

Introduction

Dear Reader,

In many places in the world, veganism has eased into the mainstream vocabulary. There is, perhaps, less ignorance and animosity towards an ethic that ultimately seeks to do no harm. There is not (quite) yet, however, widespread acceptance of the need for a Vegan Sociology to reflect the multitudinous areas of life in which nonhuman and human animals interact and are interconnected, even though “the social world with which sociologists concern themselves has always been a multi-species one, it is time for sociology as a discipline to reflect this” (Taylor, Sutton, and Wilkie 2018:465).

This first volume of the *Student Journal of Vegan Sociology* (SJVS) is a contribution in response to Nik Taylor and colleagues’ call. It is the product of a year of collective action by dozens of individual vegan scholars across the world. The voices are student voices, the journal itself the work of sociology students and faculty guides, together: a joining of emancipatory energy and academic integrity. This work is situated in the justice movement, following a vision that foregrounds nonhuman animals, revealing the ways that vegan sociologists locate, educate, and move the liberatory conversation forward.

We sought to act together, mindful of how we organised and interacted, with fairness and kindness, all the while understanding that we would not follow the “normal” path (whatever that is). This academic endeavor is reflective of our shared consciousness, brought together by the need to widen and push forward sociology as a discipline, to work specifically as vegan sociologists (whatever our official disciplines), and where it was quickly established that “this is not a hierarchy, this is anarchy” (SJVS visionary/faculty mentor, Jennifer Rebecca Schauer 2021).

The journey to this first edition has been a memorable one, full of lessons, not just in journal management, editing, and production, but also in collaborative labour between an editorial team with 17 hours of time zone differences. The initial call for papers preceded the establishment of the team itself; this created challenges such as maintaining the anonymity of a collective member’s contributed article throughout the peer review process. That said, even our processes were a little unorthodox.

Despite many competing priorities (including our own studies) and a global pandemic, ten of us got set to work reading the many great submissions, each receiving the attention of no less than two of us. Authors all had their submissions returned with names of peer reviewers attached to their comments; though an unusual occurrence, it was one we felt might make the whole experience more inclusive and encouraging. Most submissions aligned with our ethos, and some of these pieces, whilst not selected for journal publication, will feature as articles on the International Association of Vegan Sociologists (IAVS) blog throughout 2022. All of the papers chosen to move forward to the Journal were revised, resubmitted, and read again by one of the original reviewers. Each was then carefully proofread by a different member of the team, and final edits and formatting completed

before sending them to faculty. Jennifer approved them with a “seal of love” and now, here they are before you.

The articles are the voices of six of the many student scholars who answered that call for papers in late 2020. In this first issue of the SJVS, emerging vegan sociologists claim space and break new ground in academia, in the sense of who and what is published. The vegan sociological field is vast, and this is reflected in the contents of this inaugural volume. The works herein span topics such as gender, religion, culture, activism, nature, and food systems, locating the vegan sociological field as everywhere, for, and about, everyone.

The issue opens with Natalia Ciecierska-Holmes' “In the Name of Cows’ Rights: Sacred Cow “Mothers” and Ethnonationalism in India”, which considers, through a post-humanist and feminist political ecology perspective, cows’ cultural position in Muslim, Dalit, and Hindu communities in India. This article contributes to a vegan sociology by highlighting how cow protectionism is inextricably laden with human religious practices and class (caste) division. Ciecierska-Holmes makes clear that the cows in these communities are frequently foregrounded not for themselves, but instead, representative of and wrapped up tight in political disputes, human disparity, and anthropocentrism.

We move next to a work by Ruth Griggs, who, in “Queering Veganism: Prospects for a New Utopia”, speaks of how veganism is productively viewed through a queer theoretical lens. In her writing, Griggs takes a distinct stance against oppression, and common treatment as an “other”, placing a Queer Vegan as ontologically outside dominant, hegemonic norms. The author explores how veganism is powerful in its “ability to queer the present moment” and demonstrates its potential as a radical means of reaching a “queer utopia”.

Continuing the theme of hegemonic identities, Daniel A. Harrison’s “Sabotaging the Anthropological Machine: Meat-Eating, Hegemonic Masculinity, and a (Feminist) Vegan Ethic” draws attention to the paradox of growing animal welfare concerns in the West, while violence toward nonhuman animals used for food and other human “needs” is incessant and largely ignored. Harrison employs a feminist lens to demonstrate how veganism, as an ethical system, is “counter-hegemonic and distinctly post-human”, that practices such as “meat-eating” are intertwined with oppressive masculine ideologies, and thus ripe for deconstruction through a “specifically feminist vegan ethic”.

Vegan activism is foregrounded by Lynda M. Korimboccus in “Repressing Righteous Rage: The Capitalist Criminalisation of Animal Advocacy”. The demonisation of those who reject human domination and use of nonhuman animals is ongoing, and Korimboccus captures the complex and disturbing ways in which those who seek liberation for nonhumans are frequently cast as criminals. The author draws attention to the “threat” that abolitionists pose to capitalist anthropocentrism. Specifically, she acknowledges how those who benefit from nonhuman death, enslavement, and torture, fear exposure, and just how dangerously deep-seeded that fear is, for the humans that rage against it, and for the nonhumans who fall victim to a system built upon their backs.

Cosette Patterson’s “Humans and Nonhumans: Coexistence Continuum and Approaches for Working Toward Shared Sentience” considers how nonhuman and human animal

coexistence occurs in disparate ways. How the beings in these various environments navigate shared space, proximity—togetherness—is found to range from tolerance to “extreme coexistence” (Schauer, Walsh and Patterson 2021), or “shared sentience” (Schauer 2020a; 2020b; 2021). The author presents weak and strong actions, contrasting case studies, of these interactions, with the aim of identifying tangible ways that human society can move toward shared sentience with other beings in our collective environments.

Completing this first issue and complementing our own collective efforts, is a reflective look at the vegan experience within nutritional science education by Jake Sallaway-Costello, Maisie Corbett, Abigail Larkin, Andrew Mellard, Lily Murray, and Katherine Sellins. “Vegan Faces in Anthroparchal Spaces: Student Reflections on Educational Experiences of Veganism in Nutritional Sciences” addresses the anthropocentric nature of education systems. The curriculum and training of nutritional scientists is a site ripe for “veganisation”, as “there is growing interest in this field from vegan students and vegan academics, seeking to reimagine nutrition as a science of liberation and change, primarily via the deprivileging of human agency”. Written by those engaged in the current anthropocentric training system, five students and their professor document how pedagogy and practice in the field reveal “conflicts between academic tradition and total liberation”, and how a vegan orientation in nutritional sciences is powerfully positioned as a site for innovation and liberation.

As a collective, we hope you enjoy this contribution to *Vegan Sociology*: the first journal of its kind. As participants and practitioners, this first issue’s creation is an act of resistance, undertaken with love and commitment. It represents a determined step forward in a revolution that is increasingly loud and powerful, with and for all beings.

In solidarity, for liberation, for peace and love.

Lynda and Sarah May

Editor-in-Chief and Assistant Editor
Student Journal of Vegan Sociology

REFERENCES

- Schauer, Jennifer R. SJVS Editorial Meeting. 22 October 2021.
- Taylor, Nik, Zoei Sutton, and Rhoda Wilkie. 2018. “A Sociology of Multi-Species Relations.” *Journal of Sociology* 54(4):463–66. doi: 10.1177/1440783318816214.