube [is] a repository of learning resources for use by individuals for self-driven learning purposes” (Chintalapati & Daruri, 2016, p.4).

This new way of collecting information seems to be very important in the online vegan movement. V1 explains how she was first interested in health and eliminating seemingly unhealthy foods from her diet and at the same time she was introduced to veganism through a popular YouTuber:

(V1) “Also I became really interested in health, I just thought if I could have eliminated dairy and gluten and reduce my meat consumption, is there anything else that I could eliminate and feel even better? At that same time, I saw information about vegan lifestyle. I think it was Essena O’Neill who linked all the videos about the vegan lifestyle, and I watched all of them. I was like ‘I’m doing that’ and I went vegan overnight.”

V4 fell into veganism in a similar way after seeing Essena O’Neill on YouTube talking about the documentary called Earthlings:

(V4) “So starting off about last year in January, I followed Essena O’Neill (YouTuber)

for a very long time and she posted something about a documentary called Earthlings and I decided to watch it, curiosity got the better of me! And I watched the first fifteen minutes and I was like crying like ‘oh my god I have to go vegetarian, this is horrible!’” V2 felt as though documentaries were not quite enough for her so she read books as well to better round out her knowledge:

(V2) “So, I did probably about six months of research, I was doing a bit of travelling and things like that and I wasn’t ready to jump right in. And I really believed it that this was going to work, and I did a lot of research from McDougall and Gregor and they talk a lot about inflammatory arthritis. I read everything that I could find, I watched all the videos, I downloaded e-books. So, by the time I actually committed to a vegan diet I was, there was no question in my mind that this was what was going to work.”

V5 stumbled upon veganism as she was researching healthier ways of living. She describes a sudden switch of that happened after watching vegan documentaries:

(V5) “The last two years, there always felt like there was something off about the food and the nutrition at our house. So, I kind of started researching more and more and one day I stumbled upon veganism and one day it kinda it all started making so much sense. And the more I researched the more it became clearer. We watched some documentaries about just food in general, about processed food, about convenience food, the more we found out the more we wanted to know. So, we watched some vegan documentaries. And then it was just like ‘click’ we could not bear the idea of not being vegan anymore, it just all seemed so wrong.”

V6 was also awakened to animal agriculture through a documentary whereby she now thinks that she will never go back to eating meat:

(V6) “I have also seen a few documentaries on the farming industry and how they breed these animals how they treat them how they slaughter them and it is just so eye opening the way that we get our food. That also makes me not want to go back to eating meat...”

Forks Over Knives is a documentary that shows “how rapidly health can be restored without drugs, medications, and surgical procedures” (Campbell & Esselstyn, 2011) through a plant-based diet. V12 watched this documentary and life changed drastically from one day to the

next:

(V12) “Not long after that I watched a documentary called Forks Over Knives this really cemented the deal for me and um it made such an impression on me that I turned vegan overnight.”

V14 had a similar experience to V12 in that their switch to veganism happened quite drastically after being exposed to video footage regarding veganism:

(V14) “Once I had finished this speech (“The Best Speech Ever”) um I think I was redirected to some other videos it was a graphic video um with inside footage into the egg and dairy industries and I watched some of it, I watched about 30 seconds of it. But I just thought to myself then and there if I can’t watch male chicks being thrown into a grinder, um cows being raped, and animals being slaughtered in an abattoir, animals being tested on for cosmetics and in laboratories why am I supporting it? And then I went vegan, just like that.”

V15 also felt a need to drastically alter her eating habits after watching a documentary called Food Inc:

(V15) “Um, lets see back in 2009, early 2009 it had just been New Years had just come along, somehow I stumbled upon a documentary maybe it was Food Inc. it was one of those earlier documentaries and it wasn’t one of the really really intense gruesome ones yet. And I watched it and I basically went vegetarian overnight I completely cut out all meat products I maybe had a slip up once or twice since then um but other than that I’ve been 100% vegetarian since 2009 uh so, that was uh, you know, 7 years ago.”

V16 was interested in the health of veganism through watching documentaries like Forks Over Knives and Vegucated but did not truly make an ethical connection until after watching Earthlings:

(V16) “So I decided to actually do my research and educate myself about veganism I started with watching few documentaries about the more health aspects like Vegucated and Forks Over Knives, and you know I thought like “Wow, veganism is healthy, veganism is cool,” but I still didn’t really make the full connection but then I decided to go fully into it and I watched Earthlings and I was absolutely devastated to find out

about the cruelty of the meat, dairy and egg industries and the tortures that animals have to go through in order for humans to use them.”

V15 had to force herself to watch *Earthlings* to make her stay vegan as she was an on again off again vegan and wanted to fully commit:

(V15) “and I had gone off and on vegan throughout then until somebody just inspired me and it really just hit me hard and I decided to really really educate myself and not turn away from the screen at a part that I didn’t want to see in *Earthlings* or whatever. I just watched everything I could possibly find on the topic even if it was very hard to watch which a lot of it was.”

Here a man and his wife discuss how they first discovered veganism:

(V3b) “We couldn’t go back. We went back to our room after watching the movie (*Diet for a New America*) and just looked at each other and went ‘can’t do it, its wrong!’”

(V3a) “We had started to read up on nutrition in that six-month period. And we started becoming aware on the devastating effects of to our health on dairy and eggs.”

(V3b) “And that one-hour speech (Gary Yuroufsky “Best Speech Ever”), pffffff that’s it! That’s what did it for us! We watched it and we were crying towards the end and just like it took one video, one documentary to turn us vegetarian, it only took the one-hour speech to turn us vegan. And we looked at each other at the end of that speech and went ‘it stops now’”

Other vegans took a more scholarly approach and decided to do online research into veganism to better support potential backlash from their omnivore friends. This is a way of fighting the hegemonic narratives within carnism:

(V8) “My main tip (to transitioning to veganism) is to research. Before you start spreading the vegan message you need to have a solid foundation as to why you choose to live this way. There is going to be many people who are going to be against the idea of being vegan. But all I can say is to insure you know your facts.”

V7 understands that the clear majority of people are just going to be generally curious about how someone lives with animal products, but she suggests doing research and understanding

statistics to inform others:

(V7) “I mean, I am so much more confident in being vegan and proud of being vegan now that I’ve done my research even more into what people may ask me I mean, people are going to ask you ‘what do you eat’ and just tell them! There’s no need to hide it. If they ask you why, tell them why. You know, maybe tell them about some of the animal cruelty stuff. Give them some statistics if you have any.”

V13 talks about how her family started a website that promotes healthy plant-based eating that is backed by doctors who also support this type of diet:

(V13) “After our mom got well our parents started website called vegsource.com and they shared my mom’s story and throughout the years we’ve met a lot of doctors who also support eating this lifestyle and I’ve come to learn that I’m really happy I eat this way. Because of the knowledge I have from them and we love to share it with you guys.”

YouTube is a great source for spreading user-generated content, and it can change the way people think and act:

(V14) “One night my friend Grace who was vegan, still is vegan, she sent me a video which was a link to um Gary Yurovski and he’s talking to this um reporter. He was pretty much just pointing out how her arguments against veganism were wrong. I just watched her and I was just sort of like well why aren’t I vegan?”

V4 reaffirms that she is a walking textbook on veganism, and she feels proud of this fact:

(V4) “It’s absolutely the best decision I’ve ever made and so I just think that I’ve done so much research. I’m like a walking text book on it, I just know all the facts...”

Documentaries, and sharing vegan lifestyles on YouTube can help expand the knowledge behind veganism and potentially take away many of the stereotypes and stigmatism around the ‘v’ word. Educating both vegans themselves and the public of the reasons behind going and staying vegan could improve the overall quality of life for vegans socially but also improve the health of the public and of the planet.

Discussion

The themes that emerged from these videos are important to further understand vegans and

more specifically, to understand the mechanisms that force them to feel as though they do not have community within the dominant culture. An interdisciplinary approach to understanding the vegan YouTube movement is critical in grasping this phenomenon more fully. Bridging the gaps between Anthropology, Communications and Health is an effective way to gather all important factors within this subject. To understand the vegan movement from solely one discipline would not address all the factors that emerged from listening to these vegan stories. The results that were found were not very surprising to the researcher, what was surprising was the vast amount of personal details that these YouTubers shared with the public. Sharing personal stories and details might be a hint as to why six videos were deleted prior to the researcher transcribing their words. It is possible that these accounts of veganism might have been targets for online bullying, or maybe the YouTubers had changed ideals and no longer felt as though their story fit their persona anymore.

The five themes are important to grasping veganism as a lifestyle, and not simply a diet choice. The implications of taking animal products out of one's diet does not start and stop on the plate; there are numerous different avenues that are affected by the food we choose to put, or not put into our meals. Going forward, researchers and the public alike should attempt to look at vegans without stigmatization, prejudice and simply as humans just like them. Although veganism is a choice, one that is most often only possible when living in a wealthy society with access to health food, it is a choice that has implications far beyond the individual. If our planet is being harmed by the animal agriculture industry, if innocent lives are being taken away for our taste buds, and if our society is slowly dying from animal products then something needs to change. It is possible, however, that it is not the diets and lifestyles of mainstream society that needs to change first, but in fact their *perception* of veganism. Within the themes that materialized an interdisciplinary approach to understanding was necessary, to touch on each theme with accuracy. Veganism as a way of life touches on many disciplines, including, but not limited to Anthropology, Health and Communications.

Future Research

The realm of vegan research is highly under researched. There are many aspects within the cultural movement that can be studied. The researcher remains curious as to why six of the

videos that were chosen were deleted within the year of study. Additionally, the researcher came across three YouTube videos that were satirical in nature. These sarcastic videos were making fun of the naivety that omnivores sometimes carry around the vegan subject and drew in common misconceptions such as vitamin deficiencies, general weakness, and lethargy. This type of video could be interesting to research to understand its effects within the vegan movement.

Limitations of the study

YouTube videos offer an insight into the online world that could not be accessed as easily from a location like Kamloops, BC, Canada. There are limitations to conducting research from YouTube videos. Such limitations include the lack of interaction between the researcher and the subjects. Questions were not asked to the subjects for further probing which may have been a large limitation for the research. The researcher also came across six videos that were not used for quotes, and one that was that were deleted before March 20, 2017. This could be a particularly interesting phenomenon of itself, however, it was out of the scope of research. A lack of time was also a limitation for the researcher as this research paper was not the only important focus during this process.

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APPENDIX

Vlogs Transcribed

Title: My Vegan Story

YouTuber: Annie Tarasova (V1)

Video since deleted

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdfFDBdDYZU>

“HI guys, and welcome to my first YouTube video ever! I thought a good idea for a first video would be to tell you guys how and why exactly I went vegan. A couple of times I have mentioned these on my social media accounts but I haven’t gone into detail, which is what I’m going to do now. Basically it all began when me and my mom went to get a blood test. It turned out that I was like on the edge of being anemic, which isn’t a good thing. So my doctor suggested that I eat a lot of red meat. I followed my doctor’s advice and I did start eating a lot of red meat. A lot. I had red meat every single day in huge amounts in hopes to get my iron levels up. And, I did get my iron levels up but I also experienced extreme side effects from eating so much meat everyday. I felt lethargic, I felt tired, I felt in need of naps. I felt, I don’t want to say depressed, because I was not clinically diagnosed as depressed but that’s the best word I can describe mentally – sad for a very long period of time. I felt like I had no interest in doing anything. I liked sleeping best because I didn’t have to go out and do stuff or socialize with people. Basically, I felt like crap. And I was feeling so shitty mentally (#4) I also had some physical side effects. And surprisingly I didn’t gain weight, but I did have really bad skin problems. And it wasn’t normal acne or pimples it was this extreme dryness around my mouth. My skin would flake. I felt really bad about myself. It really impacted my self-esteem. (#4) In order to ‘fix myself’ me and my mom went to a naturopath and basically she changed my life. As well as how I felt physically I told her about how bad I was feeling mentally. I just opened up to her and I told her things that I didn’t even tell my mom. And what she told me to do was eliminate all dairy products, quit gluten and stop eating so much meat. THANK YOU, thank you naturopath lady! You changed my life! I did that, and my skin went back to normal within three months, and with that mentally I felt

amazing. I had so much energy – I wanted to see people, I wanted to do stuff. I was just a really positive person (#2). Also I became really interested in health, I just thought if I could eliminate dairy and gluten and reduce my meat consumption, is there anything else that I could eliminate and feel even better? At that same time I saw information about vegan lifestyle. I think it was Essena O'Neill who linked all the videos about the vegan lifestyle, and I watched all of them. I was like 'I'm doing that' and I went vegan overnight(#6). Which wasn't that difficult because all I needed to do was eliminate eggs and completely stop eating meat and fish and honey. But, that wasn't hard. And that was the best decision I've ever made! And I'm so grateful! Even though at first I went vegan for health I watch Earthlings and other documentaries and I realized how badly animals are treated. They are being treated like dirt. What has it come to when an animal's life is less important than someone's taste buds?(#3) So, in the description box I will include links to videos that I first watched when I was transitioning to the vegan lifestyle, I hope this was interesting to listen. Thanks for watching and bye!"

Title: How Veganism SAVED ME + My Vegan Story

YouTuber: Sugar and Starch (V2)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90zWHvI6mjc>

"Hey guys, it's Lauren here. So today I'm going to be talking to you about my vegan story- I guess you can call it, or exactly how I came to be vegan. And I've actually done a video like this already, but I think it was the second video that I ever did. And it's just super awkward and shaky and its way too long, its kinda funny to go back and look at it. I was at a meet up on the weekend and I had someone ask me how I became vegan and it occurred to me that its something that I want to re-do because I know lots of people will not have watched that video. Um basically I, so I was somebody who never considered a vegan diet, or even a vegetarian diet, not once did I think 'maybe I'm going to cut out meat'. It just wasn't something that interested me. And I really had this notion that vegans were these being this extremist group, like what everybody thinks. It's really funny looking back.. Probably about six months before going vegan I sat in a restaurant with a couple of friends from work and one of them had just gone vegan and she was really struggling trying to find something on the menu I remember turning to the other person we were with and saying 'I could never go vegan' and low and behold six months later I'm like, I dunno, a few weeks into a vegan diet, I'm already thinking about a youtube chanel – I'm just I've really come around, I've educated myself and so ya, I'm gonna sorta tell you what took place in order for that to happen to me. Um, I've never been what I would consider an animal lover, I have the utmost of respect for animals but um it was never a huge motivator to me before I educated myself (#6). I'm allergic to just about everything that walks on four legs I don't have a lot of patience or time for house pets, unless they're extremely well behaved and ya I just didn't that was not a huge motivator for me was the animals rights part of it. This was really before I had done very much to educate myself and I can actually remember being quite young ten or twelve even and thinking that just because I was human didn't make me feel superior to other beings, to other animals. I really have always felt that we are lucky to be humans but that doesn't mean we have rights over other living beings. And I've always thought that way

but I've never pieced together, you know, this idea that I shouldn't be eating those if I really believed that then I shouldn't be contributing to the death and torture of those animals. (#3)

So basically, I started researching a vegan diet because I had been in Australia for a couple of months, only a couple of months when I started to experience joint pains in my wrist and um it was kinda an on and off kinda thing. It went from being this mild pain that I would experience in the morning, like some morning stiffness. To being like I couldn't lift things that weighed more than a couple of pounds with one hand. I couldn't lift my laptop. I would get shooting pains some mornings from like brushing my hair. I really didn't have **this** motion (turning doorhandle motion) when it was bad. I couldn't turn doorknobs, things like that. And that probably took about a year from being this mild, I honestly thought I was sleeping on my wrists funny for the longest time, and I just pushed it out of my head. So to getting from there from getting to, you know being in quite a lot of pain and knowing that I needed to do something about it. But I still pushed it off until I started experiencing it in my knees. And I knew it was connected because when my wrists hurt, my knees would hurt. And as soon as I started having difficulties walking I just knew that I needed to do something about it at that point. And I needed to start seeing doctors. And when I would get inflamed it was very painful, and I was only 25 at this point, so this is a serious issue to be having at the age of 25 and I know I've talked about this in my other videos. I know a lot of people won't have heard any of this. So I started going to a couple of different doctors and I got blood work and xrays and all that sorta thing. And I was in Australia so all of this was pretty expensive for me. And I had done quite a lot of research into what it might be before going to the doctors and I had personally decided that it was probably a sort of inflammatory arthritis. So when I did get my blood work results back and my x-rays back the first doctor I had gone to see said 'You're fine, there's nothing in here that's conclusive' and just kinda sent me on my way and at first I'm thinking 'great, I'm healthy' but the next morning I wake up and I can barely open the door to go to the bathroom. Anyway so I took those same results to the next doctor and he said 'you do have slightly elevated rheumatoid factor and from what you're describing to me this is probably the beginning of inflammatory arthritis or rheumatoid arthritis. So I never went so far as to get an official diagnosis, because the only thing that that was going to do for me was first of all cost a lot of money because I was going to need MRI scans. Some people chase a diagnosis for five or ten years. And the other thing it was going to do, even if I could get a diagnosis, was something that was going to give me prescription medication, which I didn't want because I was 25 and I just refused to believe that there was nothing I could do. You know that I was going to be on this medication, maybe forever. So I did some of my own research and I swear it was 'diet and arthritis' in google and it was like boom up came a lot about cutting out meat and dairy and eggs and basically following a whole foods, plant based diet. And this at first just really freaked me out. Because like I had said I was never someone who really considered a vegan diet as an option. But the more I researched it and then I found people on Youtube, like Freelee and watching what they were eating really appealed to me. And I had been someone who was really interested in nutrition for a long time. But I never really found something that interested me. **I had been someone who really restricted calories and over exercised in order to lose weight, and I've talked about this in other videos. And I just felt so much guilt around food, I didn't have a good relationship with food. I was either restricting or I was binging I had very little control and I just couldn't**

understand why it was so hard for me to you know not eat tons of junk food and not feel guilty about food. And I just saw other people who made it seem so effortless for them to stay thin. So that was something that really pulled me towards the lifestyle, not only because I had this big health issue but also the weightloss results and the overall health that people were achieving on this lifestyle.(#4) So, I did probably about six months of research, I was doing a bit of travelling and things like that and I wasn't ready to jump right in. And I really believed it that this was going to work, and I did a lot of research from McDougall and Gregor and they talk a lot about inflammatory arthritis. I read everything that I could find, I watched all the videos, I downloaded e-books. So by the time I actually committed to a vegan diet I was, there was no question in my mind that this was what was going to work.(#6) And I didn't feel like I had another option because I was in a lot of pain at that point, um, I wasn't exercising, I was spending whole days just being very immobile because it really hurt to get around. Fast forward probably three or four months – it did take about that long to see results in my pain levels. And I have a full videos about that process about how it got a whole lot worse before it got better for me. And then give another couple of months after that and I had lost quite a bit of weight, I was starting to feel really really good, I had gone to the Fruit Festival, I had gotten a bike, all that sort of thing (#2). I have a whole nother video on that if you want to check that out! Um ya, so that's how I came to this lifestyle. It was about health for me, and in the beginning that really helped me to sort of come out to my friends as a vegan, I had a lot of anxiety over the social aspects of telling people that I was vegan, its funny how even today I tell someone that I'm vegan and they immediately seem almost like, put off by it and then they start asking me about it and I'll say 'oh well I had this you know this joint pain issue and this has resolved it' and its like they immediately feel better about themselves because its not something that I originally did for the moral side of it, I have a lot of respect for people that see the information and go vegan overnight, because I don't think that I was strong enough to do that at the time (#1). Now its something that I'm very proud of, and I often don't even tell people about the health issue side of it. But ya, one thing that I sorta missed to mention was that when I started getting on board with the idea of going vegan I did everything I could to educate myself on all aspects of this lifestyle and I watched Earthings, which was really hard for me, as it is most people. I watched (Cowspiracy hadn't come out yet) but of course I watched Forks Over Knives and Vegucated and all that and everything that I could do to educate myself on reasons to go vegan and stay vegan. I just became so interested in it. And I think that if I had found it even before having any reason, any health reason to find it it would have been something that really stood out to me and I would have very much considered even if I hadn't had to make such a drastic change in my health. So in that regard I almost wish that I had found it earlier, but on the same note I'm actually grateful that sort of the path that has lead me to this lifestyle and everything that it has done for me. Both in terms of my health but also my mental status when it comes to food and how I feel about myself I just feel like so much more confident and I had such anxiety around food before and I really don't anymore. I really have no guilt, even when I haven't been at all perfect with what I'm been eating. I just know that this is such an easy lifestyle to follow forever and I just know that there are so many reasons that are so much bigger than me to stay on the lifestyle. Even if I didn't love all food that I was eating I would somehow make it work because I really feel committed to this for reasons both personal and reasons, like I

said that are bigger than me. (#3) So ,Anyway, I really didn't want to make this video long and it's already as long as the first awkward video I made. But ya, I hope you guys enjoyed, and I'm very very thankful that I found a vegan lifestyle. It's not something that I ever would have imagined for myself. So anyways, that's my vegan story for you guys, I hope you enjoyed it. I hope I'm not missing anything; it would have to be a new video because this is way too long. Ok, thank you guys for watching, I hope you enjoyed and Ill see you next time!

Title: My Vegan Story – married omnivores turn vegan!

YouTuber: That Vegan Couple (V3)

Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= S9UZCptxVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9UZCptxVg)

Italics: Man (V3a)

Regular: Woman (V3b)

Hi guys, so we've been watching other peoples' 'My Vegan Story' videos and we've been really enjoying them, so we thought we would contribute our own. Our vegan story is somewhat unique in that we went vegan together. Just to set the scene, we weren't vegan let alone vegetarian; we were raised on the standard western diet. We both came from families of European background. Natasha's in particular has a huge emphasis on eating meat. If you get out a Lonely Planet guide for Masadonia; it said Masadonians love their meat. If you want vegetables, don't go to Romania and that's on page one of the lonely planet guide. Um, meat was very much ingrained in both of our cultures and I know that for my thirtieth birthday I just had this dream of having my own lamb on a spit. So that pretty much sets the scene for how we were raised.

Meat, dairy and eggs flowing through our veins just like it does for the majority of people. We remember traveling in Turkey one time and we were with a couple of other travelers that we met and we were sitting down to some lamb-cabobs and there was a girl who joined us and she was eating a pomegranate fruit for dinner. And we thought this was the strangest thing. And she started talking to us about the fact that she doesn't eat meat; she was vegetarian. And this was really bizarre for us, because here we were enjoying a lamb cabobs and this vegetarian started telling us about all the difficulties she was having with her vegetarian diet and with her parents who they really wanted her to 'be normal' and she was opening her heart and expressing herself and eating this beautiful pomegranate and the four of us Luca and I and the two other travelers, we just thought she was a complete freak. We actually didn't speak very nicely to her.

We were quite nasty

Just putting her down and really you know you don't know what you're missing out on well that's sort of your choice and this is delicious and I'm hungry. And I couldn't live on fruit and whatever else you people eat.

We really made her out to be a freak. And we look back now its one of our biggest regrets. (#4)

Our stomachs just drop because we now know what that feels like to have those conversations with people and have people react that way to you and our hearts hurt so if you're watching this we're sorry. We're really sorry that was an awful moment, and a real turning point for us when we look back. (#4) When we look back on it we could have gone either way, but we didn't choose the light we continued down the path of darkness.

And shortly after that experience in Turkey we had booked ourselves into an ashram in India for a three month period and we knew that the ashram had a vegetarian diet there and so what we did was what we did was actually load up on meat in Europe before going to India for that three month period thinking 'well we better get all of our iron in now'

...and protein!

Exactly, because we're not going to have any for three months!

So we get to the ashram and we are thinking we're completely devoid of all all nutrients – protein, iron, everything. And we were walking around thinking theres not enough iron, I don't have any protein. And we were really complaining, it was just awful awful awful. We had full intentions of going back to eating meat and dairy and eggs as soon as we left the ashram.

We couldn't wait really!

I was obsessed, sitting in meditation. All I could think about was sausages, and lambchops and hamburgers. I was meditating on barbecues! I could not wait, I had the taste in my mouth, I could smell it! Really really, it was so engrained in our beings at that point, um and then six weeks in...

They screened 'Diet for a New America' which was a documentary film on basically animal agriculture and it was the first thing that we had ever seen about the animal agriculture industry. And ya, in one hour, the host went through why eating animals was bad for our health. How cruel and violent it was towards the animals. And how devastating it was on the environment. And at the end of that one hour, there was about 300 people watching the vast majority of whom must have been vegetarian because there was a rapturous round of applause at the conclusion of the film. Meanwhile Natasha and I just sorta looked at each other and went 'what is this? What did we witness? What had we just seen?' We recall feeling angry, because why had it taken 28 years for us to see and be shown this information. And also angry that now we would have to change our meat, dairy and egg eating ways having just seen what we had seen.

We couldn't go back. We went back to our room after watching the movie and just looked at

each other and went ‘can’t do it, its wrong!’(#6) How can you see that and then say ‘oh ya but somehow im not a part of that, im not a part of that equation. It wasn’t possible. It was interesting though, we were really angry, and felt this bloody hell, really? But there was this lightness inside of us. Our hearts were beating really fast and it was like a nervous energy was moving through us. It was almost like going on a first date where you’re nervous but youre excited and your thinking about all the possibilities! And you’re like Oh my God whats going to happen. It was kinda like that, like a first love type of feeling!

Something inside of us had shifted. Almost a feeling of choosing something that was ethically right. And that had a very, uplifting,

Liberating feeling! And also knowing that you were now starting to go against the majority, going against the grain, going against the tide for the first time in our lives in many respects. So, that was exciting and it was scary at the same time.(#3) So we remained vegetarian for two years, we continued eating a lot of eggs and a lot of dairy. We found that when we took all of the meat out of our diet the eggs intake went up quite dramatically.

Because at this point we really didn’t still understand nutrition. And so we thought that we needed the dairy and eggs for you know iron and protein and what have you.

And then there was, after those two years there was a 6 month period were we started phasing out dairy and eggs.

We had started to read up on nutrition in that six month period. And we started becoming aware on the devastating effects of to our health on dairy and eggs.

We didn’t yet know about the dairy and eggs industries. We had heard, well, there were points even that we were vegetarians, we didn’t even know what vegan was. We didn’t really even understand that that was even an option. And then the more we looked to the health aspect and we came across other resources we came across Gary Yourovskys speech The Best Speech Ever on Youtube.

On the 26th of August 2011!

And that one-hour speech, pfffft that’s it! That’s what did it for us! We watched it and we were crying towards the end and just like it took one video, one documentary to turn us vegetarian, it only took the one hour speech to turn us vegan. And we looked at each other at the end of that speech and went ‘it stops now’(#6)

He connected the remaining dots for us. And um, just as compelling as that first documentary had been this was equally as compelling. There was just not choice left to be made it had already been made for us! And so, I remember we sent an email to every contact that we had and said ‘look guys, we have just watched this documentary we are going vegan from this point on we strongly encourage everyone of you to watch it as well and hopefully make the

same choice that we have. We were a little nervous because we knew that it was not going to be received that well by quite a number of people but we said we had a moral obligation that we had just come across. Because it shouldn't be withheld from people, people have the right to know so that they're informed and they can make informed choices.

Because until you know the truth you're not actually making any decisions. You're not choosing one thing over another you're just doing what you've been indoctrinated into doing from the day you were born by all of our institutions in society. So you don't make a choice until you have got all of the information and then you can choose the cruelty or the compassion. It's as simple as that. So um, we have been vegan for 3.5 years.(#3)

And I can honestly say, outside of meeting Natasha my life path partner, of 17 years, going vegan was easily the best decision I've made in my life. And I know that [Natasha] would probably relate. There's nothing like it.

Ya. And that was what's so amazing, as you said at the beginning of this video was making this decision together, this journey together. So, for the health side of veganism "Forks of Knives" is the documentary you want to watch, we will put links down below. For the ethical side of veganism: "Earthlings" again you can watch this free online, we will put the link below. And for the environment:

Cowspiracy.

Link down below! So, three areas covered! If you're concerned about the state of the world or social injustice the un-fairness that we're seeing. Awful conditions that people are living in.

Starving people!

Just horrible and violence, there's so much violence happening at the moment! We have to remember that we reap what we sow. So if we are sowing seeds of suffering in animals...

...The most defenseless, innocent beings amongst us.

150 million animals slaughtered every year just for food. And we are ingesting that, we are putting that into our bodies. And what we eat we become. It becomes ourselves.

You know, you are what you eat. Every culture has that saying.

If we can do this to animals we can do this to each other, no problem.

And we have to make that connection! And if you wouldn't do it to your dog or your cat your family pet. Why would we do it to other animals? Why would we pay people to do it to other animals.

All beings feel the same way. They all experience joy, they all experience pain. They all just want to live out their purpose. And their life purpose is not to end up on our plates.

Their lives interests are just as important to them as ours are to us.

Exactly!

So guys, that's our vegan story, we hope you've enjoyed hearing it. We've certainly enjoyed sharing it with you, and we hope its given you some ideas and some inspiration, if you aren't already vegan to make that change. Again, watch the documentaries listed in the description below.

Thank you so much for watching please give this video a thumbs up and subscribe if you haven't already and we'll see you next time. Bye for now!

Title: MY VEGAN STORY / Bethany Quinnell

YouTuber: Bethany Quinnell (V4)

Video since deleted.

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFSsISP5-Y>

Hey guys! Its been so long since I've filmed! How long has it been since I've done a sit down video? A long time! This video is a bit different from the ones that I usually do, fucking hell! Giggle

My family is talking in the background, I apologize for that. I figured I would just quickly film this video because its getting dark and Sage has to go out (points to her friend behind the camera).

This is "My Vegan Story". The reason I'm making this video is because lately, if you can't already tell I haven't really been uploading videos. Because I'm not happy with the videos I've been making, I feel like, I just feel like everyones been making the types of videos that Ive been making and I just feel like I don't really care too much for it. And I started youtube to spread the vegan message and make videos about things that I like and things that I enjoy watching myself. And so, the videos ive been making , pffft, they aren't me, and I'm so over them! Im not saying that this channel is going to completely change, but it's going to be different.

Veganism is a very big part of my life. If anyone knows me in person, its all I ever talk about, so I figure rather than annoying everyone in my personal life I could make videos about it because theres people that are interested online, I guess. (#1)

So starting off about last year in January, I followed Essena O'Neill for a very long time and

she posted something about a documentary called Earthings and I decided to watch it, curiosity got the better of me! And I watched the first fifteen minutes and I was like crying like ‘oh my god I have to go vegetarian, this is horrible!’ (#5) And then that night I told mom and she said we were having BBQ meat lovers pizza for dinner, and I was like ‘okay!’ That’s how that went... And then for a year up until February the next year I was eating meat everything like that, and I put on a lot of weight. Did I eh? Last year was my fat year, I got really fat! That’s just because my diet was terrible, I didn’t exercise, I don’t know.. It was stressfull and whatever.

“She was really fat, she wasn’t like a whale” – Her best friend Sage pipes in!

She was vegetarian for how many years?

I was on and off for like all of my childhood

She was vegetarian, and I loved meat. And I used to try and convince her to eat meat again. I’m the devil, I really am! (#4) And um, ya, I would try and be like ‘ah its just a little bit of bacon, just have it!’ So that went on for ages. And then February this year, I don’t know what made me watch it again, I don’t know. But I decided to watch Earthlings again with my sister I couldn’t give a crap about the environment, I couldn’t give a crap about what I was eating I really didn’t care about animals either, sure I liked them, but I was never an ‘animal lover’ I didn’t really care too much for them. And then ya, one day when I watch Earthings again with my sister February 26th this year, I know the day off by heart. I don’t even know, something just changed, I watched it.. I don’t know I get really emotional about sad things and I just burst into tears again, it spoke to me. It made me really upset, I think that’s what changed me, was an emotional reaction to it. I got really sad and I couldn’t... The images of the animals getting like tortured and stuff is just I couldn’t get it out of my head. And then straight away after watching it.... I can’t even explain why, I just said then and there ‘that’s it im going vegan’ I didn’t even think about going vegetarian because it showed the dairy and like egg industry as well and I couldn’t ignore that! I just decided like then and there that night it was like 11:30 at night I decided to go vegan. (#3) I didn’t know how long its stick to it, I though oh this will last a week! It just lasted, I mean, 8, 9, 10 months on I’m still doing it. It’s absolutely the best decision I’ve ever made and so I just think that I’ve done so much research. I’m like a walking text book on it, I just know all the facts, I mean everyone, Sage can vouch for this too, because a couple of months after I knew she’d turn vegan as well, she was already vegetarian so it didn’t take much for me to like, it didn’t take much convincing her at all! Anyways, Sage can vouch for this as well, the people in our personal lives oh my god they didn’t react well. They hate it! I feel like it’s the classic things like shoving meat in our face and telling us ‘don’t you miss bacon?’ I feel like we copped a lot from people we knew personally going vegan just because I feel like every time I tell someone.

Title: My Vegan story - Monami Frost
YouTuber: Monami Frost (V5)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFEFgnBxasI>

Hello everyone, this is Monami Frost and welcome to my YouTube channel. Today I will tell you a little story about how me and my family turned vegan and why. I'm not here to preach or teach or tell anyone how to live their life. The only reason why I'm here is to tell my story. You need to choose for yourself, and the more important is you have to stay informed. Me and my family have been vegan since last April. The only regret and the biggest regret is that we have not been vegan longer. A few years already I was quite interested in nutrition and health and always trying to be healthy. But the biggest information I missed out on, the biggest truth was, about animal products (#4). The last two years, there always felt like there was something off about the food and the nutrition at our house. So I kind of started researching more and more and one day I stumbled upon veganism and one day it kinda it all started making so much sense. And the more I researched the more it became clearer. We watched some documentaries about just food in general, about processed food, about convenience food, the more we found out the more we wanted to know. So we watched some vegan documentaries. And then it was just like 'click' we could not bare the idea of not being vegan anymore, it just all seemed so wrong. (#5) We had never been big animals lovers or tree huggers of some kind of loads of people see vegans. But then, at that moment, it felt like finally we had opened our eyes. And everything became so damn clear. It started to feel great living a compassionate life and living loving and caring about other beings on earth. (#3) The food started tasting so much better, I love food so much more now. I can eat food so much more now, I don't have to worry about weight or stuff like that. (#2) We kept researching more and more and everyday we were just reassuring ourselves on the decision we have made and it was the best decision ever. We watched a couple of great speeches theres this one speech by amazing activist Gary Yourovski its one of my favourite speeches. I will put the link in the description below. If you want to know all of the reasons on some of the reasons why I became vegan, he would be the best guy to tell you that. And I couldn't tell it better than he could.

My daughter used to get fevers like every two weeks when she started school because obviously there's a lot of kids around all the viruses and everything. And she was given cows milk every single day, ever since she turned vegan she has not had fevers since. And it's been almost a year now, how awesome is that? (#2) When I told her about we are going vegan, and why we are going vegan. It was obvious that she understood the reasons, because it is not normal for us to eat our friends. I went to school and talked to all the teachers and that she was bringing her own lunch to school and made sure that everybody knew that, and so no one would be giving her any chocolate cakes or anything like that not just because shes vegan but because its terrible how they feed children at school these days, its just the cheapest and the lowest quality food.

One day she came home from school and she said 'oh my god mommy there was a boy eating a cheese sandwich next to me, how sad, he just doesn't know, people are just eating bad food because they just don't know!' And that is the reason why people are eating bad food as my daughter says, its just because people lack information. And that was what

happened to us, our family, why we have been vegan for only almost a year, we didn't know all the information.

There is so much to tell, but I hope you got the slightest idea of my story. And I will definitely do another video, you should definitely give me some questions in the comments sections below so I can explain more about veganism, because its hard to just ramble on about it. Because theres so much information, and theres so much good information its hard to wrap it all up in my head!

Title: How Going vegan has changed my life!

YouTuber: TheChicNatural (V6)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyMwLAy3JdI>

Hey Guys! Alright so today I wanted to talk to you all today about my diet. As most of you I do eat a plant based diet – so I don't eat any meat or any animal biproducts. And I get a lot of questions about when and why I decided to cut out the meat. So I wanted to give you guys the complete run down on why I decided to follow this path and how it has helped me.

Because it's definitely changed my life for the better. (#2) And I just really really like eating a vegan diet, its great, I love it! I'm not here to preach to anybody, you can do whatever you want, um, I definitely do advocate a vegan diet because I love it it works for me. But do what works for you and we'll all be happy.

So I first had an issue with meat about nine years ago, I was eating a burger one day and I was just like "oh my goodness, I'm eating the insides of a cow". And I was just looking at it like 'this is disgusting, this is so nasty'. So I cut out red meat first because that was the easiest thing for me to cut out. If I would eat a piece of chicken the gristle and like the tendons and stuff would really freak me out, and just as time went on I've started cutting out more and more things. So initially it wasn't anything to do with like 'I want to save the animals' or any health reasons. I just was disgusted at the thought of eating the remains and the insides and the parts of dead animals – it just didn't sit well with me and I could not do it anymore. (#4) And one day at the beginning of this year I was just like you know what I can do this I can give all of this up I really don't need it. I'm down to the wire. I might as well just go completely plant-based and see how that goes. And um ya, that's pretty much how I did it and the timeline and everything. It took years to completely give up all meat but now that I have I really don't miss meat at all. Since I've been eating this way I have noticed a few changes that really stick out and that have really helped me out a lot. First of all: my skin I feel like it's in the best shape it's ever been in. Now I never really had major skin issues but I did used to get you know some pimples here and there and sometimes I would break out. I just feel like it's a lot more vibrant and clear and smooth. Because when you eat good things when you eat whole foods when you cut out the junk when you cut out all the meat that sits in your gut and stuff like that it really shows. So that's number one. (#2) Number two, and, I think this is probably the biggest change I've noticed: my insomnia has completely vanished.

(#2) I have mentioned this before that for as long as I can recall: I would say probably for the past 10 plus years I have struggled non stop with insomnia. It would take me so long to fall asleep and then when I would finally fall asleep I would wake up in the middle of the night I

would never sleep throughout the night. And I don't know how or why but I think it was about two weeks after I went completely vegan I woke up one morning and I was like 'Oh my goodness, I fell asleep really easily last night and I slept the whole entire night like a baby.' Every since I have been eating this way I have been sleeping like I should have been sleeping my entire life. I am so happy that I am finally getting to sleep. Like you guys don't know the struggles that I have had it has been crazy. You know when you don't get enough sleep it really carries over into the rest of your life. I would just wake up feeling so tired and drained. I was always just fatigued. And I just didn't feel like I had enough energy to carry me throughout the day. I would get irritable super easily. And ya ever since I've been eating this vegan diet my mood has sky rocketed. I have been feeling so energized and so happy! It has really brightened my whole situation. It's really made me feel so much better from the inside out. I just feel more balanced and clear and just all around just a feeling of wellness.

(#2)

Also, one of the things I really like about a plant-based diet is I have discovered so many new foods so many new ways to make things. I have discovered cauliflower! I never used to eat that ever! I love cauliflower now! It's just so many foods that I probably never would have tried previously that I'm experiencing now and that I'm getting to enjoy now! Ya, its kinda like an adventure, I'm always trying out new things!

A couple of you have asked me if I noticed any weight loss since I've cut out the weight...and I really haven't. I think it's just my metabolism the way I'm you know built. I've always been pretty much this size (small). So I haven't noticed any weight loss per se.

Oh ya, I also get questions whether it is difficult to eat out when you're on a vegan diet. Or you know eating with friends or social aspects like that. And ya, it can be a little bit difficult, especially for me since I don't, I don't even know any vegetarians, much less vegan eaters. So, I'm pretty much a lone ranger wherever I go. But you know I just have learned to be a little creative and I try not to make a big deal of it. (#1) But usually when I go to restaurants there's at least one thing on the menu that is animal free. Before I go somewhere I will look the place up online, or I will just Google 'vegan menu for xyz restaurant'. And usually something will pop up if it's a major restaurant. Or I will just ask the cook if he can whip me up something. But ya overall I have really been feeling so good from eating this way. I have also seen a few documentaries on the farming industry and how they breed these animals how they treat them how they slotter them and it is just so eye opening the way that we get our food. That also makes me not want to go back to not wanting to go back to eating meat as well. (#5)

So ya guys, I think I have pretty much touched on everything hopefully. Um, if there's something I missed or if there's any other questions that you guys have just go ahead and throw them on down there and Ill get back to you. So thanks guys for watching as always. And I will see you very soon on my next video. Bye!

Title: Dealing With Social Pressures On A Vegan Diet

YouTuber: Whyoweyou (V7)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8RSGOxPcWA>

Good morning guys! I just woke up to my day off, did forty minutes of stretching – so im

feeling awesome. I've had one of these (holds up a watermelon half) now I'm having another one and I have one more as well. Um, ok, I just wanted to talk about um, social pressures with being vegan. Um, you know obviously having a vegan diet isn't the norm these days it's not the standard diet and a lot of people seem to be quite concerned and raise questions when you say that you are vegan. I don't think that it's them targeting you or you know having hatred towards the diet, but they may not believe in it they may not believe it's healthy because they simply don't have, you know, the right knowledge. They don't know enough about being vegan. Most people who follow a standard diet think we eat, you know, lettuce and rabbit food. Like you know they have no idea that we can eat but made from plant-based foods. (#1)

I'm really sorry I eat in almost all of my videos (eating a watermelon).

Um, But ya, so I think when it can be pretty confronting when you are you know, questioned, on what you are eating and why you are eating it. But I think the one thing to understand is don't get offended by what people are saying or get really defensive and angry. Don't even get flustered or anything about it, just try your best to believe in yourself and believe that, you know, believe that, you know, believe in your opinion. Back up your opinion with an argument. You have to...you really do have to know your stuff though. If people are going to ask you questions you want to be able to answer them and you want to be able to answer them confidently. But you know you have to, at the end of the day, remember to just be proud of yourself and ya, just believe in yourself! Believe that what you are doing is right and that you know what you're doing. At the end of the day it doesn't matter what people think or people say anyway! (#1)

Um, when you are going out to restaurants, nearly everything you can veganize it. You know, go for the vegetarian option but ask for you know, no cream or no cheese – whatever! You can ask them don't put the dressing on my salad please. Just, it's simple! You don't have to stick to Rawtil4, 801010, High Startch, Low Fat – just be vegan.

I'm lucky in that, in my work place I haven't been questioned about what I eat. I mean, I have only just started having some startch lunches. But for a lot of the time I was pretty much just eating fruit and some salads, snacking on fruit, snacking on dried fruit, juices. I never got questioned, everyone there just says 'Oh my god Lil, you're so healthy, you're so good!' And they're interested, they want to know. And, I think it's great. I, truly, if you're vegan – being proud of yourself. And you know, I don't really deal with anyone confronting me. But when people ask me questions – I don't take it in a bad way. I think that's the like, the biggest thing you have to do. You just have to try and remember that they don't know! You can't expect them to know all of this stuff – they are coming from an opinion where they don't really know about the vegan diet. They don't know what you can and cannot eat. All they think is exactly as I said before you eat lettuce. So just tell them about it! Don't tell them with hatred towards them or anger towards them. Because then they're gonna be like 'does she like being vegan?!' They are going to get funny about you. Just be happy, be proud of yourself be the person that you are! Just be yourself and know that you're right and know your stuff. I mean, I am so much more confident in being vegan and proud of being vegan now that I've done my research even more into what people may ask me I mean, people are going to ask you 'what do you eat' and just tell them! There's no need to hide it. If they ask you why, tell them why. You know, maybe tell them about some of the animal cruelty stuff. Give them some

statistics if you have any. (#5) And just say it's my personal opinion and I don't want to support that. Just show them how easy it can be! And you know they are going to ask you the usual questions 'where do you get your iron', 'where do you get your protein', 'where do you get your calcium' etc. And you know, if you don't already know, look into it.

My favorite one for protein is 'well where do you get your protein from' and a lot of people will say meat. And then you'll say 'ok where does the meat and the animals get their protein from?' Plant based sources. So just say I would rather eat that then you know have an animal be harmed and eat that to try and get my protein. And also, just you are going to get, your body is going to be able to absorb the nutrients from plant based sources, like the direct source of protein, so much easier than it would you if its trying to you know tare through meat that we are not necessarily meant to be eating. And it's really hard for your body to digest. Tell them how you feel on a vegan diet. Just, be proud of yourself being vegan!

Title: My Vegan Story / How I lost 20kg/44lbs, Tips and Benefits

YouTuber: Desi Arapakis (V8)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrBblPYPc5g>

Hi guys, my name is Desi and I am new to Youtube! This is my first ever video actually talking to you guys. And this feels kind of weird, um, I will get used to it. First off I just want to introduce myself as I said my name is Desi, I am from Australia, I live in Sydney and I am 18 years old.

I am just going to start by clearing up the difference between vegan and vegetarian. There are many types of vegetarians just like vegans.

Vegetarian: is one that does not contain the flesh of an animals while still consuming dairy and eggs.

A vegan lifestyle, I say lifestyle because it does have the ability to go way beyond somebodies food choices. As well as not eating chicken you're also not eating its eggs. Not eating a cow but also not eating its milk. Vegans also avoid foods with gelatin, lactose, casein, some sugars – such as cane sugar – red food dye, but don't let that scare you as they are mainly found in processes food. It is more important to know the most commonly used animal bi-products which is honey, butter, eggs, and cheese. The purchasing of leather and fur, application of cruel cosmetics and medications and involvement in entertainment that involves humiliating an animal's natural behavior. So now that you have a better idea of the differences and what it means to be vegetarian and vegan I'm going to now tell you why I'm vegan.

My discovery of veganism stemmed from something more complicated. Which I will be talking about once I am ready. I decided to be brave enough to share such a dark period of my life with you guys and I know I will get to know you all and the time will come. And if you have not yet been able to gather before I found veganism I was going through a difficult stage in my battle with disorderly eating and irrational behavior around food which is now the loosely used act of binge eating. I won't go as far as revealing to you that it was a seven-month battle at its worst. (#4) So, during my binge eating I so desperately searched for an

answer, um, for why I was getting caught up in this vicious cycle so often. Um, and when I say so often, as I said I don't want to give away too much as I'm not ready yet. But my binge eating at its worst would carry on for a week or two weeks, non stop. I'd youtube 'how to stop binge eating', read books, articles, um, forums. But nothing seemed to help, um I was only getting worse. My mental state was as confused and exhausted as it was when I first started. The only difference that I knew is that I wasn't ready to give up. I ate nothing but a banana and an apple to get me through a nine hour shift at full time retail. I mean, I was still struggling with disordered eating which is obvious. I wouldn't eat past seven o'clock and if I did I would feel extremely guilty as well as if I ate anywhere near 600 calories that was pretty extreme days. This behavior carried on from March til early June. So I was stuck in a rut for quite awhile. Um, but it was where I discovered other Youtubers like Mary and Elle who have a similar past. You know, you don't realize until you do such intimate stuff. As I leave down in the description if you wanted to have a look, some documentaries like Cowspiracy would definitely open your eyes. From there on out, I continued to keep an open mind. I stopped consuming dairy but I still ate it in processed foods. And continued to eat eggs very rarely. But it allows someone that comes from a restrictive past and a fear of certain foods the opportunity to slowly re-introduce larger portions of foods that you're more comfortable eating.

So I made the complete transition to go vegan on the 29th of May. Basically I was brought into veganism by my own weight loss results by eating a similar way.

So it wasn't that long ago but so much has changed in my life now that I will share with you guys another confident story. **Veganism saved me from my depression, my anxiety.**(#2) I got a grip on my health my (word can't decipher), lack of self confidence in myself and those around me. **I lost 18kg transitioning to vegan.**(#2)

My main tip (to transitioning to veganism) is to research. Before you start spreading the vegan message you need to have a solid foundation as to why you choose to live this way. There is going to be many people who are going to be against the idea of being vegan. But all I can say is to insure you know your facts.(#5) You're going to be asked where you get your vitamins and nutrients from. Why you went as far as veganism. Is salad all you eat?! The best thing to do in these instances it to remain true to your beliefs and confident in the way you talk. This way you are rather educating rather than enforcing your opinion on others. Another thing you need to make sure is if this diet is right for you. Because unlike failing other unethical diets failing at eating vegan will call others to question your passion and your love for animals. Now eating an abundance of fruit and vegetables is what being vegan is all about. I suggest you research the main types of vegan to try what works best for you. You've got Raw, Rawtil4, Plant-based, High carb low fat, 801010, Starch solution, you even have junk food vegan. Which I don't recommend for your health – stick to a nutrient dense plant based, whole foods diets. But nonetheless you're still saving animals lives. It's knowing what foods replace and maintain your levels of macronutrients. Macronutrients are your fats, your proteins your carbohydrates you just gotta make sure that you are getting enough. And if you have been on YouTube enough 'Cut carbs, cut life'. You have got to, and if it scares you, you do it! If it's something you feel passionate about and see yourself living like in the future, yet your afraid there is nothing wrong with eliminating one aspect of your life at a time. Just remind yourself that you're in a transition and you will continue to be until you've

completely trained and detoxed your mind from wanting these products. Challenge yourself to try new things – eat foods that are foreign to your body. Also get to know how your body reacts to certain foods and combinations of foods.

Well, my reason for creating this channel is so that you guys can join me and for those in a similar position opportunity to grow. I know what its like to be in that period of change, you know diet, and the way you think and the way you see things. My choice to film this video so early in my lifestyle change is basically to refer back to, so like a diary entry. I am actually travelling from the 10th of July. My first trip is L.A. and then New York. So basically my first trip is the USA. From there I am going to Europe and from then I am going to be spending a short time in Thailand which I am extremely excited about.

So as I said make sure to subscribe if you're not because I'll be coming out with a lot of new content. As well as a lot of What I ate videos as well as a day in the life while im in the US, Europe and Asia, which is really exciting and should be fun for you guys to see. So thank you so much and see you guys soon!

Title: My Vegan Story

YouTuber: Dexter Deveau (V9)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSoWJdZa014&t=1s>

Regular: Dexter

Italic: Dexter's brother

Whats up everyone. It's DatVegan here! So I wanted to tell you guys a very brief story of my vegan story so I have my vegan brother here. This is Julian, also known as Jube.

Whats going on guys?

This is my vegan brother right here.

Whats up?

So we basically wanted to give you our story of how we've been vegan. So in 2012 I got a job offer as a bike messenger. And I said to myself well if I'm going to become a bike messenger I might as well become as healthy as possible. So I started adopting a vegetarian diet at first and then I implemented a vegan diet as well and the vegan diet helped me lose weight, it helped me recover faster because I was riding 80-100 km a day as in any weather. (#2) And we live in Montreal, Quebec Canada so it can get very cold in the winter times so it reached the depths of minus 40 degrees Celsius so it got pretty cold a lot of the times.

So this is our vegan puppy right here, this is Teddy, Ted say hi. Give us a thumbs up for Ted. Ted is vegan as well.

Hi Puppy!

So, this is our little vegan family right here. So Jube whats your story of how you've gone vegan?

Well I was originally vegetarian. And um, I was vegetarian for about four months. And now I'm vegan for a year and a half.

Hows it made you feel?

I feel great man.

Awesome!

Um, I'm gonna start excerssicing so I can lose..

There ya go!

...some more weight.

Perfect!

Um when I was first vegan ya I lost like thirty pounds. I just kinda loafed on it. So I'm just trying to you know lose some more weight now. (#2)

Awesome!

Teds been vegan for a while now as well. He was really just kinda all over the place. We were feeding him a lot of traditional dog food. And he just wasn't feeling good. Right Ted? So we got him on a plant-based diet according to our veterinarian. Um, Jaime Drucker who works at Notre Dam Le Gras, which is our neighbourhood, a the vet clinic he recommended that we put Ted on a plant-based diet. And he's been phenomenal he's had a lot more energy. Basically his stool has been a lot more liquefied, so it's a lot more fiber in his diet now. And he's been overall just a little boisterous miniature dash hound. So let us know what you guys think. What is your vegan story? Let us know down below in the comment section, give us a like, share with your friends. And let's just continue to share this vegan message. Dat vegan out!

See ya later guys!

Title: A Vegan's Take on Ex-Vegans

YouTuber: Unnatural Vegan (V10)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFSDnT49qqg>

Hey guys. Today I am talking about ex vegans. And first I want to say that I am completely against the public shaming of ex vegans from some vegans. I think that is really shameful and I don't think it really does anything to help veganism, the vegan movement (#1) Instead it kind of legitimizes the stereotype that vegans are militant unsympathetic assholes. And having read numerous accounts, which I've listed in the description below; one thing that I've noticed is that none have gone back to eating standard American, factory farmed. Many of them are in fact are still plant based and still eating mostly plants with some animal products. And they try, you know, to source the animal products from "better" conditions. And of course vegan is better and does a better job of lessening suffering. But, this is still a huge step in the right direction and should be treated as such. All that said, here are my thoughts on the ex vegan accounts that I've read.

Aside from a couple of the accounts, all of the stories that I read dealt with cravings and health problems. So the person had cravings for meat and eggs and/or they were not feeling well. They had low energy or lack of menstruation or nutritional deficiencies. For example, Alexandra Jamieson from AlexandraJamieson.com said that after about thirteen years vegan she started craving meat. Jordan from theblondevegan.com said that she started eating animal products again after feeling unwell and having hormonal issues and disordered eating issues on a vegan diet. And I don't doubt any of these accounts what I do doubt is the assertion made by many was eating animal products was the only answer to their problems. So let's look at the cravings issue first. Alexandra Jamieson in her account said that she started having cravings for meat and eventually gave in when she tuned into her body instead of her thoughts. Her body wanted meat, and so she gave it meat and felt better as a result. This is the "wisdom of the body" argument and is often used by intuitive eaters and valued by people who tend to value living more naturally. But is it true? Is it true that our body is really wise? And if we have cravings does this really mean that the cravings we are having are for something that's good for us? It could be the case. But it certainly isn't always the case. If it were up to my body, my taste buds, I would live on cookies, and cereal, and triscuits and pasteurized orange juice; its not even a joke. A less silly example is Pica, which is a craving for things with no nutritional value. Picaphasia is a form of pica and it is when you have a compulsion to chew ice and this has been associated with iron deficiencies and anemia. Now, if the body were so wise wouldn't you crave, I don't know, actual food, that actually contains iron. And preferably foods that are actually good sources of iron things like beef and legumes. I'm not saying we should discount our cravings completely. You have cravings for ice or for tomatoes you could have an iron deficiency. These are symptoms and its up to you to figure out what these symptoms mean. So in the case of a craving for eggs or for beef why jump to the conclusion that your body needs eggs or beef? Maybe it needs more vitamin D or B12 or something else, something that could be provided in a vegan way by either eating certain plant foods or eating more of certain plant foods or taking a supplement. In other words, listen to your body and your cravings and then use your mind to figure out what those cravings mean. You know, go to your doctor get some blood work done, and then address the issue from there. Speaking of blood work, I see a distinct lack of that in that in many of these ex vegan accounts. In most cases the person, felt badly, self diagnosed and then started eating animal products. This is sort of baffling to me because in most of these accounts most of the people claimed to have been vegan for the animals you know or at least that was part of their

reason for going vegan. And as someone who is vegan for the animals I can't imagine giving up so easily, and I know that sounds kind of melodramatic but its really what it is. To not feel well eating a vegan diet and to not even take just the basic first step of seeing your doctor and getting some blood work done to try and figure out whats wrong. And interestingly enough the most detailed ex vegan account that I found is actually not an ex vegan account it comes from Sayward Rebel from BonzaiAphrodite.com and as I said it's a very detailed account of her failing health on a vegan diet after the birth of her son. She saw doctors, got blood work done, eventually discovered that she had low cholesterol and low protein and then she admitted that she really considered back to eating animal products. But, because shes vegan for the animals she eventually solved her problems in a vegan way so for instance she started eating more saturated fat, more coconut and more protein. The last thing I want to touch on is that vegan is not a diet and I don't mean because it's about the animals or about the environment I mean the definition of vegan is no animal products. That's not a diet plan. The truth is there are all types of vegan diets; theres raw vegan theres low fat raw vegan theres eco-atkins there whatever as long as its vegan. And admittedly many of the ex vegan accounts come from people who were eating a whole food, limited processed vegan diet. The type of diet that many of us think that is the healthiest way to eat vegan. Then others, like Jordan of theblondevegan.com by her own account struggled with disordered eating and like she said she was fearful of many foods and was addicted to juice cleanses. But of course these are not the only ways to be vegan, I eat a low fat high carb vegan diet, because that's what works for me and that's what I enjoy the most. But if it stopped working for me there are so many other options for me to try. Adding more fat adding more protein eating less carbohydrates eating more omega 3s eating more calcium. The list really goes on and on. To see people say that vegan didn't work for them when they were eating 801010 or raw or McDougall or whatever is very misleading, its not vegan that didn't work for them it's those particular diet plans that didn't' work for them. Maybe if they had changed to a different diet plan maybe going from 801010 to eco-atkins maybe they would have found success. To wrap this up, I sympathize, no one wants to feel bad and when what you're doing isn't working its almost human nature to swing to the complete other side, right? To go from vegan to omnivore or in some cases vegan to paleo. I'm also really glad that these accounts exist - that people are sharing their experiences and admitting that they are no longer vegan. Ya, it sucks that some people are going to read these and now be scared to go vegan and won't go vegan or some people who are vegan may end up giving up veganism. But, it also gives people, like myself, a chance to be forthright about the issues surrounding veganism. And let's be clear there are issues surrounding vegan diets, and I'm not just talking about the rather toxic community aspects that I'm sure many of you are familiar with I'm talking about this like nutritional deficiencies and just feeling unwell and weight gain and social unease. These and other issues can and do happen to people eating vegan diets. And by addressing these issues and being open and honest we can help people better prepare we can better educate people about vegan diets and hopefully maybe I dunno help prevent ex vegans from happening, becoming a thing. That would be pretty cool.

So, that's it. I know this is a touchy subject but I don't think it should be I think these are things that, again, should be discussed and people should feel like they can discuss them and like they can be open and honest about it without fear of ridicule from supposedly

compassionate vegans. So before I go again I have included links to all of the accounts in the description below I have also included links to some takes on ex-vegans from other vegans like Jack Norris and Jenny Nesina. Definitely check those out they are admittedly quite a bit more eloquent than what I have presented here. Thank you so much for watching, I really really hope you enjoyed this video I would love to hear your questions and your comments so leave those below and if you're not subscribed be sure to subscribe that's a cool thing that you can do. So, I guess that's it for me. I will have a new video tomorrow, so stay tuned for that.

Title: My Vegan Story - Liwai - From Alcoholic Meat-Lover to Vegan Powerhouse

YouTuber: Legit Nutrition Hawaii (V11)

Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JUcRFxjecc

Italics: Woman

Regular: Man

But then you went vegetarian when I was in Costa Rica.

Yes, yes she was in costa rica.

That was in 2012.

2012 My drinking problem was really bad. Really bad. I had three DUI's, I had 10 driving with no insurance.

10?!

Yes. 10 driving with no license. I'm going back from when I was 18, you know I got into a lot of trouble. To the point where I went to jail for a little bit. Um, I went to jail for a little while I spent weekends in jail, cuz I had a job and my boss fought for my to stay out. During the week I still partied, and I, my life wasn't changing at all and I saw myself going down this downhill spiral and following the paths of people who were close to me, so, you know the last day of jail I got out and it was party time man. (#4) My friends were like "wohoo you're out of jail whole lot of luaus" It's this big party where they shut down downtown Hugo. This year man, we're going to party we going to have fun man, we're going to do all this great stuff, get into more trouble get more DIUs!" Then I just said you know what, no I think I'm good. No, Im not going to drink I'm not going to drink ever, I think I am fucking done. I went through withdrawals for a little bit – about a week, week and a half. Very bad withdrawals. But I stuck with it. About a month to two months went by and I still got the urges to drink and I remember one of the triggers was meat. I loved chicken and I love raw fish, I used to eat them when I drank beer so everytime I'd eat them my body was waiting for the alcohol to come down with it. So the I realized you know it was the whole meat eating thing. So on Thanksgiving, 2012 about 2 months sober, I, instead of eating turkey entered a

turkey truck. And it was a 5 km and short one. What is that 3.5 miles? I came in 88th place, which is not too bad. Considering the 87 people before me were triathletes. You know and then I went back home and family had brought me turkey, brought me all this food and all this great stuff and I was like fuck maybe I should just, I'm being too hard on myself. But, you know, I realized that if I'm going to stick with this sober thing I gotta stick with the no meat eating thing because it was a big trigger for me so I stuck with it, the urges of alcohol completely went away, killing two birds with one stone, it's like you know, it's saving the planet and it's healthy for me. So I came to terms with that, and shortly after I turned vegetarian, and it stuck ever since. Now it's a habit.

The 5 km had started my running obsession. So I ran like, I started running like, 30 feet a day.

Thirty feet?

Thirty feet a day - when I first started running.

Oh.

And then I got up to where I was running fucking 13 miles a day; half marathons. No joke.

No joke.

I'd live in Heelo and people would see me up (inaudible) up by work. They'd be like what the fuck did you just run that far? "Ya and I ran back"

And I was in Costa Rica and I remember you told me that he was vegetarian and that he stopped drinking and I had kind of written him off. I was like look I just cannot get involved with this dude like hes in jail, hes drinking, he eats like shit, hes just not the guy for me, as much as I'm like head over heels in love with him. He's not the guy for me. But then you said that you were vegetarian and getting sober and I was like (yells, and laughs) and I was like "Ok, I'll see you in Hawaii in a month." And it's been so nice like having a sober partner who is also vegetarian and then like after six months of us being together you cut, you know, dairy, I think cheese was the only thing you had left.

Sighs. Cheese was the hardest thing to give up.

Well, heres the thing I cook so good that you don't even miss the cheese!

I miss the cheese.

No you didn't miss the cheese.

Haha, I missed the cheese!

But you forgot about the cheese didn't you?

I just think of the poor cows. And then, it fucking just, the urge goes away. (#3) Are we done?

Do you want to be done?

I just like to end with this. I have never taken steroids before.

It's taken.

I've never....I just get it all the time.

Or took.

I've never taken steroids. People ask me that all the time. I fucking don't know why.

Cuz you're gigantic.

Ya, but I'm not, you know, if you look at someone who is on steroids you know, there's no doubt in your mind – that motherfucker is on steroids.

I don't know though, sometimes I even look at you and I'm like did you take steroids?!

It's all genetics.

I've lived with you now for 3 years. And I watched you like lose a fair amount of muscle when you stopped lifting and then I saw you start lifting again and just like naturally bulk up.

I fell to peer pressure. Guys at work was telling me: "no fucking vegans can't get big, don't you miss being big, lift heavy shit?" I'm gonna show you how to fucking lift. I'm gonna show you how to get strong and I'm gonna show you that you don't need all that supplements and all that fucking meat dude, and fucking proved it. Now all the other guys that lift weight, they just gave up, like fuck it proved us wrong.

And you're still out in the backyard getting your like front squat rash.

Getting... well it's just tire flips.

It looks like hickies!

Title: My Vegan Story – from fat guy to fit guy

YouTuber: Plant Based Guerilla (V12)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaNjgDiyEew>

So I was asked to do the My Vegan Story hashtag. So this is my story of how I got to eating plant based diet.

Rave Days (title)

So theres a bit of history: as a teenager I got into the dance producing quite heavily and that lasted a good fifteen years. I would go out, basically, once every... at minimum once every two weeks. And most of the time these were benders with excessive alcohol and what not I would spend a better half of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday recovering and feeling pretty miserable. After that, I mean, I was so into it that I started promoting and doing raves myself and uh putting on nightclub gigs. And, so you can imagine this was quite taxing on the body, being in that environment; people aren't into fitness, people aren't into healthy eating. Um, it's about having the best time on a Saturday night as you can get. My fitness was non-existent. I was focused on dance music and going out. (#4)

Animal Slaughter (title)

Being from a European family, unfortunately I had to be involved with actually killing animals which is one of those things that I really think doesn't come naturally to a human and I was helping my Dad it was a big pig or what not and I had to help him and I hated doing it. (#4)

DIY Food and Booze (title)

When my wife was pregnant I stopped going out completely so to fill my time I started getting into homemade foods. Stuff like, I would make my own cheese, I would... I bought a meat smoker so I got into smoking meat – making jerky. I started to roast my own coffee. I got into brewing my own beer so I got alcohol still and I had vodka on tap any time I wanted. This was a bad idea because my drinking really increased; it was on tap I could have it any time I wanted it was pretty much for free, so it was very hard to say no. And you know I wasn't going out at the time I thought um I could be at home and I could have a few drinks and that was fine but it could have turned quite ugly. I didn't become a professional alcoholic but I certainly binge drunk every single weekend. (#4)

The Change (title)

When my oldest child was born I started looking at my lifestyle more seriously um I was pretty over weight at the time. I was carrying 25kg extra so you can see in these photos here um it's 100kg I mean I didn't look good you can see my eyes are bloodshot I'm overweight my health isn't great and I'm having um I high meat diet with lots of cheese and beer and what not . It just wasn't condusive to health. I started to calorie restrict basically I was eating about 1200 calories... 12 to 1500 calories a day. So I started to lose a bit of weight so I was inspired so I got into a bit of fitness but it wasn't too serious you know I didn't have the energy to be running around, um, I was running at a calorie defecit most of the time. And then I watched a documentary called Food Inc which is the first to sort of broaden my mind

about food and what we eat and what not.(#5)

“The Industry doesn’t want you to know the truth about what you’re eating because if you knew you might not want to eat it.” –Food Inc.

Not long after that I watched a documentary called Forks Over Knives this really cemented the deal for me and um it made such an impression on me that I turned vegan overnight.(#5) It wasn’t long after that that I saw Durian Rider and saw him promoting a high fruit diet and this appealed to me because I’ve always been a big fruit eater; it did seem strange at first to eat ten bananas at one time and so I gave it a go for a week or so and my energy was through the roof, I felt great I started to get more serious about fitness.(#2) The only negatives are I came to realize after that I was becoming quite obsessive and I was becoming quite closed minded in terms of you know I was basically hardcore raw vegan so raw was law at the time. So once I made the switch to high fruit diet my health started to improve I started to lose weight I bought a bike, I started running and I was feeling great and over time, I mean I’ve been vegan now for three years nearly I’ve learned a lot, I’ve become way more relaxed. (#2) Now I eat more of a Raw til 4 diet. I can go out to restaurants, always vegan 100%. This is how I got into eating a vegan diet. I’d love to hear your experience in the comments below. Please like the video, um, and see ya again next time.

Title: Why We are Vegan – Nina and Randa

YouTuber: Nina and Randa (V13a)/ (V13b)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZS54LAI-I4>

Italics: V13a

Regular: V13b

Beginning 39 seconds are about Honolule Bay Hawaii.

Hey guys! Nina here.

And Randa here, and today we are in the beautiful town of Honolule. There’s a lot of great grocery stores and coffee shops.

Places to get your tea.

And even a cool little yoga studio up there.

Today we are going to share something you might not know about us; we were actually raised vegan. Sounds crazy right? But to us it’s not crazy at all! What a vegan is, if you don’t know what it is, you don’t eat any animal products. You don’t eat meat, cheese, dairy, eggs... seems like a lot of stuff you can’t eat but really there’s a lot of things you can eat!

So why are we vegan? Um, actually our mom had a rare autoimmune disease she had it

twenty years ago, so we've been raised vegan. By changing her diet she actually got rid of the disease its called relapsing polychondritis. (#2)

It's basically where your cartilage eats away at itself and theres cartilage around you heart your nose your ears.

Ears, and with 50% of the people who have it are...50% of the people who have it are dead within ten years. So it's a really scary disease.

And you have to take all these really horrible drugs like prednisone which eventually make you go blind so people are like why would you want to change your diet? It's like well why would you want to be on drugs, you know so us being vegan is a small compromise to make really. I love it actually.

A lot of people ask us, is it hard to be vegan? And for us I mean it's second nature I mean we don't ever really think twice about it.

We grew up eating like this so it's easy for us obviously.

Ya, theres' actually a lot of great foods to eat. And it's unprocessed.

Well, I guess being vegan is definitely really different from other people. And I didn't really realize that until I was around 15 or 16 because everyone would go out and eat pizza and I would be like oh wait I don't eat like that but to me I love it because it's good for the environment, its good for my health and its good for animals, so its basically just a win win. I think (#1). There were a few instances were people would kinda make fun of us for what we eat. But I mean, really anything that's different out there, I guess people can find something different about someone and think its weird or make fun of them for it but I think its cool to be different. (#1) I don't know about you guys. I say, if theres something different about yourself; embrace it.

After our mom got well our parents started website called vegsource.com and they shared my mom's story and throughout the years we've met a lot of doctors who also support eating this lifestyle and I've come to learn that I'm really happy I eat this way. Because of the knowledge I have from them and we love to share it with you guys. (#5) We're not trying to push our views on anyone because this is what works for us

its just what we know.

So if you're interested we're going to be posting vegan recipes, fitness videos

and now you'll know why there's no cheese or chicken or animal products in it.

It's because: We're vegan!

Over the years people always say to us: isn't it hard to be vegan? And for us it's really not hard because our whole family our brother, our mom, dad we're all vegan. Now our grandparents have gone vegan... aunts and uncles um so for us its really not hard because it's what we eat at home and a lot of people have actually come to us and said like oh that's so cool I want to be vegan. I mean we live in the LA area so health is very in. Very in! Everyone wants to look good. So for us its really not hard and we are going to try to give you guys enough info on how to be healthy because when you are healthy you feel happy and you want to do good things. And that's what we are trying to promote: good things! So now you guys know a little more about Nina and Randa.

Enough about talking about this subject we're off to the beach because it is such a gorgeous day.

Thank you guys for watching and we'll see you guys soon!

Aloha, much love!

Title: Why I'm Vegan + My Vegan Journey | Freyahaley

YouTuber: Freyahaley (V14)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H7gLdczWmo>

I don't want to see all of these animals being murdered and slaughtered and raped and abused. I want to change that.

Hi everyone so I'm back with another sit down video which I haven't don't in a long time, I know. I'm really excited to share this video with you guys because its been something that I've been wanting to make for a very long time. Veganism is something that I'm very passionate about and something that I really care about, you know, is animals, so on with the video!

Just as a bit context I've been vegan for five months now and before that I was vegetarian for four months and before that I was fully omnivorous and my diet consisted of chicken cheese and bread.

So, ya, all through my childhood, all through my whole entire life I've always loved animals I've always cared for animals. I'd always try not to step on ants. Um, my friend Ashley and I um used to rescue ants in primary school. So ya, every... I've always cared about animals but I never made the connection between what was on my plate and the suffering and slaughter of innocent animals. (#3)

So when I went vegetarian I pretty much just cut out each one of my meats and then um, you know one night at the dinner table I was just like "hey mom, dad, I don't want to eat meat anymore." I was vegetarian for awhile I was happy with it but I did not know about the reality of a lot of animal industries um and the cruelty of them. 5.6 billion animals are killed

every year. So that's three thousand per second um its devastating.

When I was a vegetarian and even before I was a vegetarian I was always interested in veganism. I followed Esena O'Neill on Instagram and some other accounts: the coconut goddess was one and I think Thriving on Plants. So I was always really interested in veganism but I just never knew how to make it work for myself. I kept making excuses against veganism my most common one was oh "I'll go vegan after I go to France." So I'm going to France next April to stay with my exchange student Margarie and um I just thought it would be easier on their family if I was just vegetarian and not vegan (#1) and yes it probably would be but I guess just couldn't wait any longer. I couldn't um, live with myself um supporting the torture, rape and abuse of innocent animals. So about two months into vegetarianism I actually started replacing a lot of my non vegan products with vegan products for example I um, my last two months of vegetarianism I only drank soy milk and I also did the easy thing of replacing my cows butter with nontalex which is a vegan alternative. There's a lot of vegan alternatives you'll honestly be surprised if you're thinking of coming into this lifestyle. So, basically I didn't eat any milk or butter but I still ate cream, um eggs, and just pastries and stuff like that.

One night my friend Grace who was vegan, still is vegan, she sent me a video which was a link to um Gary Yurovski and hes talking to this um reporter. He was pretty much just pointing out how her arguments against veganism were wrong. I just watched her and I was just sort of like well why aren't I vegan?(#5) I kept talking to Grace for a little bit and I was like "ya, I'm going to go vegan um, in a month" And then, I'm not sure if it was on the same night or on a couple of nights later I found a video, another one of Gary Yurovski's videos and it was titled "The Best Speech Ever" and I started watching this speech I think it goes for about an hour and I watched it all. It spoke to me. It was really true and it was at that time that I basically realized that vegetarianism wasn't vegetarian. And by that I mean the whole principal of vegetarianism which is not to kill animals um you're supporting as a vegetarian if you buy animal products because animals in all animal industries are subjected to torture, abuse and slaughter. For example, Bobby Calves. They are the waste product of the dairy industry um, they are the male calves that are born when the female cow is artificially inseminated by something known in the industry as a "rape rod". These bobby calves are taken away from their mothers and sent to slaughter for veal. And that's what youre supporting when you're buying milk, that's the industry that you're supporting. You are also supporting the throwing of male chicks into a grinder so yes, another waste product of the egg industry. Once I had finished this speech um I think I was redirected to some other videos it was a graphic video um with inside footage into the egg and dairy industries and I watched some of it, I watched about 30 seconds of it. But I just thought to myself then and there if I can't watch male chicks being thrown into a grinder, um cows being raped, and animals being slaughtered in an abattoir, animals being tested on for cosmetics and in laboratories why am I supporting it? And then I went vegan, just like that.(#5) Um, I woke up the next morning and I was just like "Mom, nope, I'm vegan now." So, she was pretty mad to start with because she thought it would be such an effort for me to be vegan. She thought that she would have to be cooking it all but she eventually came around. So the bottom line is I am vegan because um, I care about animals, I don't want to see all these animals being

murdered, and slaughtered and raped and abused. I want to change that. And I think with veganism it may be a small difference but it is a difference that I can actually make. And I'm also vegan for the planet so um for those of you who don't know animal agriculture is responsible for 80% of all green house gas emissions which is more than all of transportation combined so that's planes ships cars everything. Animal agriculture, raising livestock, more green house gas emissions it is also the leading cause of ocean dead zones, deforestation in the amazon rainforest, species extinction, water pollution and habitat destruction. Livestock is also responsible for 80%-90% of all of the United States water consumption. I'm not sure about Australia, but that's a lot. Animal agriculture also occupies a third of the worlds ice free land. We are killing over 2.6 trillion fish per year. It's expected that there will be no fish in the oceans by 2048. Because, of animal agriculture, because of fishing. And, that's not an industry I want to support I don't want to see our Earth being exploited and just used for the raising of livestock for human consumption. And I don't want to see our planet die before it, I don't know the next generation can see it. If you guys are more interested in more sustainability facts um I would like to link you over to Cowspiracy you can watch it on Netflix, Youtube um they've also got their own page so if youre not bothered to watch the documentary you can read all of their facts on their site. I've put a little link here or something. And if you're more interested in the ethical side of veganism um, watch Earthings, it's an eye opener. You need to know the reality. If you want to continue supporting animal industries, animal torture, animal agriculture then you need to know what's happening. I don't think its okay for you to be kept in the dark. Um, I mean if you watch these videos and you still want to support them then alright its your choice but I think you need to know what...you need to know the truth. With this video and these facts I've barely hit the top of the iceberg, if that! Um, if youre interested in veganism research more you can go to Cowspiracy, and I'll also link the Gary Yurovski video, um both of them in the description bar. Those two aren't graphic as far as I'm aware. Earthings is graphic and Cowspiracy isn't graphic except for one scene and if you're not into watching animals being killed um you can watch those. I hope you enjoyed the video, if you guys have any questions about veganism or anything else feel free to comment on this video, message me on tumblr, I'm always happy to help. Let me know if you want to see more vegan videos or any video suggestions. I'll leave the link of all the videos that I mentioned in the description bar. I hope ya'll have a really nice day and thanks for watching!

Title: MY VEGAN STORY || MEAT EATER TO VEGETARIAN TO VEGAN

YouTuber: Kate Flowers (V15)

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ6WAlc92Qw>

Hello beautiful people how are you guys today? I feel like everytime I make a video that it's been so long since I've made a video even though it's only been like four days or something but I don't know I think I might be making more videos, if you guys want me to make more than two videos a week let me know down below and I will really try to make that happen. So the other day somebody asked me to make a video on my vegan story. And I realized that I have never done that, I haven't told you guys how I became vegan how I got to the point in my life. So, I thought I would give you a little bit of background. Um, lets see back in 2009,

early 2009 it had just been New Years had just come along, somehow I stumbled upon a documentary maybe it was Food Inc. it was one of those earlier documentaries and it wasn't one of the really really intense gruesome ones yet. And I watched it and I basically went vegetarian overnight I completely cut out all meat products I maybe had a slip up once or twice since then um but other than that I've been 100% vegetarian since 2009 uh so, that was uh, you know, 7 years ago. (#5) And, **sigh** I remember I was dating somebody at the time and they like, a week after I watched this documentary had made this like huge life changing decision that I was just done eating meat they um, ate a piece of chicken in front of me and I remember just being so upset first of all I was a lot younger than I am now, so you know my maturity level was totally different but they ate this piece of chicken in front of me and I like cried. I like cried, broke down and cried and obviously if you're watching this and your vegan or vegetarian you understand that we are so passionate and the idea that anybody out there could contribute to the torture of animals is just mind boggling since you know what you know. But you know at the time you can't expect other people to change over night or you can't really expect other people to change at all. You can just do the best that you can do and hope that other people see that and make a change. However at the time I was, I was not there yet. Let's see, I think after that point I found out that, maybe it was Ellen, I think it was Ellen Degenerous I think I watched a clip of her saying that she finally made herself sit down and watch Earthlings so I believe I found Earthlings and watched portions of it. My memory from back then is a little bit blurry I don't remember specifically everything that happened I was drinking a lot of alcohol at the time and smoking a lot of weed at the time and I don't do either of those things anymore but its kinda of blurry, so um, I think I watched Earthlings or at least part of it I might not have even gotten through the whole thing at the time I was like ok I'm going vegan. So I didn't really know what to eat I hadn't educated myself at all. There was not nearly as many Youtube videos back then as there are now. And, um, I just remember eating like a lot of hummus. Hummus and crackers and um salad and you know veggies and stuff I just didn't really know what I was doing, so obviously it wasn't very sustainable. During that time I also got a couple of my wisdom teeth taken out and once I was recovering from that I was on like medications and pain meds and all kinds of stuff and um couldn't eat anything and I remember somebody brought me a milkshake and I was just like whatever I'm just gonna eat it. And so the veganism dropped off at that point however I continued to be vegetarian I still didn't eat meat. So, at that point I didn't know enough it hadn't hit me strong enough I guess I hadn't watched enough documentaries or whatever for it to really stick in my mind I was still addicted to dairy products obviously it had only been about six months of being vegan for me to go back to that once my wisdom teeth were out and after I had that milkshake it was just over. I started eating cheese again I started eating eggs again um and then I off and on ate fish for the next few years as well and that pretty much continued; I had little boughs of veganism throughout the next few years. But that pretty much continued until 2013- August 2013, ya I think that's when it was. And um like I said I was still vegetarian and then I found some YouTube videos of can you guys guess? Ya Freelee of course. Um, so thank you Freelee for this she just, I was just in awe of her. I was like she's eating how many freaking bananas in a day? Like is this girl serious? Um can this be for real? So I started doing research. I got the 801010 book I found Fully Raw Kristina all these people and basically she just reinspired me about all the things that I already at some

point had known about veganism um I rewatched Earthlings I rewatched all the documentaries and I basically went vegan overnight at that point that was August 2015 and now we are in April of 2016 so I have been 100% vegan since that point.(#5) But I guess why I wanted to make this video was because I don't want you to think that it has to happen overnight. I mean, for me it did happen in this instance but like look at my background, I'd already been vegetarian for 7 years I'd already tried veganism at different points in my life I had some um I had some long transitional time periods before I went 100% hard core vegan overnight. And so I am basically trying to tell you don't be hard on yourself, I mean if your goal is to go vegan because you're compassionate about the animals and its totally you know all ethical reasons which really should always be the number one reason for going vegan because that's what's going to keep you vegan if you're just doing it for health you're gonna have moments where you care a little bit less about your health and you might go back to some of your old ways and eating some, you know animal products but if you're doing it with the number one reason being 100% ethical if you've done the research watch the documentaries over and over until when you think of eating cheese you don't think "ooh cheese yum its delicious" you think "this is contributing to the torture of another being unnecessarily". That's how your brain should register cheese and eggs and meat and all of the animal products it shouldn't be anything else other than that because cheese and dairy products are extremely addicting and that's the difference between a vegetarian and a vegan is that the vegetarians can not give up their cheese and its not theirs to begin with but that's what everybody says. It's "I can't give up my cheese" well sorry to tell you, its not your cheese, it's the baby calves um food and fuel, it has nothing to do with you and its anyway. I could go day about that but I wont. Basically my point is – be easy on yourself its going to take time, you might not go 100% overnight like you know mine spanned out over a 7 year course where finally in the last 2 and a half years I went 100% vegan I had tried it before I hadn't been eating meat for a long time so that was already out and I had gone off and on vegan throughout then until somebody just inspired me and it really just hit me hard and I decided to really really educate myself and not turn away from the screen at a part that I didn't want to see in Earthlings or whatever. I just watched everything I could possibly find on the topic even if it was very hard to watch which a lot of it was.(#5) So, I hope that like covers everything for my vegan story and if you guys have any comments or questions please let me know down below, please let me know like a brief on your vegan story or um anything else you want me to cover on this topic I'll be happy to. I love when you guys give me video suggestions because sometimes I mean I feel like I could talk forever about any topic and other times I'm like what am I going to make a video on? So I'm just being real with you guys. Leave me topics to talk about I will definitely do so um I hope you enjoy this video. Don't be hard on yourself. If your goal is going towards veganism watch the videos, educate yourself and you will get there because you can only watch so much of that without making a change so, I hope this was helpful. Guys, give me a thumbs up, lets see if I can do this this time. Oh geeze I don't know... anyway give me a thumbs up if you like this videos, don't forget to subscribe to my channel if you haven't already and I hope you guys are having an awesome day or night. I will talk to you soon!

Title: My Vegan Story

YouTuber: mango.margaux(V16)

Video since deleted.

Retrieved from: unavailable

Hey everyone its Kaitlyn and today I'm going to be sharing "My Vegan Story" with you guys. I've actually been meaning to film this for awhile and I am finally getting around to it. But I think I've been delaying it because my story is kind of complicated and confusing, so please bare with my I promise it's worth it in the end.

So my story is a little different from most people's in the fact that I was actually raised vegan/vegetarian both of my parents actually decided to go vegan together while they were dating and I was raised as a vegan until I was around 6 or 7 at this point my parents decided to raise me and my siblings as vegetarians instead of vegans for certain reasons but I'm not really going to get into that because this video isn't about them it's about me and my decisions. That being said please refrain from making any comments about that, I love both my parents and I'm incredibly grateful for the way that I was raised and I'm vegan now so that's all that really matters.

So, essentially I was raised vegetarians but I wouldn't say that my diet was 100% healthy. Per se as I still ate some junk food, a lot of sugary candy and a lot of mock meats. But I still ate a large amount of fruits and vegetables as well and I was not picky at all as a child. So, growing up, my parents did talk to us a little about why our family didn't eat meat but they never went into too much detail. I basically understood that we didn't eat animals because it was mean and other than that I didn't really have any ethical or intellectual connections with the concept of vegetarianism.

But all of my friends generally accepted that I was a vegetarian and they never really made any rude comments to me. And honestly me being vegetarian seemed kind of normal to me. I was around kids who would be eating meat but I never really thought that I should be eating that meat I just realized that other people ate meat and I didn't and that was fine. So I

remained vegetarian from grade school into my first year of college but then we enter the phase that I like to call "the dark days", honestly I felt very tempted to just lie and leave this part out of my life but it's the truth and unfortunately I have to share it with you all and I am not proud of it. But ya, obviously I want to be transparent and maybe it will help some of you out. But, seriously, I'm not happy about it. So, my sophomore year of college I started dating this guy and he basically had the worst diet ever. He ate a lot of meat he ate a lot of processed foods but somehow at the time I still thought he was attractive. But at this point in my life I didn't really have a lot of self confidence and I wasn't really sure about myself and I was kind of trying to fit in with the crowd so unfortunately I fell pray to pros of consumerism and the meat industry and I started to eat meat. I also believe the incredibly stupid protein myth that vegans are constantly trying to defend so I did eat meat for a few months but I didn't really really sparingly and in really really small protions because my body was just not used to it. And as you know after you don't eat meat for awhile you literally vomit and get sick when you eat again. Ugh! What was I thinking?! And honestly I felt absolutely horrible when I was doing this; I was super bloated I just felt really sluggish and lethargic and I also feel like deep down even though I hadn't made an ethical connection with not eating animals yet something just felt wrong when I was eating meat like it just, I just didn't like it, at all.(#4)

So, after my boyfriend and I broke up and I realized that I was actually a person capable of making my own responsible decisions I immediately reverted back to vegetarianism and felt a lot better, but ya looking back I 100% regret this decision and wish that I could take it all back. Because now I'll never be one of those cool kids that has never eaten meat in their life. (#4) And, also I contributed to animal suffering. So, eh! Also, I know that this totally doesn't justify that I ate meat but it might make you feel better to know that this ex boyfriend cheated on me with multiple people so I sort of accepted that as my punishment for contributing to the meat and dairy industry. So then, two years ago I decided to make an instagram account in order to log my food because I was trying to encourage myself too eat healthier. Through searching through a lot of instagram accounts I came across a lot of popular food pages that all seemed to be vegan and I found this really interesting because before this even as a vegetarian I thought that vegans were like weird hippies or something who smell really bad and had B.O. and just like ate a lot of grass. But, these accounts showed me that vegan food is actually beautiful and awesome and that you don't need animal products in order to have a delicious meal. So these accounts definitely peaked my interest and I started to adopt a more plant-based diet at this point. So, I was really interested in vegan recipes and vegan cooking but at the same time I still ate some dairy and eggs I still didn't really understand how unhealthy these were for me and the cruel industries that are behind them and also I just really like them and I thought I'd never be able to give them up. So at this point my perception of veganism had sort of changed and I thought about going vegan at this point but it was more for esthetic purposes because I wanted to have like a pretty food account but I never really fully committed to it because I was just like well I can still eat my eggs but I just don't have to take pictures of it. But then one day I was scrolling through instagram and I thought to myself why the heck do I even want to go vegan if I literally know nothing about the vegan diet? So I decided to actually do my research and educate myself about veganism I started with watching few documentaries about the more health aspects like Vegucated and Forks Over Knives, and you know I thought like "Wow, veganism is healthy, veganism is cool," but I still didn't really make the full connection but then I decided to go fully into it and I watched Earthlings and I was absolutely devastated to find out about the cruelty of the meat, dairy and egg industries and the tortures that animals have to go through in order for humans to use them. (#5) And if you haven't watched Earthlings you definitely need to get on that, I'll leave a link to it in the down bar. But once I saw innocent animals actually being tortured something finally clicked inside of me. And I realized that veganism isn't just a diet it's a lifestyle and it's completely 100% against any animal suffering. (#3) I was absolutely heart broken after I finished watching the movie but I was still a little wary because I thought I would never be able to give up my prized dairy and eggs. However, I decided that it was definitely something that I should attempt to do so I told myself that I was going to go vegan for a week to see how easy it was and how I felt, however, it wasn't hard at all! I immediately felt so much more vibrant and energized now that I wasn't eating any animal products at all. (#2) And, I found that I was so passionate and inspired by the vegan movement and I just wanted to go out and spread the message with everyone and show other people how awesome this lifestyle is. It just feels really good to be able to take a stand for something that you fully support and I actually decided to go vegan on my vegan on my birthday this past year and I have been vegan ever since! (#3) And I can

honestly say that I am 100% happy with my decision to go vegan and my only regret is that I didn't go vegan sooner and look more into the research and I never have cravings for animal products and I never have a desire to eat an animal product ever again. Ever. (#4) And ya, that's basically my story. I feel like it's sort of complicated because I was flip flopping for awhile all throughout my life but the most important part is that I am fully vegan now and I fully support the movement. I hope that my story can inspire you all to realize that wherever you are in your life and whatever path you're on you can definitely go vegan. Even if it's just through small changes in the beginning. So thank you all so much for watching I hope you enjoyed this video and learning a little more about me and I will see you later! Bye!

Title: Benefits of Veganism, My Vegan Story | The Edgy Veg

YouTuber: The Edgy Veg (V17)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn4Z4EFHL6U>

Awwwee, I want a gummy. Men!

Today on the Edgy Veg I'm doing a video that is based on a lot of comments that you guys have been posting. You guys wanted to know what my vegan story is how long I've been vegan, why I went vegan, so many questions! So I'm doing this video to answer most of those questions and share my vegan story with you guys!

So before I was vegan I grew up in a house that was like, healthy and vegetarian most of the time. We ate a lot of weird healthy food like meat alternatives, which growing up, like this would have been like 20, like 15-20 years ago when meat alternatives were really scary. Like I remember these like really big vegan hot dogs that like were like mushy and pink they were actually pink they look like the end of your pencil, like the eraser. And they kind of tasted like that too. But, I didn't eat a lot of meat growing up, kinda of like chicken here and there. I really experimented with meat when I was in college but it was mostly packaged meat because I tried steak and it was kind of weird. Red meat was never really a thing. I never have had seafood in my life. Seafood just looks like bugs to me, but I was very heavy in like the cheeses and milks and creams because I'm European and we eat a lot of cheese and breads and ice cream and yogurt and whatnot. When I hit puberty my skin was like: think of like the worst-case scenario for acne that's what I had. I also got a bunch of headaches all the time. So I went to the homeopathic doctor and he concluded that I probably was not digesting animal proteins very well and it was giving me migraines as well as showing up on my skin. He suggested that I get rid of like cow products all together so cows milk and anything made from cows. So we actually switched first over to goats milk, which was interesting every carton kind of smelled like a barn. But eventually cutting out the dairy helped. So he suggested actually that I get rid of all animal proteins all together. So I got rid of that and it was within I would say like a couple months my skin turned around like that! Like it went from just the worst acne you could possibly think of to manageable acne. (#2) It was still there, it was still really annoying but it was so much better than it was before. That was my first step and I went "uh, there is something here!" So this is kind of how I found out about it and just stuck with it. Then I started to learn you know about the animal cruelty issues, so it

went from like more of a health change that I was making to a change to not contribute to like the torture and murder of animals so I did it for health reasons first then I found out what was going on in the meat industry and the dairy industry and what was going into those products and how they treated those animals and that like sealed the deal for me, that was like that's it! I can't now as an educated person go back to what I was doing. (#3) So those are the reasons I decided to go vegan and stay vegan: health, love animals, they kind of go hand in hand, sure, let's go with that. I did a video on how to transition to veganism so if you're curious I gradually cut things out one at a time and eventually making it to the finish line with a completely cruelty free lifestyle. I mean, even to this day all my makeup isn't vegan, cuz I still have things that I bought like 5 years ago. So how I transitioned was like slowly cutting things out, building like this portfolio or scrapbook of recipes, and favourite products. You just continue to eat all the foods you want to eat, it actually becomes really great and easy and and and doable. Benefits of being vegan: I'm going to go TMI (too much information) for a second. You have the most satisfying bathroom experience of your life. It's satisfying quick in and out, look forward to that. Also, most of the time I have tons of energy, I feel really vibrant. Like my skin feels brighter and more clear, I don't break out on a regular basis anymore. My weight hasn't moved, like I have been at a consistent like thin weight for like 6 years. I have not gained weight. I get to eat more and work out less and look the same. Which is incredible for someone like me who does not enjoy working out. (#2)

High five! High five me, ya, you rock.

Another one is ethical awareness. I feel good about what I am eating there's no guilt there. I feel like I am nourishing my body with only positive vibes, I'm not eating a piece of meat from like a tortured animal its taking all my negative energy and putting it into my body and making me angry or sick. So um, I feel really good I'm aware. I feel like I'm making a difference when I eat which a lot of people can't say that. (#3) Um, so that's a really great feeling. But also I think of lot of it comes down to I get to adventure and play every single day. So like, every time I go and buy makeup its an adventure looking for the cruelty free product or trying out something new like I go to the grocery store theres always something new that I get to try. And that's really fun, its adventure without like having to go on a big trip. Like I get to adventure in my life, every single day in my home and that I mean, that's really great. I mean, that's the key to happiness, right? Not being bored, I'm never bored. Never boring. That's my high level vegan story I can do more in depth versions of this if you guys want. That's, that's how I got here. So I hope you enjoyed this video! I hope it wasn't too serious for you guys. So leave me a comment below letting me know why you went vegan or how you decided, how did you do it, how are you staying vegan. This is a community, we're all friends we all have to encourage each other and encourage others this is a really cool way to live your life. So comment, blow up the comment section below I want to hear everything like really keyboard warrior that stuff. Give it huge thumbs up, oops I choked on my own spit there... Please subscribe and share this channel with your friends whether they be vegan or not! And I will talk to you very soon. Bye!

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Regret
Education

Videos deleted between first viewing and attempting to transcribe (on year later):

1. Title: CHANGES SINCE BECOMING VEGAN <3 MY VEGAN JOURNEY
YouTuber: Stella Rae

2. Title: "I'm No Longer Vegan"
YouTuber: Blake Awake

3. Title: My Vegan Story
YouTuber: Bohemian Bowen

4. Title: MY VEGAN STORY
YouTuber: Amanda Ducks

5. Title: My Vegan Story
YouTuber: CamandNina

6. Title: MEOWJUANA ~ MY VEGAN STORY ~ how and why I went vegan!
YouTuber: Mewojuana