

Theory and Methods

INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to contextualize the research conceptually and methodologically. First it looks at some of the guiding concepts and ideas that have informed and underpinned this study, chief amongst these being the concept of normalization (Foucault 1977, 1990, 2007) and how this relates to queer theory, as these represent central threads running through the project. I also discuss concepts such as ‘speciesism’ (Ryder 1989, 1998), ‘carnism’ (Joy 2010), ‘vegaphobia’ (Cole 2008) and ‘vegan-sexuality’ (Potts and Parry 2010). These have all shaped the project and informed the way that data have been analysed and interpreted.

The second half of the chapter outlines the research design of the project, which necessarily entails a discussion of biographical research. I explain the major methodological issues I faced when conducting the project, including issues relating to access, sample and ethics. I outline the methods used in the project and provide justification for how the project was conducted.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Normalization

‘Normalization’ is a social process, through which certain behaviours, identities, ideas and actions come to be recognized as ‘normal’, and

consequently, neutral, taken-for-granted and objective; thus, alternative behaviours, ideas and actions become abnormal, subjective and problematic. Normalization is particularly associated with the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1990), who theorized it as the process by which an idealized norm of conduct is socially constructed, against which all conduct is judged, and rewarded or punished accordingly (Foucault 1990; Adams 2004).

Foucault (2007: 91) argues that, on an operational level, normalization establishes interplay between social differences and acts to *'bring the most unfavourable in line with the more favourable'*. Normalization forms part of the process of 'disciplinary power', tactics used to ensure social control whilst using the minimal amount of force necessary (Foucault 1977). Foucault describes the diverse techniques and processes used by states to control bodies and behaviour as 'Biopower' (Foucault 1997; Lemke 2011). The ultimate aim of Biopower is to produce self-regulating subjects—we police ourselves into behaviour that is accepted as good/healthy (Danaher et al. 2000). Thus, discourses of health/illness function as social control exercises (Tremain 2002). Foucault argued that the production of knowledge is intrinsically connected to power dynamics in society and that 'every society produces its own truths which have a normalizing and regulatory function' (McNay 1992: 25). Normalization encourages subjects to become efficient at upholding a narrow set of expected practices; for example, processes of normalization around gender produce a binary choice, whereby subjects must engage only in acceptable, normative, binary performances (Taylor 2009). No one can escape normalization; everyone is subject to the processes through which norms are established (McWhorter 1999).

For Foucault, one of the ways normalizing processes can be resisted is through self-transformation at an individual level (McLaren 2002). This can in turn lead to social transformation through the creation of new non-normalizing, non-institutionalizing ways of living. In practice this may mean rejecting existing relational social norms, for example the institution of marriage. Instead of striving to have 'homosexuality' included in conceptions of marriage, we should instead 'create new types of relationships' (McLaren 2002: 160). The following section discusses how queer scholars have theorized normalization, in particular, in relation to identity.

Queer Theory

The term ‘queer theory’ was originally coined by de Lauretis (1991) and is frequently associated with particular works of Butler (1990, 1993a, b), Halperin (1995), Sedgwick (1990), Fuss (1989, 1991, 1995), Warner (1993, 2000), Halberstam (1998, 2005) and Foucault (1977), who has been described as the first queer theorist (Halperin 1995). As an academic discipline, queer theory is only partially and loosely definable. It emerged from LGBT studies, queer studies and women’s studies in the 1980s and 1990s and focuses both on theorizing queerness and on producing queer readings of texts (Giffney 2009). Queer theory is closely associated with poststructuralism, and the idea of deconstruction, as a means of social analysis. In particular, queer theory has been concerned with how normalized ‘straight’ identities are constructed and maintained in opposition to ‘queer’ identities. For Giffney (2009: 3), ‘queer’ denotes ‘a resistance to identity categories or easy categorisation, marking a disidentification from the rigidity with which identity categories continue to be enforced and from beliefs that such categories are immovable’. Building upon foundations laid by Foucault, Halperin (1995) provides a definition of ‘queer’:

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer’... demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative. (Halperin 1995: 62)

Instead of accepting and embracing fixed notions of identity classification, those who find themselves on the periphery of society may better acknowledge and assert the inevitable relativity of all notions of identity. It is important that we call into question the legitimacy of all conceptions of normalcy. ‘To “Queer” something is to question normalcy by problematizing its apparent neutrality and objectivity’ (Manning 2009: 2). Any debate can be ‘queered’ to reflect its underlying assumptions. Emphasizing the temporal, spatial and contextual components enables an identity of ‘queerness’ to be constructed; thus, we acknowledge that no one exists in a vacuum.

Warner’s (2000) analysis of ‘normality’ seeks to critique the conflation of an identity’s ethical status with its statistical frequency.

If ‘normal’ just means within a common statistical range, there is no reason to be ‘normal’ or not. By that standard we might say that it is ‘normal’ to have health problems, bad breath or outstanding debt. (Warner 2000: 54)

It is simply inaccurate to suggest that a heterosexual, cisgender, meat-eating person is ethically favourable to a homosexual, transgender or vegan one, simply because the former are more common. It is also rare to be born into enormous wealth or to possess an extremely high level of intelligence (Warner 2000). Aspects of one’s character must be engaged with on a deeper level than simply calculating their likelihood relative to alternatives. Warner’s queer analysis of normality is valuable in considering the experience of participants in this research, with veganism as statistically uncommon and thus potentially a ‘queer’ phenomenon. I now consider some foundational concepts relating to human–animal social relations.

Speciesism

As discussed in Chap. 1, Critical Animal Studies (CAS) is an interdisciplinary field of study dedicated to human, non-human and earth liberation. Several key theories can be seen to have emerged broadly from the field of CAS including the idea of speciesism.

‘Speciesism’, a term first coined by Ricard Ryder in the 1970s (Ryder 1989), was widely popularized with the release of ‘Animal Rights’ by Singer (1975). Speciesism is an attempt to deconstruct binary understandings of human and non-human animals. It refers to that way members of certain species are valued, and afforded rights and treatment, which other species do not receive (Ryder 2000). Speciesism does not inherently suggest that non-human animals and human animals should be treated alike, but is a way of analysing and challenging practices of violence, exploitation and oppression. A very simple example of speciesism is the way that the slaughter of (non-human) animals is deemed permissible in most societies, where the slaughter of human animals is, in most instances, forbidden (Ryder 1998). Speciesism can also refer to the differing treatment of non-human species, for example, the way in which Western society values dogs and cats as pets, and generally eating dogs is viewed as ‘inhumane’ in the West, whereas pigs or cows are not afforded the same concern, regardless of their comparable levels of personality and

intellect (Ryder 2000). Speciesism has been an important concept within the animal advocacy movement, as it has moved concern from animals beyond traditional understandings of human superiority and compassion to a non-hierarchical conception of human and non-human animal relations (Ryder 2000). A more recent theoretical development, rooted in speciesism, is ‘carnism’. Carnism refers to the dominant speciesist paradigm, whereby it is permissible for anyone in society to consume animal flesh (Joy 2010). Within this, the ethics of meat consumption are rarely problematized, and the theoretical and physical processes at work remain largely invisible. Millions of animals are slaughtered every year, but most are unseen, at least in a live state, by the people who will eventually consume them (Joy 2010). Living beings come to be viewed purely in abstract or as objects. Carnist discourse is thus perpetuated through the media and the government (Joy 2010). Veganism and vegan praxis provide a challenging counter-narrative and practice that subverts carnism, whereby non-human animals are not treated as appropriate for human consumption (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014). Theories such as ‘speciesism’ and ‘carnism’ allow us to understand dominant values surrounding animal exploitation, but empirical research has also demonstrated the ways that veganism and compassion for animals are systematically marginalized.

Vegaphobia

Cole’s (2008) work on ‘othering’ is particularly noteworthy in how it problematizes hegemonic understandings of veganism, highlighting how academia has reproduced societal trends towards discursively ‘othering’ the experience of vegans and perpetuating normative assumptions about those who adhere to veganism. Cole (2008) criticizes the tendency for research in this area to frame vegetarianism and veganism in ‘ascetic’ terms (as difficult, limiting and ultimately a restrictive, undesirable lifestyle). More broadly this can be seen to contribute to a hierarchizing of diets in Western food discourse, in which meat consumption is positioned as normal, straightforward, healthy and unproblematic, and veganism is ‘the other’. This tendency towards ‘normalizing’ meat consumption and ‘othering’ veganism is highlighted elsewhere; for example, Sneijder and Molder (2009) acknowledge this hostile discursive context, identifying forms of everyday resistance vegans take part in to reassert the ‘ordinariness’ of their health and habits.

Cole and Morgan (2011) have coined the term ‘vegaphobia’ to describe patterns of negative discourse surrounding veganism. Based on empirical research, the authors documented a tendency for newspapers and other media sources to ridicule, misrepresent and discredit vegans as fussy, faddish, ascetic, absurd and extreme and represent the lifestyle as ridiculous, unrealistic and unsustainable. Vegans are subject to stereotyping that casts them as extremists or even terrorists. Dominant discourses in society frame understanding of key issues, and discourse surrounding veganism frames it as a contravention of common sense (Cole and Morgan 2011). The authors argue that this process has three key consequences; firstly, vegan experience is empirically misrepresented, thus marginalizing them in society. Secondly, omnivores in society are dispossessed of the ability to understand veganism, as a practice that intrinsically challenges speciesism. Thirdly, it conceals violence against animals, allowing oppression and exploitation to continue unproblemitized.

MacInnis and Hodson (2015) argue that the negativity faced by vegetarians and vegans is not widely problemitized and is in fact routine and largely accepted, which sets it apart from other forms of bias (e.g. racism, sexism¹). Indeed, comparisons have been drawn between vegans and religious minority groups (MacInnis and Hodson 2015). Vegetarianism and veganism are seen to pose a symbolic threat and are therefore routinely met with enmity. However, unlike other groups in society who pose a challenge through non-normative behaviour (for example, gay and lesbian people), vegans pose a threat through a failure to engage in normative behaviour, that is, theirs is a passive rejection of normalcy and are thus viewed as threatening in a unique way (MacInnis and Hodson 2015).

Vegansexuality

Potts and Parry (2010) examine the previously unnamed or unexplored phenomenon of ‘vegansexuality’, whereby there is a greater likelihood of sexual/romantic attraction between those who share similar beliefs on animal advocacy and, concomitantly, a sexual aversion to the bodies of those who consume animal products. Linking to the concept of ‘vegaphobia’ (Cole and Morgan 2011), the authors argue that the dominant negative discourse surrounding vegans positions them as sexual losers, deviants and failures. The exaggerated hostility shown to those expressing ‘vegansexual’ tendencies (particularly from meat-eating men) is

evidence of the powerful links between meat consumption, masculinity and notions of sexual dominance and prowess in Western societies (Potts and Parry 2010). The authors highlight several unpleasant examples of hostile media responses to vegansexuality. These illustrate the need for an intersectional approach to the interconnected processes of misogyny, heterosexism and speciesism.

Having discussed the theoretical background of the project, the next section focuses on matters of research design. Specifically, I offer an introduction to the field of biographical research, in order to explain the use of semi-structured biographical interviews in the course of the research, as well as contextualizing the analytical focus on ‘turning point moments’ in the lives of participants. I also discuss issues surrounding access, sampling and ethics as key components of the research process.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Biographical Research

Storytelling has been described as an ‘ontological condition of human life’ (Phoenix and Sparkes 2006: 219). It is centrally important to the way that individuals give meaning to the reality of lived experience. Biographical research concerns itself with examining these stories and, in contrast to objectivist approaches, places value on subjectivity and specificity. The ideas and arguments presented by biographical research scholars such as Bornat (2008), Roberts (2002, 2004, 2012), Sparkes (2000, 2007, 2009), Reissman (1993, 2002), Plummer (1983, 2003), Denzin (1976, 1989, 2006) and O’Neill et al. (2014) were instrumental in shaping the methodological character of this research project. Roberts (2002: 1) describes biographical research as

An exciting, stimulating and fast-moving field which seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future.

Based on the principle that life stories represent a rich, interpretive ground for the formulation of substantive theories, biographical research focuses on lives (Bertaux and Kohli 1984). Critical engagement with the situatedness of the researcher is a key facet of the field of biographical

research, meaning the subjectivity of the researcher is acknowledged within biographical research. This deliberate narrative self-awareness might be discussed in terms of ‘reflexivity’. Delamont (1991: 8) describes reflexivity as ‘a social scientific variety of self-consciousness’. Reflexivity demands consideration for the circumstances under which research is produced, in particular the subjective social, institutional and political dimensions of the project and the way the project impacts on the social world. It is therefore appropriate and often necessary for the researcher to ‘state [their] attitude to the subject under discussion to let readers know of the alternative position as well as to facilitate their better understanding of the situation so that it is no longer possible for the scientist to assume the classical so-called God’s eye view’ (Dobronravova 2009: 25). Following on from this, I acknowledged my veganism as a central facet of the project and was open to participants about my own adherence to veganism and political views on animal advocacy.

Bornat (2008: 344) describes ‘biographical methods’ as: ‘an assembly of loosely related variously titled activities: narrative, life history, oral history, autobiography, biographical interpretive methods, storytelling, auto/biography, ethnography, reminiscence’. An emphasis on the biographical entails a focus on individual lives and attempts to understand specific life stories within their broader cultural, historical, political and social context. Furthermore, biographical research entails questioning and rejection of rigid, fixed, dualist distinctions between structure and agency, both individual and collective. These binary oppositions present an overly dichotomized view of social life. No ‘single self’ can ever truly be ‘understood in isolation from networks of interwoven biographies’ (Stanley and Morgan 1993: 2).

Feminist research has been historically entwined with biographical research (Roberts 2002). According to O’Neill (2007: 212):

Feminisms and cultural studies share a methodological and epistemological focus upon a primarily phenomenological approach to understanding the processes and practices of our socio-cultural worlds and the everyday lived experiences and meaning-making practices we engage in.

Stanley (1990) asserts that feminist theory is fundamentally derived from experience and that this means that a feminist researcher must engage with matters of auto/biography. Concomitantly, Stanley (1993) argues in favour of the use of first-person accounts in academic texts, to

appropriately contextualize research regarding the subjectivity of its author, and the situation in which it was produced. Thus, such work ‘explicitly recognises that such knowledge is contextual, situational and specific and that it will differ systematically according to the social location (as a gendered, raced, classed, sexualised person) of the particular knowledge-producer’ (Stanley 1993: 49). This challenges notions around objectivity in research and paves the way for the inclusion of auto/biographical, reflexive, ‘messy’ data from the researcher, although this must always be tempered. Letherby (2003: 143) argues that there is a ‘fine line between “situating yourself” and “egotistical self-absorption”’. The influence of this feminist tradition illustrates the compatibility of biographical research with the theoretical framework of this project, particularly the importance of reflexivity, subjectivity and intersectionality.

Turning Points

Roberts (2004: 8) identifies significant moments as a common theme of life narratives, particularly when looking at political narratives. These can be defined as moments that produce shifts in outlook, commitments and behaviour. Denzin (2001: 145 in Roberts 2004: 8) describes these moments as ‘turning points’.

Meaningful biographical experience occurs during turning-point interactional episodes. In these existentially problematic moments, human character is revealed and human lives are shaped, sometimes irrevocably

‘Turning points’ have been a focus of research and have particular significance within the field of biographical sociology. These ideas are instructive when conceptualizing the process by which someone goes vegan, or stops being vegan, or the process by which someone gets more or less involved in activism (et cetera). The crucial point is the focus on these processes and their relation to turning points in life narratives. Thus, the data analysis process of this project entailed sensitivity to these ‘turning points’ as described by participants.

Standpoint

The idea of generating knowledge from within a particular identity is fundamentally linked to feminist theory, particularly that of ‘standpoint’

(Smith 1987a, b; Hartsock 1983). Feminists have acknowledged the importance of women's experience, as a source of expert knowledge, and of respecting women's specific locations within social and political frameworks (DeVault 1990). This does not imply that all women share a single homogenous experience, but accepts the identity category as meaningful and important to the heterogeneous experiences of those to whom it applies. This project applied these principles to those who identify as vegan. In acknowledging my own biography and 'situated knowledge' (Haraway 1988), the project aimed to contribute towards the goal of reflexivity (Delamont 2009). I am vegan; my biography is inevitably important to producing reflexive research (Oakley 2004).

Methods

The research project utilized a mixed-methods approach, involving biographical interviews, as well as visual and autoethnographic methods. This book focuses solely on data from the biographical interviews.² The main method utilized was semi-structured biographical interviews conducted with vegan research participants. Interviews generally took place in settings the participants chose, public spaces (such as cafes or libraries) or at a private residence. The interviews themselves generally lasted up to three hours and focused on the participant's biography.

Participants were asked to discuss their life stories, moments, experiences and perspectives with a particular focus on issues of ethics, activism and animal advocacy. Following the principles of biographical research, these interviews sought to place the participant at the centre and allowed them to dictate the topics discussed. An interview guide provided starting points for discussion, mainly centred on life stages (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). These provided a rough structure, but in the interviews I sought to enable discussion to flow organically and to allow participants to introduce new topics or ignore suggested topics as they so wished.

Thus, I attempted to ensure that 'theory and empirical investigation were interwoven' (Bryman 1988: 81). I sought to focus on the specificity of the life in question, and the interviews were flexible enough to allow participants to lead the discussion, whilst still structured enough to ensure focus on animal advocacy/ethics. Taking seriously the claim that the individual is 'a multiplicity interconnected with other multiplicities' (Heckert 2010: 48), the interviews displayed sensitivity to narratives and

stories as they emerged, and the discourses and ‘voices’ present within these narratives. I sought to establish trust, respect and reciprocity between researcher and participant and thus to achieve a less hierarchical relationship. Implicit within this was an awareness of my influence on the research process as an interviewer, and how my subjectivity impacted upon what was said and how (Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

With each interview I sought an informal, conversational atmosphere. In doing so, I attempted to break down the conventional barriers between researcher and subject to access the voices of participants (O’Neill 2010). I feel I had some success in limiting hierarchical power dynamics between researcher and participants. This was through a flexible and conversational interview style, where I did not shy away from offering my own perspective where appropriate and where I encouraged participants to lead the discussion in areas that were most interesting and important to them. Naturally, this was not always completely successful, but my efforts had some positive impact, and produced a better dynamic than might have existed had I adopted a more typically formal, ‘objective’ researcher persona.

Research Questions

Three research questions helped to frame and guide the trajectory of the project. These were:

1. Which events and experiences have been significant in shaping the biographies of vegans?
2. To what extent can vegan identity be said to be fluid?
3. How have vegans expressed their political and ethical beliefs?

These questions were developed in line with the conceptual underpinnings of the project. Biographical methods were used to elicit textured, in-depth accounts of the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of vegans. I sought to make space for the voices of vegans, and resist mainstream understandings and representations of veganism. In eliciting ‘situated, partial biographical and visual accounts’, we may better understand ‘social relations, processes, structures and lived experiences of participants’ and challenge the ‘dominant knowledge/power axis’ related to veganism (O’Neill 2010: 22–23).

Access

Due to recent high-profile cases of police infiltration and mistreatment of environmental and animal advocacy activist communities (Lewis and Evans 2011, 2012; Walby and Monaghan 2011), many animal advocates approach an invitation to participate in a research project with justifiable trepidation. This can be a fundamental flaw of ‘outsider’ studies in such areas, with many people avoiding participation due to a lack of trust. While my status as a vegan with connections to the animal advocacy movement granted me ‘insider’ status to a degree, trust was still a significant obstacle to navigate with potential participants. I therefore prioritized establishing relationships of trust from the outset.

Participants were usually approached in person (with a few exceptions) and informally asked about their interest in participating in the research. Some participants were contacted via email. Once they had expressed an interest in participating, contact details were exchanged to organize a formal introduction to the research. Before the interviews, participants received a ‘participant information sheet’ and a ‘consent form’ (usually via email), which explained the research and offered a set of indicative questions, so that they had an idea of what to expect from the interviews and how the discussion might progress. I also included clear contact details and made myself available to answer additional questions and address their individual concerns or emerging ethical issues. All participants gave informed consent to take part in the research.

Sample

Delamont (1991) stresses the importance of explaining how a research sample was drawn, in ensuring the reflexivity of a research project. This must also be balanced with the necessity of preserving the anonymity of the participants, especially in sensitive cases. It is important to remember that animal advocacy movements and the vegan community, whilst growing, are relatively small and interconnected. This means that seemingly benign information that might otherwise not identify someone has the potential to single participants out. This has been at the forefront of my mind when working through participants’ data, and I have made efforts to ensure anonymity is preserved not just as part of a duty of care to participants themselves, but to the other people in their lives who they talked about. As such, pseudonyms are used throughout the book, and

other specific details, such as names, organizations, places, have been altered in an effort to preserve anonymity where necessary.

The project uses adherence to veganism as its primary selection criteria, within which participation in other forms of animal advocacy activism was not necessarily a prerequisite. All but one participant identified as vegan.³ This study takes the vegan as its subject, including vegans who have taken part in legal or illegal activism and/or direct action in defence of animals, as well as individuals who simply follow a vegan lifestyle.

The research used purposive, opportunistic snowball sampling (Lovell 2009). Initially, the project aimed to recruit twenty participants, but this was reduced to twelve once the project was underway, due to the quantity and depth of the data being elicited, and to allow the richness of these data to flourish through the research report. In total I conducted eighteen initial biographical interviews, with data from twelve being included in this book. Data from six of the initial interviews were not included for various reasons. For example, after discussion with one participant we mutually decided it was best for them not to participate due to ongoing legal constraints relating to their prior activism. In two cases, I felt that the data were not sufficiently biographical to warrant inclusion. Both participants were wary of the potential for their anonymity to be jeopardized, and I agreed with the participants to omit their interviews from the data analysis process. Three further interviews were analysed but the data were not included in the final project. I plan to use some of these data, as well as other omitted material, in future work developed from this research.

The sampling process was implicitly purposive; I used my personal discretion in deciding whom to involve in the study (Patton 2002). An activist and participant from an earlier pilot study conducted as part of my Masters dissertation agreed to act as a gatekeeper to members of the animal advocacy movement. The sample was not intended to be representative of vegans or animal advocates in general; instead my focus on personal narratives required specificity of experience before generalizability. I interviewed a greater number of people who identified as female (8/12) than those who identified as male (4/12). Eleven of the people interviewed identified as white, and one identified as black. Nine (9/12) participants identified as 'heterosexual', two (2/12) as 'queer', and one as 'bisexual' (1/12). One (1/12) participant identified as being 'disabled' or 'impaired'. All participants identified as cisgender (12/12). Nine (9/12) participants were aged between twenty and thirty, one

(1/12) was over 30, and two (2/12) were over 40. A key drawback of the research was the lack of diversity within the sample, and I discuss the implications this has for the project in Chap. 7, in particular the lack of diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender identity and sexuality.

Ethics

This project received ethical approval from the School of Applied Social Sciences at Durham University, before data collection began. In conducting the research, I sought to consider ethics as a constant and ongoing process. Ethical considerations do not ‘stop’ when ethical approval is granted or even when the project ends. In fact they necessarily precede and supersede the research project. Ethics require reflexivity, ongoing reflection and a level of self-awareness and constant questioning: What is being done? How might this impact on the participant/others? What are the effects of this impact?

As far as was possible, ethics were treated as a collaborative process; participants were consulted and kept informed about the research process and given a chance to contribute to decisions made, especially those concerning their own place in the research. Ultimately, there is not one set of rules for a research project (Pink 2007: 50). We may look to ethical guidelines provided by institutions, funding bodies, research councils (et cetera), but eventually, situations will arise that are not covered in these ‘rulebooks’, and decisions must be made, and researchers must be accountable (Downes et al. 2014).

This research presented particular challenges in following the general principles for ethical research. Ethical codes usually state that the interests of the participants should be protected (they should suffer no harm or repercussions), deception and misrepresentation should be avoided (the participants should understand what the aims of the research are, what outcomes they can realistically expect and what their involvement will entail) and participants should give their informed consent (based on a clear explanation of the above and their rights to withdraw or decline). It is important that researchers recognize the general and particular ethical ramifications of research. Ethical issues were addressed at every stage—from drawing up the interview guides, eliciting the consent of participants, to planning the dissemination of my findings.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the theoretical background to the project and has outlined the methods used, research questions and underlying methodological concerns. The next chapter focuses on biographical interview data, in particular narratives of becoming vegan, family background and matters of faith and belief.

NOTES

1. That is not to say that prejudice against vegans is as equivalent concern to racism/sexism or that racism/sexism is a thing of the past, but rather to acknowledge the widespread acceptance and viability of such prejudice discursively, which is important particularly where it intersects with other forms of prejudice (e.g. vegans of color, queer vegans, etc.).
2. For further reading on the visual and autoethnographic components of the research, specifically, the use of comics in social research, see Stephens Griffin (2014a, b).
3. One participant, Claire, has experienced medical issues, which means she is no longer able to maintain what she deems to be a sufficiently vegan lifestyle to use the label. The specificities of this case are discussed in Chap. 5.

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