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Dynamics of positive deviance in destigmatisation: celebrities and the media in the rise of veganism

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ABSTRACT

How is positive deviance utilised by the news media in the destigmatisation of a consumption practice? I study this question in the context of veganism through critically informed frame analysis of a major British newspaper, the *Daily Mail*. This context is ideal for such an analysis as the image of veganism has been transformed in the recent years from a stigmatised lifestyle to a normalised, healthy diet. Furthermore, this transformation has particularly taken place through celebrities, who are conceptualised as positive deviants. I then develop a discursive framing perspective of the role of media in the destigmatisation process of a consumption practice. The resulting framework shows how media can use positive deviance in destigmatisation by managing both the boundaries of the stigmatised practice and the dynamics of positive deviancy. Moreover, this framework contextualises the different frames in terms of the organisational, institutional, and national context as well as macro-level ideologies.

KEYWORDS

Positive deviance;
destigmatisation; media;
celebrities; veganism

Introduction

Individuals and groups, who are deemed to be deviant, often face discrimination which results from stigmatisation (Link and Phelan 2001). Such perceived deviance can stem from a myriad of sources and, thus, extant literature has explored stigmatisation in contexts as diverse as tattooing (Irwin 2003), exotic dancing (Lewis 1998), HIV/AIDS (Brown and Basil 1995), illiteracy (Adkins and Ozanne 2005) and even coupon redemption (Argo and Main 2008). As these examples show, research into deviance has tended to emphasise negative deviance (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015). However, within any society there are also individuals who deviate from the norm positively through some exceptional talent, wealth or fame. Examples of such individuals include, for instance, exceptionally talented sports stars such as Usain Bolt, extraordinarily gifted individuals such as Dr. Stephen Hawking or entertainment megastars such as Michael Jackson. Through their exceptional characteristics and through the resulting media interest, these individuals then have the potential to work as role models for a wide variety of consumers (e.g. Hackley and Hackley 2015).

Despite the prominence of such individuals in the society, extant literature has nevertheless paid relatively little attention to positive deviance. This is problematic as some commentators argue that negative and positive deviance can only be understood in reference to each other (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015). Positive deviance can then be defined as “acts, roles/careers, attributes and appearances [which are] singled out for special treatment and recognition ... [and are] evaluated

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as superior because they surpass conventional expectations” (Dodge 1985). In other words, positive stigma or positive deviance is non-conforming behaviour which, contrary to negative stigma, is positively evaluated (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015).

When extant literature has explored positive deviance, it has focused on two particular facets. A more pragmatic strand of research has investigated positive deviance in order to identify and promote exceptionally high performance in a particular domain (Herington and van de Fliert 2018; e.g. Stuckey et al. 2011). Alternatively, and similarly to the main body of research on negative deviance (Sandikci and Ger 2010; e.g. Adkins and Ozanne 2005), the focus has been on deviance management. These strategies aim to help the individual either to conform to the in-group (e.g. Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2012, 2015; Huryn 1986; Posner 1976) or to legitimise or defend one’s status as positively deviant (Irwin 2003; see also Johnson, Thomas, and Grier 2017).

As stigma is a mark that divides groups of people into Us and Them (Link and Phelan 2001), the issue of boundaries and how to surpass them is, of course, of great importance in understanding (de)stigmatisation. Indeed, extant literature has noted the malleable nature of both negative and positive deviance, and has posited that the status of the individual is largely determined by boundary work (Weinberger 2015) and how the deviant is framed. Extant literature has then argued that even the positively deviant can be evaluated either negatively or positively depending on who the evaluator is (e.g. gifted students being evaluated positively by teachers but negatively by peers, Huryn 1986). Hence, Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert (2012), for instance, investigate how gifted students deal with the negative evaluations of their deviance in order to analyse how the dynamic nature of positive deviance can be managed by the individual.

Such research is invaluable as it underlines the malleable nature of positive deviance. However, the focus on deviance management in the everyday interactions of the individual has meant that less attention has been paid to how it can be utilised in a destigmatisation process by a powerful market actor such as the news media. Indeed, as Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert (2015) note, extant literature has not adequately investigated the role of power in shaping who is deemed a positive deviant. Thus, this paper takes a critically informed, macro level view on the management of these dynamics by investigating the role of an external market actor as the framing agent. Therefore, the research question of the study is “How is positive deviance utilised by the news media in the destigmatisation of a consumption practice?” More specifically, in this study I conceptualise celebrities as positive deviants as, through their wealth and fame, they can be seen as deviants and as their status is generally positively evaluated.

The research question also highlights the fact that, in this study, the news media is seen as an important institutional actor in stigma relations. Indeed, this study also deviates from the main body of stigma literature (e.g. Sandikci and Ger 2010; Humphreys 2010a, 2010b) as here the focus is placed on the media as an actor in itself through a focus on the frame building processes of news production. Overall, media research within the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) has started to gain more traction in the recent years (e.g. Humphreys and LaTour 2013; Humphreys and Thompson 2014). It seems as though the field has become more sensitised to the fact that news media has an exceedingly important role to play in the cultural and normative regulation of consumption and of appropriate consumer identities (Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Humphreys 2010b). However, both in the field of CCT and media studies overall, there has been a tendency to overlook the institutional mechanisms (Tuchman 1978) of news production. In other words, there has been a tendency to overlook the frame building processes and the power relations of the news production itself (Vliegthart and van Zoonen 2011). Conversely, in this study I then utilise critically informed frame analysis which, in contrast with discourse analysis and constructivist frame analysis, also accounts for the institutional context of frame production.

Hence, the contribution of this study is to, firstly, develop a discursive framing perspective of the role of media in the destigmatisation process of a consumption practice. The framing perspective then aims to show how it is the wider macro level ideologies, and national and organisational contexts which make the ground fertile for the destigmatisation process at this particular moment. In

this way, the study also aims to answer the call for more multilevel and multifaceted stigma research which emphasises the social structures and the many mechanisms of (de)stigmatisation (Link and Phelan 2001; Scambler 2006). This kind of research has been lacking particularly in terms of positive deviance (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015). Thus, as the second contribution of this study, this perspective advances the understanding of positive deviance in that the framework shows how the media institutions can use the positive deviants in destigmatisation by managing both the boundaries of the stigmatised practice and the dynamics of positive deviancy. Furthermore, as the context of this study is that of veganism, the study also aims to shed further light into the institutional forces which prevent or facilitate the rise of plant-based diets (see Beverland 2014).

The context of veganism seems ideal for this analysis as, according to mainstream media reports, recent years have seen a considerable change in the image of veganism. Indeed, Cole and Morgan (2011) found that as late as 2007, 74.3% of all articles in the UK press related to veganism were negative in tone. In contrast, by late 2013 the mainstream media was calling veganism “fashionable” (Fury 2013), and declaring 2014 “the year of the vegan” (Rami 2014). Moreover, in the media, this change in the image of veganism was mainly attributed to the new celebrity vegans (e.g. Fury 2013; Rami 2014; Walker 2014). Thus, it does indeed seem that celebrity involvement has been a contributing factor to the rise of veganism, and the media has been a considerable force in drawing attention to these positive deviants and their new-found veganism. More specifically, this study is based on a longitudinal frame analysis (2008–2014) of a large British tabloid, the *Daily Mail*. Furthermore, the mode of analysis is critically informed frame analysis, which also employs quantitative methods to further increase the reliability of the findings. First, however, it is necessary to introduce the context in more detail before delving into how extant literature has conceptualised deviance, destigmatisation and the role of media in stigma relations.

Literature review and the context

The context

Veganism can be defined as “a way of living which seeks to exclude ... all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (Vegan Society 2014). The primary motivation for vegans has been animal rights whilst others include healthiness and environmental preservation (Greenebaum 2012). Particularly due to the third facet, the plant-based diet also has the approval of many high-level institutions. The United Nations, for instance, has argued that a more plant-based diet would be highly beneficial for the environment (Carus 2010). Vegans also tend to have a lower body mass index (Spencer et al. 2003) so one could speculate that a more plant-based diet would help in the current obesity crisis in the Western world.

However, despite the good intentions, vegans have traditionally been framed in a negative light in mainstream media. Cole and Morgan (2011), for instance, found that in 2007 media portrayal of vegans in the UK consisted of a derogatory and ridiculing attitude where vegans were essentially stigmatised with 74.3% of all articles being negative in tone. In fact, they go as far as call this general attitude “vegaphobia” which derives from the ideology of speciesism. By this they mean a form of prejudice against nonhuman animals, which is analogous to sexism and racism, and which shows a disregard for the discriminated group (Ryder 1983). An example of this negative framing is, for instance, Fury’s (2013) article in the *Independent*, where he notes that veganism has had an image of “fanaticism” which “sucks out the joy” in life (Fury 2013).

Recently, however, there has been a clear change in the media portrayal of vegans. This change is acknowledged, for instance, in the aforementioned article by fashion journalist Fury (2013) who poses himself the question “Why is a fashion editor writing about veganism? Because it’s [now] fashionable.” This sentiment is also shared widely in the mainstream media. The year 2014, for instance, was declared “the year of the vegan” (Rami 2014) as many celebrities such as Beyoncé, Jay Z and Gwyneth Paltrow associated themselves with the diet (e.g. Fury 2013; Rami 2014; Walker 2014).

The trend is also seen among consumers. It is estimated that in 2012 less than 1% of the UK population were vegan (Public Health England 2014). In 2014, however, it was reported that there had been a clear rise in the numbers of part-time vegans where consumers, for instance, try veganism for a limited time (Barford 2014). It is also estimated that the number of individuals opting for a plant-based diet in the UK rose from 150,000 in 2006 to 542,000 in 2016 which makes this a 350% increase (Marsh 2016).

How is one then to understand this change in the public perceptions of veganism? In order to start answering this question, one must first understand how stigma has been conceptualised in extant literature.

Stigma, positive deviancy and the media

Extant literature has defined negative deviancy or stigma in various ways. Here, I mainly follow Link and Phelan's (2001) conceptualisation as it emphasises the ways that power shapes the distribution of stigma (see also Scambler 2006). According to Link and Phelan (2001), then, a stigma is a mark that links a person to undesirable characteristics or stereotypes, it divides groups of people into Us and Them, and leads to discrimination. This process is entirely contingent on access to social, economic, and political power. This power allows the identification of difference, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labelled persons into distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination. In this study it is not possible to ascertain the final component, the level of exclusion and discrimination of vegans. Instead, and similarly to Cole and Morgan (2011), the analysis will focus on the media representations of vegans and on the construction of the different stereotypes associated with veganism. However, stigma as defined by Link and Phelan (2001) was investigated by Bresnahan, Zhuang, and Zhu (2016) who concluded that the stigma does exist.

Conversely, destigmatisation is taken to mean the normalisation and acceptance of previously stigmatised groups by lessening or neutralising the negative stereotypes related to the Other, and by decreasing the degree of separation between Us and Them. This assumption is so ingrained that destigmatisation is generally not even defined in destigmatisation literature but is made explicit by using binaries which equate stigma with negative deviancy and destigmatisation with normality (e.g. Warren 1980). Stigma therefore does not need to be permanent but the changes in it do reflect the interests of the powerful. In practice, as noted earlier, it is estimated that the number of individuals opting for a plant-based diet in the UK has increased by 350% in 2006–2016 (Marsh 2016) suggesting that the increasingly positive media representations reflect changes in actual consumer behaviour, and that veganism is indeed becoming more normalised.

While the main body of stigma research has then tended to view stigma as a binary of normalcy vs. negative deviance, another, less explored avenue of research is that of positive deviance (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015). It refers to a situation where individuals who, through their "acts, roles/careers, attributes and appearances [are] singled out for special treatment and recognition ... [and are] evaluated as superior because they surpass conventional expectations" (Dodge 1985). The concept of positive deviance is then reminiscent of Weber's (1947) argument of charismatic authority where he proposes charisma to be a "certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, super-human, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." Such individuals include, for instance, celebrities (Ferris 2007; Kurzman et al. 2007; Couldry 2015). Similarly, in this study, I conceptualise celebrities as positive deviants as, through their wealth and fame, they are set apart from ordinary consumers (e.g. Hackley and Hackley 2015). In general, their fame is also evaluated positively, although exceptions also exist. For instance, the same celebrity can be evaluated negatively if they are viewed as being uneducated and of lower class but can also be viewed as a source of inspiration for the same reasons if they are framed as having succeeded despite these barriers (e.g. Cocker, Banister, and Piacentini 2015).

This fluidity of how celebrity deviance is evaluated is, in fact, also very much in line with positive deviance literature, as it appears to be a rather dynamic concept. Huryn (1986), for instance, notes that gifted students are poorly treated by friends but are valued by teachers and parents. Thus, the same, seemingly positive behaviour (being a good student) can be valued positively or negatively by different evaluators. Based on these notions, Heckert and Heckert (2002) then construct a typology of deviance, which classifies an individual in one of four groups depending on their level of conformity and the collective evaluations of these actions. Thus, positive deviance combines over-conformity with positive evaluations (e.g. gifted students evaluated by their parents), whereas being a “rate buster” involves over-conformity which is negatively evaluated (e.g. gifted students evaluated by peers). Conversely, negative deviance refers to non-conformity which is negatively evaluated (e.g. a serial killer, Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2012), while deviance admiration involves non-conformity which for some reason is admired (e.g. Bonnie and Clyde, Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2012).

Such a typology is valuable in understanding the different categorisations of deviance. It also implies that the same person can belong to different categories depending on how the actions are framed or who is evaluating the behaviour. However, extant literature has not investigated in detail how the dynamics of positive deviance can actively be managed and utilised by an external framing actor. Thus, in this paper I aim to show that the dynamics can be driven by an actor who can frame the same deviant as either positive or negative depending on their aims.

One important actor which has the power to frame issues either positively or negatively is the media. Indeed, media has been assumed to have an important role in the (de)stigmatisation of a phenomenon (Wahl 1992; Stout, Villegas, and Jennings 2004; Dalal 2006; Heijnders and Van Der Meij 2006) since it has extensive power in promoting and creating stereotypes, and as through evocative language, metaphors and framing, it can attach deep felt emotions to issues. To be more specific, Humphreys (2010b), for instance, argues that newspaper journalism shapes consumer perceptions by selecting the information, examples and sources to be included in the narrative, and by representing the object as (in)congruent with the prevalent cultural norms. Media thus has the power to represent an issue, such as a consumption practice or a celebrity, either as deviant or non-deviant, and as either positive or negative. These framing methods also have concrete consequences as media is shown to have an effect on public attitudes (e.g. Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Humphreys and LaTour 2013; Humphreys and Thompson 2014). Together these studies then set the parameters of the destigmatisation process by highlighting that stigma should be investigated more broadly than a strict binary of normalcy versus negative deviance, and that both the media and celebrities as positive deviants can be involved in stigma relations. But how exactly is positive deviance, particularly through celebrities, utilised by the news media in the destigmatisation of a consumption practice?

Extant literature does not provide a clear answer to this question. However, it has noted that a positive celebrity association can raise the status of an entire stigmatised group. A celebrity can, for instance, become the spokesperson or the face of a stigmatised group thus promoting contact with the stigmatised group through parasocial relationships (PSR, Horton and Wohl 1956; e.g. Brown and Basil 1995; Hoffner and Cohen 2017; see also Corrigan and Penn 1999). These relationships consist of a bond which forms when people come to know and develop close attachments to media figures through mediated contact (Hoffner and Cohen 2017). Parasocial contact hypothesis then contends that sustained media exposure to positive portrayals of social group members, especially those with whom viewers have formed a PSR before the revelation of a stigmatised identity, can lead to more favourable attitudes and behaviours towards that group (Hoffner and Cohen 2017).

However, focusing on a personal relationship with the celebrity seems to divert attention to fandom and to the micro level. This is problematic as celebrities are a stable part of consumer culture (see e.g. Rojek 2001; Turner 2010; Couldry 2015), and their influence also extends beyond those individuals who identify themselves with one particular celebrity in a meaningful way (Couldry 2015).

Furthermore, such research, arising from social psychology, again emphasises the role of media as a neutral conduit of news and also fails to take into account the “context of contexts” (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). In addition, the parasocial contact hypothesis still confines itself to the binary of normalcy/negative deviance. Thus, it seems that there is still a need for a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of the role of positive deviance in the destigmatisation process.

One such account is provided by Warren (1980) who also makes the implied connection to Weber’s (1947) work by adopting the term charisma in an effort to understand destigmatisation. While she does not use the terminology of positive deviance, it is also possible to see the linkages to this concept. Thus, Warren (1980) argues that destigmatisation can happen if, for instance, a person belonging to a stigmatised group (e.g. a gambling addict) mends their ways or transcends the limitations of their handicap (e.g. a deaf, dumb and blind person achieving a college degree), thus gaining a charismatic status. Collectively a group can also try to claim super-normal status whereby a deviant collective can frame themselves as “chosen people,” or as moral superiors to the “normals.” Thus, these individuals or groups are non-confirming and yet positively evaluated. However, the problem particularly with the first two types of charismatic destigmatisation is that the transformation only happens for certain individuals whilst leaving the original stigma untouched. Moreover, in this instance, the change in the portrayal of veganism appears to have been caused by an outside force, the celebrities, instead of the original movement managing to claim a super-normal status as in the collective transformation suggested by Warren (1980).

The notion of positive deviance along with Warren’s (1980) study then support the notion that stigma needs to be explored beyond the strict binary of the negative deviant/normal, but the contradictions with the current context also imply that the processes suggested by Warren (1980) are not exhaustive. Furthermore, Warren (1980) also argues that for all these deviants, the new identity is still not seen as normal and that the positive and negative deviant are more closely related to each other than either is related to the normal. Therefore, what this would suggest is that even if veganism becomes fashionable through its association with the positive deviants, it does not necessarily mean that it has been destigmatised or that it is normal. Before exploring these notions, however, it is first necessary to detail the methodology of this study.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to understand why and how the image of veganism in the UK media has undergone such a dramatic transformation in the recent years. Particularly, the aim was to understand “How is positive deviance utilised by the news media in the destigmatisation of a consumption practice?” Therefore, a longitudinal, critically informed media frame analysis on the portrayal of veganism was conducted. The timespan of the study was 7 years, from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2014. The reason for this choice was that, as Cole and Morgan’s (2011) study highlighted, veganism was still very much stigmatised in 2007 but, as noted above, by the beginning of 2014 mainstream media was making clear statements about the new-found status of veganism. Therefore, the aim was to investigate the discursive process underlying this transformation during this time period. In this study, I focus particularly on a British tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Mail*.

The Daily Mail

The British print media is known for the fact that each national newspaper has a fairly stable political leaning which affects the way news is covered. Of the broadsheets, for instance, the *Daily Telegraph* takes a conservative stance, whilst the *Guardian* is known for its left-leaning liberal views (BBC 2009). Conversely, in this study, I focus on the tabloid *Daily Mail*.

The *Daily Mail* is well known for its promise to represent the middle class (Baggini 2013), and the term “Middle England” has become synonymous with it (e.g. Burrell 2010; Greenslade 2007). Middle England is a widely used, though often vaguely defined (e.g. Adams 2005; Easton 2010; Maconie

2010), socio-political term. Stereotypically it refers to the middle or lower-middle class British people, who are portrayed as the deep majority. They are further portrayed as holding conservative or right-wing views and as standing for respectability, the suburban nuclear family, conservatism, whiteness, middle age and the status quo (Reeves 2007). Similarly, the *Mail* has been described as conservative, patriotic and Christian, emphasising the hard-working ordinary tax-paying families and it is said to be opposed to the “liberal intelligentsia” and the left-wing influence (Cole 2007; Baggini 2013, 20–21). Arguably, the term Middle England also has clear pejorative connotations (e.g. Reeves 2007; Burrell 2010), and the *Daily Mail* has also been criticised for biased reporting. The popular press has, for instance, nicknamed the newspaper as the “Daily Hate” (see e.g. Toynbee 2013). Nevertheless, its target audience has, for instance, been hailed as the place “where contemporary British elections are won and lost” (Reeves 2007; see also Adams 2005; Burrell 2010; Maconie 2010), making it a powerful segment of the society.

In this study, the emphasis was placed on the online version of the newspaper as in the recent years there has been an ever-increasing tendency for the readership to veer away from traditional print media towards online publications (Newman et al. 2016). In addition, the online version was chosen for ease of access and for a more detailed search (see also Cole and Morgan [2011] for a discussion on the drawbacks of using databases such as LexisNexis). Thus, the data was gathered using the online version of the newspaper, *MailOnline* (www.dailymail.co.uk/). The focus on online media also justified the choice of the *Daily Mail* as the data source for this study as, based on the readership of both the printed newspaper and the online publication, the *Mail* arises as the largest news outlet in the UK. Thus, while the *Daily Mail* has had a combined monthly UK readership of 17.5 million across both print and PC access, its next biggest rival *The Sun* has had a combined monthly UK readership of 13.3 million (National Readership Survey 2016). In fact, during the time period under study, the *Mail* became the most visited online newspaper in the whole world attracting 45.3 million unique visitors a month (Greenslade 2012; Wheeler 2012). A media outlet with such a wide circulation thus has the ability to affect the framing of issues for a large proportion of the society making it an important focus of analysis, particularly as this “Middle England” segment represents a formidable force both politically and in terms of spending power.

Furthermore, the *Daily Mail* was deemed to be a more suitable newspaper for the present study compared to the *Sun*, as the *Sun*'s readership is skewed towards the lower end of the socio-economic scale, whereas the *Mail* professes to represent the middle of the market. Thus, according to the National Readership Survey (2016), the monthly readership figures for the combined print edition and PC readership for the *Daily Mail* can best be described as consisting of 63.6% of consumers belonging to social grade ABC1 (upper [middle] class and [lower] middle class), and 36.4% of consumers belonging to social grade C2DE ([skilled] working class and underclass). In contrast, the same figures for the *Sun* are 41.5% for ABC1 and 58.5% for C2DE consumers. Further look into the readership demographics also reveals that the *Daily Mail*'s readership for both print and PC readership consists of 50.89% of women, and 71.6% of readers of 35 years of age or older (compared to readers of 15–34 years of age).

The choice of the newspaper is also further justified by Cole and Morgan's (2011) study. They find that in 2007 the *Daily Mail* had a higher than average frequency of using negative discourses related to veganism (89.1% versus the average of 74.3% of all 19 publications), and a lower than average proportion of neutral discourses (4.3% versus the average of 20.2%). These figures as well as the aforementioned, purported core values of the stereotypical “Mail reader” are then another reason why the *Daily Mail* was chosen: on the face of it, it seems like an unlikely proponent of veganism (see also Dhont and Hodson 2014). Thus, for the *Mail* to promote veganism later on, this represents a clear turn-around and is an indication that a change in the wider mediascape has also taken place.

All in all, the final sample consisted of 1,220,997 words (equivalent to approximately 9750 pages of A4 sheets) and of 1,275 individual articles. These included all the articles found in the *Daily Mail* within this time period using keywords “vegan,” “vegans” and “veganism” appearing anywhere in the article. In other words, the keywords could appear in the heading, lead paragraph, body of the text or

in the captions related to images (cf. e.g. Humphreys 2010a). This search also yielded results which utilised the term “Las Vegan” as an adjective for someone or something originating in Las Vegas but these were excluded from the final sample.

This strategy, of course, led to the inclusion of articles which were not focused on veganism, *per se*. However, not limiting where the keywords appeared allowed me to also capture instances where veganism was only mentioned in passing but, nonetheless, contributed to the overall understanding of the changing image of veganism. For instance, whereas in the early years, notions such “militant vegan” could be used briefly in conjunction with animal rights activists, in later years a lifestyle article about a celebrity could also briefly note that said celebrity was pictured entering an upscale vegan restaurant. Had the search been limited to keywords appearing merely in the title or the lead paragraph of the article, many such instances would not have been captured by the data. This choice thus led to a more holistic and thorough understanding of the changing frames.

Critically informed frame analysis

For the data analysis, this study utilised mixed methods. While the main method of data analysis was qualitative and critically informed frame analysis, quantitative analysis was also used to further enhance the reliability of the findings. These quantitative methods will be outlined later on. First, however, it is necessary to explore the basic tenets of critically informed frame analysis, and how it was utilised in this study.

As Vliegthart and van Zoonen (2011, 101) note, framing has become one of the “buzz-words” in mass communication research despite it not being ubiquitous in the field of consumer research. Frame analysis is also often associated with Goffman (1974) and much of frame analysis is either cognitive or, following Goffman, constructionist (D’Angelo 2002). In this paper, I depart from these traditions in that, as Tuchman (1978) argues, Goffman does not adequately explain the ideological functions of media. Therefore, in this study, critically informed frame analysis was used in an effort to bring the study of power back into frame analysis (see Vliegthart and van Zoonen 2011).

Here, I take the view, following Vliegthart and van Zoonen (2011), that news frames are outcomes of social interactions between political and media actors and their environments. The aim of frame analysis is then to analyse how news content promotes particular problem definitions but also to tie such problem definitions to an analysis of power. This kind of analysis then requires a multi-level, sociological investigation into the organisational processes of news production, ideological leanings of the news organisation, market constraints, differential power of social and political actors, as well as the national and international cultures and structures (Vliegthart and van Zoonen 2011).

Following from this, the reason for choosing frame analysis over, for instance, discourse analysis is that frame analysis also investigates the processes of the news production (Vliegthart and van Zoonen 2011) and hence assumes a more active involvement on the part of the news organisation in the coverage of the issue (e.g. Tucker 1998). Thus, this kind of critical frame analysis also assumes that the representatives of the institution select some information and omit other points of view to support the status quo (D’Angelo 2002) and, overall, to provide maximum benefit to the organisation (Herman and Chomsky 1988). At the same time, in bringing issues of ideology and power into the analysis, critical frame analysis comes close to discourse analysis. Indeed, as Vliegthart and van Zoonen (2011) point out, the work of Stuart Hall (e.g. Hall et al. 1978, 1980), for instance, arises from Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk 2001) but could also be seen as part of this kind of sociological frame analysis tradition despite the fact that he does not use the wording of frames. Similarly, discourse analysis, for instance, refers to frames as part of the analysis (see e.g. Van Dijk 2001; D’Angelo 2002). Therefore, the difference between discourse and frame analysis is a fine one, but it is particularly the focus on the institutional frame building processes which sets critically informed frame analysis apart from discourse analysis.

In practice, critical frame analysis then first involves identifying clusters of messages which deploy similar rhetorical strategies (e.g. problem or issue definition, keywords and images, sources and

themes) which highlight and promote specific facts and interpretations of veganism (Entman 1993; Tucker 1998). The articles in this study were then coded based on the most prevalent strategy. Indeed, in the case of contradictory rhetorical strategies within an individual article, the coding was based on what was deemed as the overall attitude of the article towards veganism. Moreover, as was detailed above, the data also included articles which contained one of the keywords somewhere within the text but were not about veganism *per se*. Thus, similarly to Cole and Morgan (2011), the data for instance included articles where veganism was used in metaphors which equated veganism with weakness and oversensitivity. If this was the only reference to veganism, the article was coded based on the immediate context, in other words, the metaphor. On the other hand, the data also included lifestyle articles about a celebrity which could also briefly note that said celebrity was pictured entering an upscale vegan restaurant. In these instances, the coding was more holistic in that if the article generally portrayed the celebrity or celebrity lifestyle as aspirational, veganism was seen contributing to this positive portrayal. Conversely, if the article generally took a critical and negative attitude towards said celebrity, veganism was generally interpreted as acquiring a negative halo due to this association.

The operationalisation of the first frame, “Veganism as a sign of extremism and moral decay,” largely followed Cole and Morgan’s (2011) study in that framing was coded as stigmatising if it included anti-vegan discourses such as ridiculing veganism, characterising it as asceticism, as difficult and/or impossible to sustain, and characterising vegans as oversensitive or as hostile. However, veganism as a fad, which Cole and Morgan (2011) identify as a stigmatising discourse, was more related to the celebrity trend as faddism claims mainly arose in reference to celebrities in the third frame of “Veganism as a healthy diet.”

Conversely, then, the second and third frames, “Veganism as a celebrity fashion” and “Veganism as a healthy diet,” respectively, were operationalised and distinguished in the coding along six different facets. These were authority (celebrity lifestyle gurus versus doctors and the scientific community, respectively), focus (aesthetics and weight-loss versus health), longevity and intensity (obsessive or fickle versus reasonable and flexible), politics (apolitical or “charismatic” politics versus apolitical), implied level of cultural capital (low versus high) and reference group (popular culture opinion leaders versus ordinary consumers). In cases where contradictory rhetorical strategies were used within the same article, the final coding was again based on the most prevalent strategy. New celebrity adherents were, for instance, referred to in many articles within the destigmatising framing. However, if the article mainly used scientific authority to grant legitimacy to veganism as a healthy diet, the article was coded as belonging to the destigmatising framing.

In addition, in order to highlight the increasingly positive attention veganism received, the articles were also categorised as negative, neutral or positive. In this way it was also possible to compare the results with Cole and Morgan’s (2011) study which, as noted above, focused solely on data from the year 2007. Therefore, similarly to Cole and Morgan (2011), “neutral” articles were those mentioning vegans or veganism in passing without evaluative comment, “positive” articles were those deemed to be favourable towards vegans or veganism, and “negative” articles those which deployed derogatory discourses as identified by Cole and Morgan (2011). Similarly, the final categorisation was made based on the author’s interpretation as to the dominant discourse in the data. However, given that there are some differences in methodology (e.g. print versus online media), and that the persons in charge of the categorisation are different, caution should be exercised when comparing these results.

In order to enhance the reliability of the coding, a recoding by an independent coder trained in qualitative analysis was conducted. The sample included all articles in the first month of every year under investigation. I assessed Krippendorff with the Kalpha macro (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007) in IBM SPSS 23 with 5000 bootstraps. The Krippendorff’s alpha reliability estimates of .922 for the frame analysis and .848 for the sentiment analysis indicate very good intercoder reliability.

After the articles are coded, critical frame analysis then involves contextualisation of the frames using extant literature (e.g. Watkins 2001). Here, this contextualisation followed Vliegthart and

van Zoonen's (2011) advice in that the frames are contextualised particularly in reference to the organisational processes of news production, ideological leanings of the news organisation, differential power of social and political actors, and the national and international context.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, quantitative methods were also employed in order to enhance the reliability of the findings. Firstly, simple time series data showing the changes in the frames and in sentiment was compiled in order to highlight the changes in the data across the seven years (see [Figures 1 and 2](#)). Secondly, regression analysis was conducted to show that the celebrity frame could be used to predict the rise of the destigmatising framing. I will therefore outline the results of the quantitative analysis in more detail next.

Findings

Quantitative analysis

Already in quantitative terms it is clear that the interest in veganism had increased considerably. When in 2008 there had on average been 4.5 stories related to veganism a month, this had increased 9-fold to 40 stories a month in 2014. The average number of pages covering issues related to veganism each month also increased 23-fold from 2008 to 2014 as, for instance, a great deal more photographs of the new celebrity vegans were included. This highlights the importance that was placed upon the visual appearance of the new adherents. In addition, whereas Cole and Morgan (2011) found that in 2007 only 6.5% of the articles in the *Daily Mail* were positive and 89.1% were negative, by 2014 the tables had turned: only 14.7% of the articles were classified as negative, while an overwhelming majority of 76.7% of the articles were classified as positive. This development can be seen in [Figure 1](#). Here, the figures from Cole and Morgan's (2011) study are also included, although it must again be stressed that the results are not entirely comparable.

However, this sentiment analysis does not differentiate between the frames. Instead, the frequencies of the three frames across the seven year period are shown in [Figure 2](#). Here, the most obvious observation is the rise of the "Veganism as a celebrity fashion" frame. In particular, one can distinguish between two points of inflection in 2010–2011 and 2013–2014. Secondly, the rise of the celebrity fashion frame is in sharp contrast particularly with "Veganism as a sign of extremism and moral decay" frame which stays relatively stable in frequency, whilst decreasing in proportion due to the increasing number of articles related to veganism.

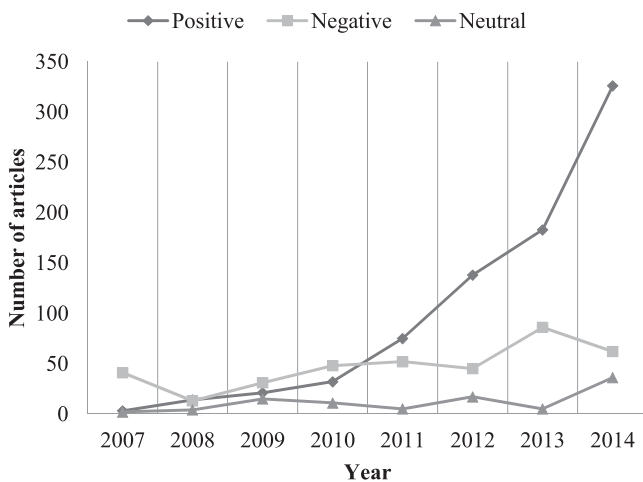


Figure 1. Frequency of articles exhibiting negative, positive and neutral sentiment towards veganism in the *Daily Mail*. (NB: figures for 2007 as cited in Cole and Morgan [2011]).

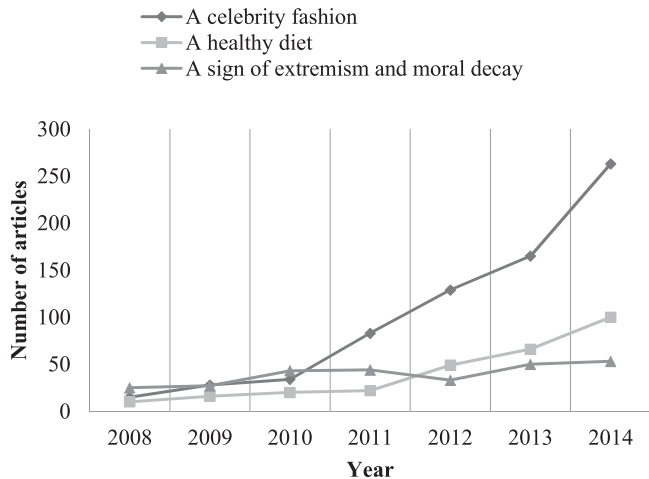


Figure 2. Frequency of the three frames regarding veganism in the *Daily Mail*.

However, perhaps the most interesting observations relate to the destigmatising framing. Firstly, it is important to note that the destigmatising framing never takes over from the celebrity fashion framing. Thus, it must be kept in mind that the celebrity framing is still clearly the most prevalent frame in the *Daily Mail*. Secondly, as can be seen in Figure 2, “Veganism as a healthy diet” framing remains fairly stable until 2011 and only then becomes more frequent. In other words, this change takes place a year after a sharp increase in the celebrity fashion framing. This suggests that the destigmatising portrayal of veganism in the media is sparked by celebrity trend.

Indeed, linear regression with the number of articles within the “Veganism as a healthy diet” frame as the dependent variable and the number of articles within the “Veganism as a celebrity fashion” frame as the independent variable also shows that the celebrity framing is a good predictor of the rise of the destigmatising framing. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 82) = 69,444, p < .000$) with an R^2 of .459. The number of articles within the frame “Veganism as a healthy diet” was predicted as $1.309 + .564(\text{“Veganism as a celebrity fashion”})$. “Veganism as a healthy diet” framing thus increased by .564 articles for every additional article within the “Veganism as a celebrity fashion” frame. This proposition also seems to be supported by the qualitative analysis, which I will turn to next.

Negative deviance: veganism as a sign of extremism and moral decay

Veganism certainly has not always had a high status as is evident, for instance, from Cole and Morgan’s (2011) study. Based on a discourse analysis of the UK national newspapers for the calendar year of 2007, they concluded that speciesism and what they call “vegaphobia” were still very much alive and promoted by the news outlets. Similarly, the stigmatising frame, which highlights veganism as a sign of extremism and moral decay, was particularly prevalent in the early years of the current data. This frame relied heavily on the construction of a divide between Us and Them through positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (see e.g. Van Dijk 2006). Through boundary work, the aim of this framing is to preserve the values and lifestyle of the conservative, traditionalist middle classes and to elevate them by derogatory portrayal of the Other.

The frame itself can be seen as consisting of three related strands. The first one of these is the most extreme one as it associates veganism with terrorists and criminals. These words are associated with vegan animal rights activists, for instance, in an article titled “Animal rights extremist given ‘vegan’ work boots and ‘ethical’ make-up in jail (and guess who’s footing the bill?)” (12 January 2010). In the

article, it is noted that “A vegan prisoner labelled an ‘urban terrorist’ by a judge has been handed a pair of non-leather work boots funded by the taxpayer so she can work on a prison farm.” In these articles, the *Daily Mail* then shows its disdain for the animal rights activists who not only break the laws and norms of a civilised society, but also become an increasing financial burden on the ordinary, respectable tax payers due to their extremist views.

Here, one can see echoes of what Couldry (2008) has termed “theatre of neoliberalism.” He argues that reality TV shows such as the Big Brother have become a form of “deep play” (Geertz 1971) through which social tensions are being “worked through,” in other words, where the society reflects on itself and on its ideological tensions (Couldry 2008, 12). In particular, Couldry (2008) argues that these reality shows emphasise the importance of external authority, control, surveillance and adherence to norms within this theatre. Similarly, stories such as these not only construct the animal rights activists as enemies of the society and as a drain on the tax payers’ resources, but also as refusing to adhere to norms and authority. Moreover, they are constructed as shameless and without remorse, which is demonstrated by their constant demands even when behind bars. Thus, there is an element of what Barton and Davis (2018) call voyeuristic hate of those deemed as less deserving, which serves to bolster the idea of “Broken Britain” and to further institutionalise neoliberal ideology.

The strategy of voyeuristic hate was also used in other contexts as well, for instance, in the case of Mark Kennedy, which also served to further highlight the serious threat posed by animal rights activists. His story was explored in a string of articles in which Kennedy was introduced as an undercover policeman “who posed as an eco-warrior for eight years” in order to “infiltrat[e] and bec[o]me a key member of [a] hardline group” (“I’m the victim of smears’: Undercover policeman denies bedding a string of women during his eight years with eco-warriors,” 17 January 2011). Not only does this case highlight the police operation required to contain the threat of “domestic extremism” (“My life on the run: The police ‘spy’ lifts lid on eight years as eco-warrior,” 17 January 2011), the case also allows the *Daily Mail* to present the movement from the inside. This allows for a voyeuristic look into the “vegan lifestyle” within these communities (“How undercover officers squandered millions of pounds, with flash cars, luxury flats and up to 14 hours’ overtime a day,” 23 January 2011). In one article, a *Daily Mail* columnist, for instance, portrays the vegan extremists as work-shy, promiscuous and lacking in personal hygiene by writing:

Mark Kennedy, who spent eight years posing as an eco-warrior, said free love was part of the culture and if he hadn’t slept with the women his cover would have been blown. ‘The world of eco-activism is highly promiscuous.’ – Kennedy said casual sex was par for the course among the protesters. ‘No one worked, so there was a party lifestyle, with 100 to 150 people passing through in two or three days. There would always be a big bowl of vegan condoms, because regular condoms can contain animal by-products.’ – Call me old fashioned, but my sympathies are with Kennedy. – [H]ave you seen the state of some of these birds, caked in mud, looking as if they haven’t been near a bath in months? Having sex with them is nothing less than heroic, way beyond the call of duty. (4 January 2012)

This case could be seen as an example of so-called poverty porn (Barton and Davis 2018). Here, despite the quote above, the term is not used so much in reference to the sexual activities. Instead, it is used more in reference to the recurring strategy of the voyeuristic peek into the lives of the supposed “dole scroungers” and “social security frauds” (Cohen 2002, xxi) which aims to vilify the unrespectable and unredeemable groups in a way which serves to incite a powerful, judgemental and condemnatory response in the audiences (Barton and Davis 2018). However, what the party lifestyle and the promiscuousness of the community does highlight is, again, the shamelessness of these communities due to their insistence on remaining unembarrassed and unapologetic, in other words, being proud of their lifestyle. Again, in the words of Barton and Davis (2018), this is a strategy for creating voyeuristic hate towards the animal rights community and towards the so-called vegan lifestyle.

While the tone of the series of articles about Kennedy is relatively light, including sarcastic comments about both vegans and the supposedly hapless and resource-draining police operation, a more serious tone is reserved for animal rights activist Daniel Andreas San Diego. An article titled “FBI

hunting Hawaii for top domestic terror suspect” (13 March 2014), for instance, explains that San Diego is “an animal rights extremist” who was “charged with exploding pipe bombs in front of two San Francisco Bay Area companies with ties to a lab that conducted animal experiments.” The threat posed by San Diego, “a vegan who doesn’t eat food containing animal products, according to the FBI,” is highlighted by notions such as “San Diego is atop the FBI’s list of most-wanted domestic terrorists, and the agency is offering a \$250,000 reward for information leading to his arrest.” An earlier article also links San Diego to the nation’s biggest enemy, Osama bin Laden. It is noted that “For the first time, an accused domestic terrorist is being added to the FBI’s list of ‘Most Wanted’ terror suspects that includes Osama bin Laden” (“Animal activist becomes first domestic terrorist to appear on FBI’s ‘Most Wanted’ list,” 21 April 2009). This is a clear instance of the discourse of fear which Altheide (2006) found to have become increasingly pervasive in the post 9/11 world. He argues that news reports which fuel a climate of fear regarding terrorism “construct public discourse that reflects symbolic relationships about order, danger, and threat” which may then be “exploited by political decision makers” for their own gain such as to obtain support for the Iraq War (Altheide 2006, 416).

These stories clearly highlight that particularly early on veganism was associated with extremism and was not deemed suitable for respectable individuals. They suggest that the animal rights movement, and by implication veganism, poses a serious danger against which caution must be exercised. The division to Us and Them is particularly achieved by referring to legal authority which represents what the society deems to be just and right.

In contrast, the second strand of this frame included warnings against the harmful effects of veganism including reports of criminal cases where a child had died due to malnutrition on a vegan diet (see also Cole and Morgan 2011). The threat here is that of being persuaded into believing that veganism is a healthy option. Thus, earlier on, harmfulness of veganism was highlighted by emphasising the various deficiencies veganism could lead to (e.g. B12, calcium, iron) and by linking it to different kinds of religious fanatics and eccentrics who believed in, for instance, natural healing practices instead of scientifically proven Western medicine. This attitude is exemplified by the following quote, which again refers to both legal and scientific authority:

A vegan couple who solely fed mother’s milk to their baby daughter before she died because of vitamin deficiency were facing life prison sentences today. – Both [parents] are militant vegans whose diet forbids them eating any animal products whatsoever, and they only use alternative medicine. – An autopsy then revealed that Louise had been suffering from a deficiency of vitamin A and B12 – both of which are essential to healthy growth in a child. It will rekindle the fierce debate about the health benefits of veganism –. (30 March 2011)

The serious consequences of adopting a vegan diet did not only apply to those who had adopted the diet due to concerns for animal rights. Another article highlights the argument that even if one is highly conscious of nutritional needs and health, and even if one takes nutritional supplements, veganism would lead to deficiencies. Indeed, the article goes as far as to equate veganism with diets found in nineteenth century slums:

‘We all ate exceptionally healthily, with plenty of vegetables, nuts and seeds.’ The problem was that this was all the Paiges ate. They had a strict vegan diet, and ate only raw food. – ‘I was assured by the people who devised the diet that we would get all the protein we needed from nuts and seeds, and we also took a daily supplement to replace the nutrients found in animal foods. – I thought we were on the most nutritious diet possible. – I was so brainwashed that the fact our bodies were craving dairy products had passed me by.’ – ‘I had let malnutrition in through the back door in the name of health,’ she recalls now with horror. – Alarmingly, Holly’s is a far from unique case. Earlier this month, Glasgow’s Royal Hospital for Sick Children reported a 12-year-old girl with a severe form of rickets. Her parents, ‘well-known figures in Glasgow’s vegan community’, had unwittingly starved her of necessary nutrients found in fish and meat, causing her to develop the bone-wasting disease usually associated with 19th century slums. (14 August 2008)

This quote draws attention to several issues. Firstly, the article reflects on some of the anxieties regarding the health and obesity epidemic in the UK and particularly what Cain (2013) calls the

anxieties regarding obesogenic mothers. Cain (2013) argues that the public discourse is littered with images of ignorant working class or unemployed mothers who overfeed their children already during pregnancy. This epidemic is thus portrayed as a classed issue, and the status of such obesogenic mothers as stigmatised. The case of the Paiges can then be seen as an attempt to distance oneself from such moral objections and labels. It can also be seen as an instance where the stigmatising public discourse guides the individual to take action in a way that responds to the public objectives of good health and order or, in other words, as an instance of healthism (Crawford 1980; Skrabanek 1994; Rose 1999). Healthism refers to the idea that neoliberalism has placed the problem of health and disease at the level of the individual, away from the shoulders of the government. This responsibility happens particularly through advertising and other means of persuasion (Rose 1999) such as the media.

Secondly, attention is drawn to the raw food diet as well as the dietary supplements. Of these, the former refers to the consumption of food which is not cooked and is not industrially processed. Thus, the ingredients are believed to have retained more of their natural nutrients. This, however, seems to be in a slight juxtaposition with the industrially manufactured dietary supplements. This dichotomy is reminiscent of the ideology of “Do-It-Yourself Wellness” proposed by Thompson (2004) in his analysis of the natural health marketplace. This ideology draws on the mythic promises of both nature as maternal power as well as the gnostic metaphor of technology as divine tool. However, the article then goes on to juxtapose the information the Paiges had received from an unknown source to the authority of GPs and scientifically qualified nutritionists. Thus, their case, and thereby veganism, is framed in terms of the negative stereotype of “ethereal New Age believers” (Thompson and Troester 2002, 566). In essence, the article then acts as a warning against natural healing practices. Moreover, it acts as a promoter of national health guidelines and the idea that what constitutes a “proper meal” is the traditional “meat and two veg” (Keane and Willetts 1994, 15). Both of these aspects are in line with the conservative and neoliberal values the *Mail* professes to espouse.

The third and final strand of this framing consists of vegan misfits, eccentrics (see also Cole and Morgan 2011) and hate figures. These included, for instance, religious fanatics of other denominations such as druids and Seventh Day Adventists, including also some campaigns by PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment for Animals. These cases again used the rhetoric of Us versus Them in an attempt to separate the supposedly respectable *Daily Mail* readers from the negative deviants. While in this strand the vegans were not considered dangerous *per se* as in the first strand, they represented ideas which were deemed inappropriate and outside the realm of a respectable and normal society.

The issue of education, class and income should also be noted here. As was highlighted in the quote regarding the Kennedy case, vegan activists were often portrayed as work-shy (see also Barton and Davis 2018). This attitude was emphasised, for instance, in articles related to fracking protests. In one of them, titled “Benefits, a council house and non-stop partying. It’s a tough old life being a fracking protester!” (24 August 2013), it was reported that a fracking protest had allegedly turned into a mere party on the government’s expense. The story focused on a druid who was claimed to live his hippie lifestyle on various social benefits whilst causing severe problems to the local community, the police and legitimate businesses. The article states that “at least half [of the] protesters are on benefits,” highlighting the unemployed status of the protesters. Furthermore, the police are “complain[ing that the] site is becoming a ‘free festival’ after anarchists from Spain, France, Holland and Poland, among others, joined the party” and that the “[c]ost of policing operation [is] already £2.3million – likely to end up at £3.7million.” The article also notes that the “[m]ajority of local residents oppose fracking,” but also highlights that a “growing number are tiring of the chaos,” further creating a division between the activists and the supposedly respectable citizens. While it is not claimed in the article that all the protesters would be vegan on a permanent basis, it is stated that the free meals consumed at the protest are vegan provided by a non-profit organisation called “Veggies.” Thus, it is implied that veganism is an integral part of the lifestyle of these activists.

Again, the article then emphasises how the protesters are draining the resources of the tax paying citizens both by failing to be employed and by creating a need for an extensive police operation. This

is reminiscent of the Kennedy case as the protesters are portrayed as the undeserving “dole scroungers” who enjoy their “time rich” lives (Barton and Davis 2018, 10) by partying on the expense of the busy tax payers. Interestingly, by also highlighting the international nature of the group of “anarchists,” the story is also apt at inciting Euroscepticism and further hatred towards the demonstration.

In relation to issues such as fracking and badger culling (which was believed to stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis), vegan protesters were also often framed as having opinions about issues they did not understand thus showing a lack of education. For instance, in an article on 30 August 2013, a *Mail* reporter follows a “strictly vegan” saboteur in her war on the badger culls. The article reads:

[A local farmer says:] ‘These anarchists don’t know the first thing about the countryside or animals.’ Certainly, this seems true of eco-warrior Lynne. I ask her a series of questions as we patrol the ‘cull-zone’ – how long do badgers usually live; how many make up a typical family; do they hibernate? – to be met by a series of ‘not sure’ and ‘I’ll have to look that up’. Her ignorance was disconcerting. It added to the sense that the act of sabotage was an end in it itself, and the creatures she purported to defend scarcely mattered.

Whilst this quote highlights the lack of knowledge of these protestors, it also frames vegan activists as attention seeking, and vegans as promoting anarchism for anarchism’s sake. Thus, the aims of the animal activist are also trivialised and their character is called into question. Overall, in terms of Rosie and Gorringer (2009), this could also be seen as an instance of a disjuncture between campaign objectives and media frames. As anarchism has re-emerged as a form of political expression for radical social change (Gordon 2007), there has been a need to contain the threat and manage the boundary between anarchism and a “respectable protest” by the media. Thus, by focusing on supposedly mindless violence on behalf of the grass roots movement, this distracts from the underlying issue at hand and delimits the boundaries of debate (Rosie and Gorringer 2009).

The most notable single case in this frame, however, was that of Heather Mills, the ex-wife of the Beatle Sir Paul McCartney (see also Cole and Morgan 2011). In 2008–2011 the *Daily Mail* ran a total of 59 stories which connected her to veganism, and in 2009 approximately a third of all vegan stories were about Mills. However, by 2008, she had become hate figure in the British press. In fact, in a survey conducted by *Marketing* magazine, she was voted as the most hated celebrity whilst Sir Paul emerged as the most loved celebrity in Britain (Rohrer 2008). Again, then, there is a clear divide between good and evil, Us (team “Macca”) and Them (team “Mucca”). Thus, while Sir Paul is portrayed as a wholesome British icon and as part of the cultural heritage, the newspaper portrayed Mills as a gold digging, fame hungry woman. Furthermore, in the tabloid, her veganism was framed as an attempt to polish her tarnished image. The framing, however, made Mills come across as a fake as the *Mail* sarcastically posits that her “love for this multi-millionaire was so powerful that, overnight, Lancashire hotpot-loving Heather discovered she had been a vegan all along! Heather is brilliant at faking it” (18 March 2008, titled “Heather’s no better than an escort girl”). In this way, her veganism was framed as a fad thus “serving to ridicule veganism by association” (Cole and Morgan 2011, 144). In contrast with later celebrity stories, this is then an instance where the status of being a celebrity does not grant the aura of positive deviancy, as both the behaviour and Mills’ character are evaluated negatively (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015) by the media. Thus, her veganism merely placed her more firmly in the category of the negatively deviant.

As noted above, in this study it is not possible to ascertain the final component of stigma, the level of exclusion and discrimination of vegans. Nevertheless, it is now time to return to the rest of Link and Phelan’s (2001) definition of stigma. Thus, veganism here is the distinguishing label. The negative stereotypes associated with this label in this data abound: they were portrayed as terrorists and criminals, misfits and eccentrics, and uneducated and ill-informed fanatics who were both harmful to themselves as well as those they were to protect. As has been detailed above, the boundary work which leads to a separation between Us and Them was clear, and the aim of it was to separate these negative deviants from the in-group so as to protect the values of the group and to avoid contamination. Finally, the power here is in the hands of the media institution as it has access to social power which allows the construction of stereotypes and the ability to distribute disapproval and rejection by

its choice of topics, words and frames. However, despite this initial negative coverage, the portrayal of veganism was about to change as a wide array of celebrities appropriated veganism as a diet for aesthetic reasons.

Positive deviance: veganism as a celebrity fashion

The turning point in the framing can be placed between 2010 and 2011. This is the time period when the overall number of articles related to veganism along with the celebrity fashion framing increased considerably (see Figure 2). Concurrently, positive sentiment within the data also began to increase dramatically (see Figure 1). In fact, this is also the time period when the number of A-list celebrity vegans also increased noticeably.¹ The trend of the vegan diet was then promoted by associating an ever increasing list of celebrities with veganism and by highlighting the rise of the trend in no uncertain terms. Veganism is “Hollywood’s hottest eating plan” (7 October 2014) and “Veganism is currently an on trend diet – Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez among celebrities ditching animal products” (10 November 2014), it was, for instance, announced. Drawing a clear line between the celebrity trend and the earlier portrayal of veganism, it was also reported that: “Once associated with extreme fussy eaters and devoted animal rights activists, veganism is now becoming cool thanks to a number of celebrities embracing the diet” (10 November 2014). Thus, this framing saw veganism enter the world of Hollywood glitterati where patronising a “trendy,” “celebrity hotspot” vegan restaurant became a paparazzi moment through the association with the positive deviants.

Despite a whole host of celebrities joining the movement, the most powerful celebrity endorsers were arguably singer Beyoncé and rapper Jay Z who went on a 22-day long plant-based diet at the end of 2013. Given that at the time Beyoncé was ranked as the most powerful celebrity in the world with husband Jay Z following in 6th place (Forbes 2014), this is by no means an inconsequential fad, and the *Daily Mail* followed their every vegan step with 15 stories in December 2013 alone. The following year also saw another sharp increase in the number of articles within the celebrity fashion frame as well as the overall positive sentiment (see Figures 1 and 2), which provides further evidence to the importance of this event.

The framing of the 22-day diet did not, however, highlight ethical or political reasons. The first story in the data related to it, for instance, focuses entirely on the pair’s appearance as they made their first visit to a vegan restaurant. The emphasis on the aesthetics is also highlighted by the fact that the story includes no less than four paparazzi pictures which is in stark contrast with the sparse text, which focuses on detailing what the pair was seen wearing. Thus, in the article, titled “We’d recognise those legs anywhere! Beyoncé showcases her pins in tiny shorts as she goes vegan for 22 days with Jay Z” (4 December 2013), the focus is drawn to how to dress like them:

She may have a very famous face, but Beyoncé’s fantastic legs are also impossible not to notice. And although she was enjoying a low-key meal after temporarily going vegan with her husband Jay Z, the singer drew attention to her long pins by putting them on display. Beyoncé dressed in a pair of teeny tiny black leather shorts, and lengthened her legs even further with matching platform boots for lunch in West Hollywood on Tuesday. The 32-year-old was also sporting a T-shirt under a black, white and red jacket in tweed and leather. The former Destiny’s Child star wore her blonde locks tousled in a beach babe style and completed her look with several rings. – [Jay Z], 43, was dressed in a navy shirt and beanie, black trousers and grey high-top trainers. The golden couple then piled in a car and sped off, presumably eager to get back to their daughter Blue Ivy. – Jay Z revealed on his website that he and his wife would be practising veganism for just over three weeks.

In this article, the *Mail* then portrays the “golden couple” as experts in lifestyle (Lewis 2007, 2010) which is highlighted by how eager they presumably were to get back to their daughter. Thus, Beyoncé

¹All in all, celebrities associated with veganism in the data included actors Gwyneth Paltrow, Pamela Anderson, Natalie Portman, Portia de Rossi, Jared Leto, Samuel L. Jackson and Brad Pitt, musicians and singers Paul McCartney, Dave Grohl, Gwen Stefani, Morrissey and Jennifer Lopez, talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, models Christie Brinkley, Daisy Lowe, Miranda Kerr and Jourdan Dunn, reality star Kelly Osbourne, boxer Mike Tyson and former US president Bill Clinton, to name but a few. Note, however, that this does not necessarily mean that they are full-time, long-term vegans or that they are vegans for ethical reasons.

in particular is portrayed as a “cultural icon of femininity, the ‘supermom’ who effortlessly [can] do it all” (Thompson 1996, 388). Moreover, the focus is entirely on the aesthetics and on how the consumer can imitate the couple through consumption. Hence, they are also portrayed as experts in consumption (Hackley and Hackley 2015), with the *Mail* thus urging the readers to follow their example. This consumerist orientation is further emphasised by the fact that the article was linked to a follow-up story “Mix it up in a tartan and leather biker by Junya Watanabe” instructing the readers also how to get the look for less.

Of course, what is also of interest here is the fact that Beyoncé wore leather to a vegan restaurant and, in fact, also dressed in fur on another occasion. This attracted attention and speculation related to her knowledge about veganism (“Are you fur real? Beyonce makes for an unconvincing vegan as she steps out for lunch with Jay Z on new plant-based diet,” 6 December 2013). This shows the emerging boundary between veganism as a moral and political lifestyle, on the one hand, and the plant-based *diet*, on the other. Indeed, in the initial announcement, mentioned in the above quote, Jay Z himself had also called the stint “a spiritual and physical cleanse” (7 December 2013; see also Jay Z 2013), thus clearly distancing them from the political aims of the animal rights movement. In such a way, it is also possible to avoid stigma by association (Argo and Main 2008; see also Casais and Proença 2012). This, then, is an instance where, through boundary work, veganism clearly became disassociated from animal rights and instead became associated with the positive deviants. Indeed, the status of the couple as positive deviants is highlighted with notions such as calling them the “golden couple,” and drawing attention to their fame and their unbeatable looks and dress sense.

Instead of ethical or environmental reasons, what reportedly then sparked the pair’s interest in the vegan diet was their friend, exercise physiologist Marco Borges. In fact, Jay Z (2013) had already directed the attention of his followers to Borges’s latest venture “22 Days Nutrition” in his initial announcement of the diet. Among others, the company (see <https://www.22daysnutrition.com/>) sells plant-based protein shakes and bars, offers a meal delivery service, and sells cookbooks for a plant-based diet. The stint could then be seen as a publicity stunt to promote Borges’s brand. In this way, celebrities can become involved in the co-optation or appropriation of veganism (Frank 1997; Heath and Potter 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007) whereby a previously radical and marginal consumption phenomenon is transformed into “a constellation of trendy commodities and depoliticized fashion styles” (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007, 136).

However, while the influence of Beyoncé and Jay Z undoubtedly was considerable, the celebrity endorsement of veganism was certainly not limited to them. Singer Jennifer Lopez, for instance, was also reportedly joining the movement. In one article, the emphasis is again on Lopez’s toned body, which she had achieved partly through the vegan diet (“Wild thing! Jennifer Lopez shows off pert posterior in plunging jungle print leotard as she puts on high energy show at iHeartRadio gig,” 29 June 2014). The article, once again abundant in pictures highlighting the singer’s toned frame, focuses on her diet and exercise regime thus urging the readers to follow in her footsteps. Again, Borges’s products are also listed as a recommended aid in achieving an aesthetically pleasing body:

She recently dropped 10 pounds with a strict vegan diet and rigorous dance workouts. And Jennifer Lopez showed off the fruits of her labor in a plunging multi-coloured leotard with corset style detail as she took to the stage – When J-Lo’s not dining on quinoa enchiladas, black-bean burgers, and zucchini ‘pasta’ – she indulges in Borges’ 22 Days cherry chocolate bliss bar.

Thus, to a great extent the coverage of the new celebrity vegans focused on the weight-loss aspects. This was the case not only for Beyoncé, Jay Z and Jennifer Lopez, but also, for instance, for celebrities such as Jessica Simpson and Kelly Osbourne, to name but a few. These instances are reminiscent of Bourdieu’s (1978) notion of body for others by which he means the cultivation of slim, trim bodies through which one seeks to increase their symbolic (and economic) capital. Veganism was also often listed on the diet comparisons around New Year’s Eve. Here, the emphasis is more on putting the body right (Bourdieu 1984). In other words, periods of hedonism are counterbalanced by a diet as short term fixes to balance the overindulgences of the previous periods. Similarly, Jay Z’s emphasis

on the “cleansing” properties of the 22-day diet also underline the idea that the body can somehow be purified or reset by temporary abstinence from substances which are harmful to the body (cf. more long term strategy of pursuing the goal of purification in Thompson and Troester 2002). It thus became evident that veganism was mainly seen as a short-term weight-loss regime aimed at aesthetic considerations rather than an ethical, political or environmental choice, or even a long-term diet for a healthier life.

In addition to stories regarding veganism as a tool for honing the body, there were, of course, also some stories about animal rights and celebrity altruism (see also Hopkinson and Cronin [2015] on celebrity led activist campaigns). Among these cases were celebrities such as actress Pamela Anderson and rock musician Morrissey. Generally, the media framed them both as altruistic, long-term animal activists. Therefore, they were also framed as positive deviants, as their behaviour is positively evaluated. However, the main form of political activism (mostly) approved by the *Daily Mail* was People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) even though earlier, as has been noted above, the *Mail* had had a rather antagonistic attitude towards PETA.

Indeed, earlier PETA had been shunned due to its shock tactics in advertising and its supposedly fanatical outlook on animal rights issues. However, the strategy of using beautiful female celebrities, who were invariably practically naked in the promotional pictures, received the approval of the *Mail*. Whilst PETA did gain a great deal of positive publicity in this way, the downside of this development was that often the vegan side of the story was merely used to promote the given celebrity or to promote their latest venture. Thus, the issue of veganism and animal rights was quickly subsumed with tangents about their other projects. Here, modelling for PETA merely seemed to be another promotional opportunity for the celebrity, and PETA’s radical message was diluted. Even in the case of animal activism, the media framing thus effectively decoupled veganism from its political, “extremist,” animal rights roots and transformed it into a consumption fashion which could not cause offense. In other words, through boundary work, the media is able to separate the positive deviants from the dangerous and stigmatised aspects of the original vegan movement. Therefore, whilst PETA arguably is a political and at times extremist organisation at heart, it was accepted when it was packaged in an aestheticised fashion and thereby allowed the magazine-like, human interest story (Cole 2007) about the glitterati to dominate.

It should, however, also be noted that this framing did include stories about non-celebrities as well. Most notable example of this is the Youtube vlogger “Freelee the Banana Girl,” who reportedly mainly ate bananas even during pregnancy. The reason for this is that whilst Freelee started as an “average” person, she became a celebrity, or perhaps more accurately a celetoid (Rojek 2001), in her own right through her vlog and through the controversy she created in the media. The debate focused particularly on her obsessiveness in maintaining a slim figure. More specifically, the controversy was caused by the extreme measures she allegedly used even during pregnancy thus potentially jeopardising not only her own health but also that of her unborn child (see also Cain 2013). Her advice also clearly contradicted the consensus of the scientific, medical community, which emphasises the importance of a varied diet, and specialists were often interviewed to give their opinion on the diet. Thus, the obsessiveness towards aesthetics, the disregard for the recommendations of doctors and the scientific community, her cult status as a popular culture opinion leader and the lack of any political or ethical intent with regards to animal rights or environmental considerations placed her firmly in this frame.

More importantly, however, this is an instance of where the positive deviancy turns sour as the supposedly positive behaviour of maintaining a slim figure is, in fact, evaluated negatively. Indeed, at first Freelee was even admired with notions such as:

Having suffered from both anorexia and bulimia in the past, Freelee claims that adopting her low fat, high carbohydrate, raw, vegan diet saw her shed 40 lb or 2st 12 lb as well as clearing up her acne, chronic fatigue syndrome, low thyroid function and terrible digestion. Often receiving negative comments for being too thin, Freelee – has nonetheless gained 166,000 subscribers on her YouTube channel preaching the benefits of her lifestyle. Sporting a washboard flat stomach and lean limbs, it is easy to see why many are won over,

especially since a key point of her diet is never to restrict calories, often eating well over daily calorie recommendations. (11 April 2014)

Such quotes show that the intentions of Freelee are admired in that her goal of maintaining a healthy, beautiful and lean body is positively valued by the report. However, as the article notes, Freelee also often received negative comments for actually being “too thin.” This is reminiscent of the so-called rate busting students who are viewed negatively despite their supposedly good intentions as they take the good behaviour too far in the eyes of the other students. Indeed, the coverage turned increasingly sour as the extent of her extremist views was exposed. One article, for instance, reads:

She hit headlines and divided opinions with her extreme ‘raw til four’ low-fat, high-carbohydrate vegan diet. But now FreeLee the Banana girl – is generating further controversy. She now says chemotherapy is dangerous and kills people, and claims losing her period for nine months was good for her. (15 July 2014)

As in the case of Heather Mills, the extremist views of Freelee then “serv[ed] to ridicule veganism by association” (Cole and Morgan 2011, 144). Moreover, this example also shows how the dynamics of positive deviance can be managed by the media institution as her non-conformity becomes negatively evaluated. The importance of this stigma management strategy will become clearer with the third and final frame where the dynamics of positive deviance are used to further separate the destigmatising framing from the celebrity trend.

Destigmatisation: veganism as a healthy diet

In comparison with veganism as a celebrity trend, the destigmatising framing portrayed veganism as a scientifically proven, healthy (supplement to a) diet (see also so-called health vegetarians in Beverland 2014), as opposed to a diet for aesthetic, weight-loss reasons which, due to its connotations of faddism, became the target of ridicule. Compared to both the stigmatising and celebrity fashion framing, it also highlighted the economic and cultural capital the new breed of vegans was seen to possess. In comparison with stigmatising portrayal of political veganism, it also emphasised veganism as an apolitical diet aimed at distinction and obligation to oneself. Thus, overall the media portrayal of veganism was transformed from an all-encompassing, moral lifestyle to a plant-based *diet*.

The *Daily Mail* highlighted this normalisation of veganism in no uncertain terms. It was, for instance, reported that there were 40% more people pledging to go vegan for a month (“Veganuary”) in the first two months of 2013 compared with the same period in 2012. Similarly, in a *Daily Mail* article on 10 April 2013 it is noted that “Google Trends reported that interest in veganism is at an all-time high.”

This attempt at destigmatisation took place through framing veganism as a healthy diet. Thus, firstly, the *Mail* highlighted the rationality of veganism. In the data, several studies and scientific, expert information related to the health benefits of veganism (e.g. in terms of diabetes, cancer, metabolic syndrome, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, lower mortality, obesity) were used to support this claim. The claim was also further supported by role models such as tennis star Venus Williams and former US president Bill Clinton who gave an aura of credibility to the diet. Both Clinton and Williams had opted for a vegan diet, albeit part-time veganism, under doctor’s orders, in order to improve their health and to live a long, healthy life. In other words, the diet is used as a preventative measure against illness, which can be seen as an instance of the “medicalization of everyday life” (Crawford 1980) and, hence, a further instance of healthism (see also Skrabanek 1994; Rose 1999). Thus, in contrast with the celebrity fashion framing, which emphasised weight-loss and beauty, the destigmatising framing highlighted health.

In particular, in this frame, flexible part-time veganism was promoted in order to reap the benefits but to avoid the potential, harmful side effects. In fact, the *Mail* reported that some experts again warn against long-term veganism:

However some nutritionists argue that veganism isn't necessarily the answer for a long, healthy life as it may lead to followers being deficient in protein, iron and other vitamins and minerals – [Instead] you can follow the plan for a set period, like Beyonce and Jay-Z, or on certain days of the week. (10 November 2014)

Thus, whereas the stigmatised frame had highlighted malnutrition, lack of knowledge and being blinded by ethical convictions, and whereas celebrity fashion framing ignored the issue of health and focused instead on superficial and dangerous obsession with beauty, destigmatised framing highlighted scientific data, education and rational thought (see also Thompson and Hirschman 1995). It framed veganism as a healthy diet or, perhaps more accurately, as a healthy supplement to a diet. Thus, this is reminiscent of what Featherstone (1982) calls “calculating hedonism.” In other words, by balancing hedonism and asceticism one can both enjoy life and maintain or acquire a beautiful, healthy body. In contrast with the previous frame, however, the emphasis here is more on the health aspects of the diet and on supplementing the diet with veganism, rather than using veganism as a temporary or so-called crash diet. This is how the boundaries between stigmatised and destigmatised veganism, on the one hand, and between destigmatised veganism and the celebrity trend, on the other, are being formed.

How this new found status translated into practical advice for readers included, for instance, recipe tips where vegan modifications were placed next to their “normal” variants, thus normalising this option. In this way, the boundaries between the plant-based diet and the omnivorous diet are being blurred by the *Mail*. However, there were also articles about, for instance, luxury holidays, health retreats and spas, exclusive environmentally friendly schools, as well as restaurants and events which were vegan friendly.

This highlights the need for both cultural and economic capital. It also highlights the distinction this new type of veganism confers. Firstly, one had to have enough economic capital to afford these suggestions and, secondly, enough cultural capital to appreciate and to blend into such establishments (see also Elliott 2013; Laidley 2013; Carfagna et al. 2014). In addition, the body is an important factor in gaining distinction as it is a symbol of differences in taste and class (Bourdieu 1984) as well as a symbol of self-surveillance as regards to excess weight, in particular (Price 2000; Guthman 2003). Therefore, the distinction here is also made in relation to those consumers who do not have the self-control and the sensibilities to look after their bodies and their health (see also Bourdieu 1984). The issue of wealth, on the other hand, is highlighted particularly in comparison with the stigmatising framing. Whereas destigmatised framing focused on well-to-do professionals who could afford to exercise veganism through specialised home delivery services, restaurants and holiday retreats, the latter had an image of low cultural capital activists who were allegedly work shy and lived in eco-communes, as was highlighted, for instance, by the Kennedy case. Using reason to promote the diet also emphasised the fact that destigmatised veganism was intended to appeal to readers of higher cultural capital and educational level (see Holt 1997).

The issue of cultural capital also raises its head in relation to what distinguishes destigmatising framing from the previous framing of veganism as a celebrity fashion. There were, for instance, several instances where the celebrity adherents were used to justify the new-found “acceptability” of veganism:

The diet gained popularity after singer Beyoncé and rapper Jay-Z went vegan for 22 days – The increasing acceptability of a vegan diet has been fuelled by a number of celebrities admitting they have adopted it. (22 January 2014)

Such quotes suggest that, indeed, certain types of veganism were now becoming normalised and destigmatised, and that this destigmatisation arose due to the celebrity fashion. Particularly, it seems that the increasing number of male vegans such as Bill Clinton and even the former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson now also helped to solidify the image of veganism. The *Mail*, for instance, posits that:

[P]eople, especially men, used to be macho in their desire to eat meat but – many influential men are now admitting they believe a vegan diet is healthier – making the diet more socially acceptable. (22 January 2014)

This is significant as meat consumption has traditionally been associated with notions of power, distinction, control, and wealth, whereas those opting for plant-based diets have been seen in oppositional terms, as deviant, weak, and poor (e.g. Adams 1990; Stevens, Kearney, and Maclaran 2013; Beverland 2014). Deriving from this binary, meat consumption has been associated with masculinity (Adams 1990; Stevens, Kearney, and Maclaran 2013; Beverland 2014), whereas plant-based diets have been deemed as inappropriate for men. Furthermore, as Cole and Morgan (2011) argue, faddism claims are frequently associated with women's subculture as a trivialisation strategy. Similarly, they argue that the discourse of the "over-sensitive" vegan plays to a female stereotype of sentimentality. However, when there is an increasing number of male role models, especially men with connotations of raw manliness (Tyson) or power and rationality (Clinton), this dissolves some of the feminine faddism and over-sensitivity connotations. Thus, it helps to break some of the traditional connotations of opting for a plant-based diet as a sign of weakness or femininity.

Nevertheless, while celebrities were utilised to highlight the acceptability of veganism, there was also a clear sense that mindlessly following celebrity advice is foolish. Such concerns arose particularly in reference to celebrities who were not seen as representing rationality and authority, and were thus negatively evaluated by the media. Actress and self-appointed lifestyle guru Gwyneth Paltrow, for instance, was often used as an example of vegan faddism (see also Cole and Morgan 2011), again highlighting the gendered nature of this strategy. On the other hand, some men were also subjected to such treatment. Indeed, while Tyson was used to promote veganism in that he blurred the boundaries between masculine and feminine diets, the *Mail* also turned against him particularly after the launch of his autobiography "Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth." For instance, one article which accounts the story of Tyson's break away from his controversial past reads:

Tyson has been in and out of rehab in recent years, and has now become a Muslim and a vegan. – Tyson himself, though, admits to having relapsed on occasion. 'Sometimes I just fantasise about blowing somebody's brains out so I can go to prison for the rest of my life,' – The once swaggering bully cuts a pathetic figure now. – [R]ead the book or watch the stage-show and you'll see precious little evidence of repentance from a man who still seems distinctly proud of his truly awful past. (16 November 2013)

Similarly to the case of Freelee, the status of Tyson is thus being renegotiated by the *Mail*, and veganism seems to merely add to the irrational and erratic nature of his persona thus, again, "serving to ridicule veganism by association" (Cole and Morgan 2011, 144). The same line of argument was also used in other articles, such as when the *Mail* describes Tyson's erratic behaviour in a TV interview where he was asked why he had become a vegan:

Iron Mike took a question from [TV host] Curry about why he'd given up meat – and turned his answer into a confession about why he's given up hookers. 'You're a vegan?' asked Curry. 'What changed you?' – 'There's too many prison cells, too many jails, too many lawsuits, too many bankruptcies, too many women, too many venereal diseases, too many everything,' the boxing icon told his host. 'I'm sorry, I was a prostitute hunter,' admitted Tyson, before finally being cut off by Curry. (19 June 2012, titled "I was a prostitute hunter! Mike Tyson blurts out bizarre confession ... after being asked why he became a Vegan.")

The irrationality of celebrities and, by extension, the irrationality of following celebrity advice corresponds well with the argument by Üstüner and Holt (2010). They posit that, unlike consumers with high cultural capital, consumers with low cultural capital often refer to celebrities as their role models and copy their consumption styles. Therefore, celebrity emulation is not deemed suitable for consumers of high class. Indeed, the issue of (ir)rationality was often referred to in relation to the celebrity fashion framing. It was, for instance, argued that celebrity trends often do not last very long and can be taken to an unhealthy extreme. For instance, on 18 December 2013 an article, referring to scientific authority, was very critical about following self-appointed celebrity lifestyle gurus:

A paper published in the Christmas edition of *The British Medical Journal* said celebrity medical advice can be a health hazard – The researchers also believe that consumers want to buy into public figures’ ‘social capital’ in the belief that owning the same products and taking celebrity advice allows them to rise in social status and buy into their lifestyle. The study has called on doctors to warn their patients about the dangers of following celebrity advice. – Steven J Hoffman, lead author of the study, said: – ‘[The power of the celebrities] can be harnessed to disseminate information based on the best available research evidence, or it can be abused to promote useless products and bogus treatments.’

The article does not claim that veganism is unhealthy but does urge the readers to exercise caution and common sense. Moreover, it warns against celebrity emulation, as celebrity advice cannot always be trusted or can be taken to the extreme. In fact, Beyoncé and Jay Z’s 22-day vegan diet is positioned next to the example of Gwyneth Paltrow who reportedly is “fighting ‘evil genes’ that cause cancer, by eating fresh food” and asking her fans to follow suit. Again, Paltrow’s argument is reminiscent of the “ethereal New Age believers” (Thompson and Troester 2002, 566), and implying that celebrity veganism belongs to the same ideology and is related to the same celebrity faddism takes away credibility from veganism as a movement. In this way, the dynamics of positive deviancy are managed again, and they become framed as “rate busters.” The positively deviant, in being framed as having gone too far in their obsession with health and beauty, is then in fact valued negatively. This is also why I argue that the celebrity fashion framing does not mean destigmatisation but is still seen as something deviant and abnormal despite its connection to the glitterati. A separate destigmatising frame was thus required for veganism to appeal to the *Mail* readers.

The final aspect of the destigmatisation framing to be discussed is its relation to political action. As noted above, the celebrity fashion framing turned veganism into an apolitical, aestheticised form of consumption, which seemed to bear very little resemblance to the political, moral lifestyle choice highlighted by the stigmatising framing. The destigmatising framing upheld this trend. With only a few exceptions to the rule, almost all instances of animal rights and environmental arguments promoting veganism appeared in the stigmatising framing, or alternatively, as part of celebrity driven, “charismatic” PETA campaigns. Through boundary work, the attention was then diverted away from animal rights or environmental activism, protests, political festivals and rallies which had featured quite heavily in the stigmatising framing of veganism, even when they had been ridiculed and trivialised.

Instead, the main promotional claim for veganism in the destigmatised framing was the health aspect. Thus, the emphasis here was on obligation to oneself (Johnston 2008) through consumption, not on political action aimed at the good of the commons (Johnston 2008) or at a major upheaval of the current moral order. One could, of course, argue that health-motivated veganism is an entry point into global ethical issues (Johnston 2008). However, the part-time nature of it, along with the lack of connotations of political resistance to the exploitation of animals or the environment, seem distanced from the original aim of veganism. In fact, these connotations make it seem more like a niche market where specialised goods allow privileged consumers to achieve distinction (Johnston 2008). Vegan fare thus seems to have taken its place as the new “yuppie chow” (Guthman 2003), as a medium to show one’s class position through fresh, healthy ingredients, the air of asceticism, the exclusivity and good karma, and its potential as a medium for self-surveillance.

Discussion

Why would the media in general or the *Daily Mail* in particular then first portray veganism as stigmatised, and then as destigmatised and even fashionable at this particular moment? Moreover, what is the role of celebrities as positive deviants in this process? The discursive framing perspective of the role of media in the destigmatisation of veganism, which is presented in [Figure 3](#), aims to explain this.

Of interest here is first the symbiotic relationship between celebrities and the news media. This relationship is most obvious in the organisational context, which is shown in the middle of the

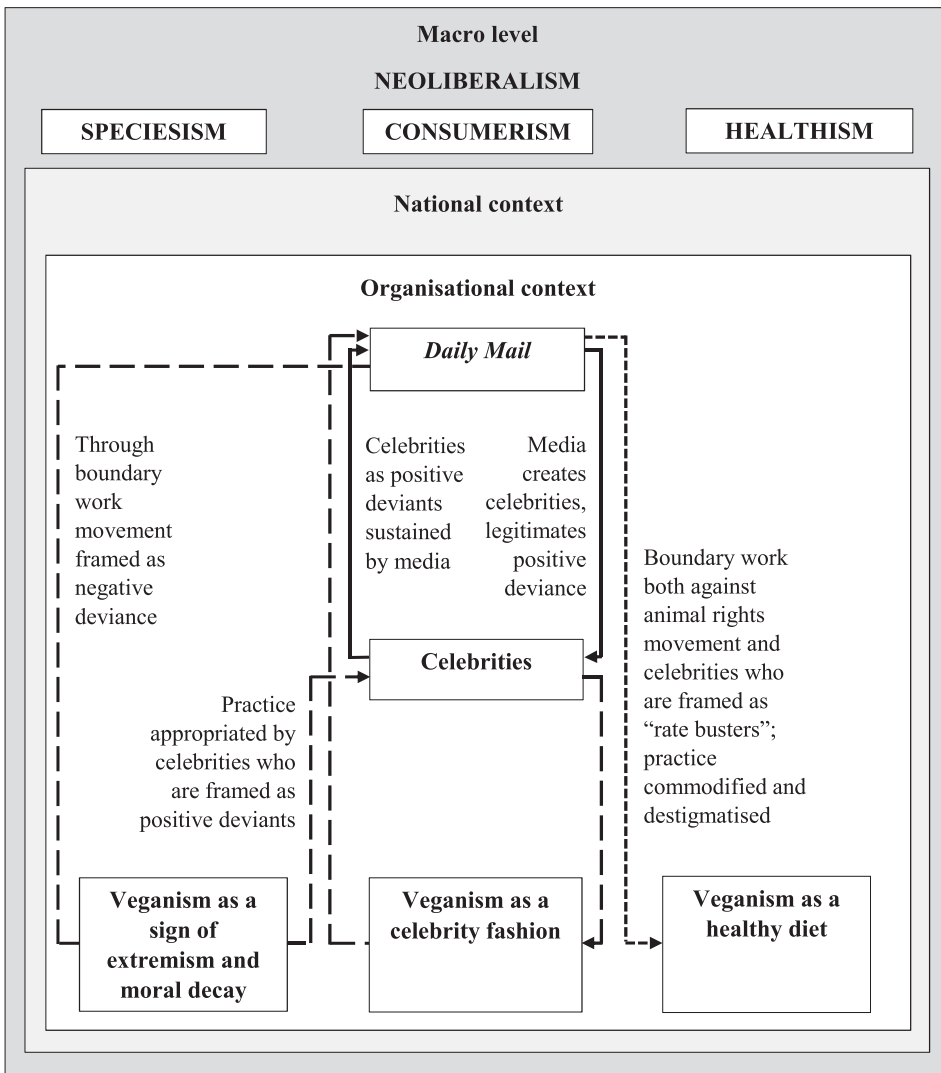


Figure 3. A discursive framing perspective of the role of media in the destigmatisation of veganism.

figure. Here, the inner feedback loop, drawn with a solid line, shows the interdependence of media and celebrities. It is the media, such as the *Daily Mail*, who create celebrities. Indeed, this relationship is built in to the very definition of celebrities. Boorstin ([1962] 2012, 57), for instance, simply defines celebrities by their “well-knownness,” which arises from their visibility in the media (see also Driessens 2013). In fact, a celebrity truly only exists in the public imagination through the media (e.g. Boorstin [1962] 2012, 61; Fraser and Brown 2002; Kerrigan et al. 2011; Cocker, Banister, and Piacentini 2015). To a large extent then, celebrities rely on media to increase their visibility, status and earning power and are, therefore, sustained by the media. As Kerrigan et al. (2011, 1505) argue, celebrities carefully construct “celebrity activity and stage celebrity spectacle, which makes for media product.” Thus, they state that “Celebrity, spectacle, and media interests live in entangled relation, feeding off and energising one another symbiotically. Celebrity culture makes news.” (see also Cashmore 2010; Lundahl 2014; Cocker, Banister, and Piacentini 2015). In terms of stigma, it is then the media who frames celebrity as positive deviance or, in Weber’s (1947) terms, legitimate their charismatic authority.

The second feedback loop in the figure, drawn with a dashed line, is the flow of meanings between the media, via the stigmatising frame, to celebrities, and further via the celebrity frame, back to the media. As explored earlier and as will be analysed in more detail later on, previously the *Mail* has had an antagonistic attitude towards veganism. It had portrayed it as negative deviance and thus distanced the *Mail* and its readers from the practice through boundary work. However, the framing changed when celebrities appropriated and co-opted some of the aspects of veganism. In order to do so, boundary work in terms of reducing veganism to an apolitical diet by both the celebrities and the media was required to separate the positively deviant from the stigmatised movement. A reason for this arguably is that in order to stay interesting, novel and exciting, in other words, in order to build and sustain their positively deviant status, individual celebrities need to create new, interesting stories and trends. One way to do so is the appropriation and commodification of marginalised practices, cultures, and movements (see Zeisler 2016). In this data, this appropriation is perhaps the most obvious in the case of Beyoncé and Jay Z, and their personal trainer, Borges. In the figure, this appropriation is denoted by the arrow from the stigmatising framing to the celebrity trend framing via the celebrities.

Finally, once the celebrity trend is established, it is then transformed as suitable for the consumption of the ordinary readers in the form of destigmatised consumption practice. This is denoted by a dotted arrow from the *Mail* to the third and final frame as the new meanings related to veganism are further refined and transformed. This process takes place through boundary work and through the management of the dynamics of positive deviance, where the practice is separated both from celebrities and the original movement. Through such a process, particularly female celebrities become framed as “rate busters” who take the diet and the obsession with aesthetics too far, and hence become negatively evaluated. However, when the practice is separated from the rate busters, it is possible to turn a celebrity fashion, with its connotations of faddism and overzealousness, into a normalised consumption practice or, in other words, into a sign of conforming behaviour. This aspect is particularly crucial for the *Mail* as Cole (2007) argues that the *Mail* was “the first to realise how much newspapers could learn from magazines, particularly the technique of applying a current news story about a celebrity, a fashion or a fad to ‘ordinary’ *Mail* readers.” These magazine-like techniques then highlight the role of celebrities for the *Mail*’s profit-making logic, in particular.

Of course, one must also account for the national context within which the newspaper and the frames are situated. Brockington (2009), for instance, argues that the heightened income inequalities in the UK lead to a higher propensity for celebrity obsession. Thus, again, the impact of celebrity role models seems heightened here. The national context is also important for understanding how the macro level ideologies have helped to transform the image of veganism due to the heightened neo-liberal tendencies in the UK (Harvey 2005), which arguably then further enhance other related trends. These ideologies, shown on the highest level in Figure 3, firstly explain why, traditionally, the *Daily Mail* has attempted to stigmatise veganism.

The reason for this lies in the aims of the animal rights movement. Politically motivated veganism as practiced by the animal rights movement is essentially aimed at bringing down the ideology of speciesism. Speciesism, as explained above, refers to a form of prejudice against nonhuman animals, which is analogous to sexism and racism, and which shows a disregard for the discriminated group (Ryder 1983). Thus, veganism, for instance, questions the basic ideas regarding the omnivorous diet and the place of the human at the top of the food chain. However, as extant literature (e.g. Link and Phelan 2001) has explained, stigmatisation protects the interests of the powerful. Therefore, the marginalisation of political veganism can be seen as a way to protect the status quo from a challenge to the ideology of speciesism (see also Cole and Morgan 2011). If speciesism was overthrown, this would, for instance, have serious real life consequences for many industries which rely on animal-based products, from meat and dairy industries to fashion, to name but a few. As Beverland (2014) notes, meat and other animal-based industries are viewed by governments as vital to food security, economic wealth creation, job creation, and the identity of the nation. Thus, governments and these industries are likely to be eager to protect their interests. Similarly, if speciesism was

overthrown, this would threaten the individuals' freedom to choose from free markets, which is a key tenet of neoliberalism (Ayo 2012). As Herman and Chomsky (1988), for instance, argue that media as an institution protects the right-wing elitist and corporate interests, it is unlikely to propose such major upheavals which would destroy many industries.

Nevertheless, as has been shown above, there was a clear shift in the framing, and veganism became portrayed as a vehicle for health and weight-loss. I argue that the reason for this is that the media, via celebrities, has been able to harness veganism to uphold the ideologies of consumerism and healthism, both of which are linked to the overall neoliberal project (e.g. Rose 1999; Ayo 2012). Together, they make the current context such fertile ground for veganism.

Firstly, self-surveillance as regards to one's health is a direct link to healthism which, Rose (1999) argues, links the public objectives of good health and good order with the individuals' desire for health and well-being. Healthism assigns a key role to experts as it is experts who can tell us how to conduct and improve ourselves (Ayo 2012; see also Lewis 2008). These expert sources include, for instance, nutritionists and personal trainers as well as official expert guidelines such as the "Five a day" mantra promoted by the UK Department of Health regarding the amount of fruit and vegetables an individual should consume. This is shown in the data particularly through the reference to scientific authorities.

In addition, as Rose (1999) argues, the seduction to healthism takes place through advertising and media (see also Featherstone 1982). More specifically, media has framed celebrities as experts in lifestyle (Lewis 2007, 2010), consumption (Hackley and Hackley 2015) and, indeed, health (Hoffman and Tan 2013) by framing celebrity lifestyle as aspirational. Furthermore, by framing celebrity lifestyle as aspirational and by framing consumption as a way to emulate the celebrity lifestyle, the media perpetuates consumerism and thus the neoliberal project (see Ayo 2012) via the celebrities. Whilst this may not be intention of the individual celebrities, the celebrity culture combined with the media logic upholds the status quo.

These ideologies and trends, again, seem to be heightened in the case of the *Daily Mail*. Thus, it seems that the turnaround, in which veganism has been appropriated and changed from representing the layabout other to the symbol of leanness, self-monitoring and success, seems to be related to the same core values which at first made the *Mail* seem so opposed to veganism (see also Dhont and Hodson 2014). It is an ardent proponent of neoliberalism and taking charge of one's life. Therefore, the *Daily Mail* is likely to promote lower taxes and the responsibilities of individuals, and lobby for less government control. Hence, the *Mail* is, for instance, likely to take a harsh view on what it deems to be individuals who live off the money of the respectable tax payers, as was highlighted in the findings section regarding the first frame. On the other hand, it is also likely to promote healthism in which the individual has to take responsibility for their own actions. Thus, these different contexts seem mutually re-enforcing thereby giving rise to veganism as an apolitical consumption trend.

Conclusion

Understanding the role celebrities have in stigma relations is important as their effects can be felt in many different contexts. It is not, for instance, unknown for celebrities to become involved in the destigmatisation process by publicly announcing that they identify with a stigmatised group. Such examples range from Magic Johnson's announcement of HIV diagnosis (Brown and Basil 1995) to Robin Williams's struggles with mental health (Hoffner and Cohen 2017). However, it is also necessary to understand the role positive deviancy plays in this process, as extant literature has tended to overlook this concept (Shoenberger, Heckert, and Heckert 2015) even though it can provide a wealth of insights into (de)stigmatisation and into the diffusion of new meanings.

In response to these issues, this study has developed a discursive framing perspective of the role of media in the destigmatisation process of a consumption practice. In particular, the resulting framework has shown how the media institutions can use the positive deviants, particularly celebrities, in destigmatisation by managing both the boundaries of the stigmatised practice and the dynamics of

positive deviancy. In this way it is possible to turn a celebrity fashion, with its connotations of faddism and overzealousness, into a normalised consumption practice. Indeed, while extant literature has established that “celebrities function as a mode of economic production whereby cultural resources are celebritized in pursuit of marketplace appeals” (Brownlie and Hewer 2009), and that celebrities have become experts in lifestyle (Lewis 2007, 2010), consumption (Hackley and Hackley 2015) and health (Hoffman and Tan 2013), what this study aims to show is that this status is not static. In fact, this status depends on how the media negotiates their positive deviance. Hence, if the boundaries of the practice are not managed also in response to the celebrity trend, the behaviour will be evaluated negatively, as rate busting. Thus, the paper aims to show that the media also has a great role in facilitating which celebrity health messages are accepted and how they are diffused among the consumers.

Moreover, the study has attempted to contextualise the changing frames related to veganism in terms of the organisational, institutional, and national contexts as well as several macro level ideologies. Thus, I have argued that veganism was first portrayed as stigmatised in order to protect the status quo from the challenge to speciesism which the animal right movement represented. However, I have also shown how, via celebrities, the media has been able to harness veganism in a bid to uphold the ideologies of consumerism and healthism both of which are linked to the overall neoliberal project (e.g. Ayo 2012). Together, they make the current context such fertile ground for veganism. These macro level ideologies are then further emphasised by the national and organisational contexts.

These insights can also help to uncover some of the institutional forces which both facilitate and hinder the wider adoption of veganism. From the perspective of societal implications, then, it is important to note that, in the data, stigmatising portrayal of veganism is still prevalent and that the framing of veganism as a celebrity fashion was still by far the most dominating frame. Indeed, in 2014, 63.2% of the coverage consisted of celebrity fashion framing, whilst 24% of the coverage was destigmatising and 14.7% stigmatising. This is problematic as with its connotations of faddism, extreme weight-loss and beauty, and with its lack of political intent, veganism still seems to have a long way to go to become an accepted form of consumption because important aspects of veganism still remain stigmatised. Thus, due to its connotation of (feminine) celebrity faddism and crash dieting (or in terms of stigma, rate busting behaviour) it can fall out of favour as soon as new, fashionable diets become available. In fact, despite appearing as beyond normal, the positively deviant still lies closer to the stigmatised than to the destigmatised end of the spectrum (Warren 1980). Therefore, the framing of celebrity fashion should not be confused with destigmatisation.

All in all, what this also implies is that while the plant-based diet has now been accepted as a healthy (supplement to a) diet, there has not in fact been significant changes to the representation of veganism as a moral lifestyle, as the stigmatising framing still persists. Thus, the media representations have become divided depending on the motivations and, hence, the type of veganism which is practiced. This development, both the changes and the lack of changes to the framing of veganism, I argue to be reflection of the ideological forces at play: veganism seems to be accepted or utilised as long as it fits the ideological status quo or if it fits in with the profit-making aims of the media. In fact, it seems that the original message of the radical, political animal rights movement is transformed into a consumption trend to uphold neoliberalism.

Admittedly, there are some limitations in the current study in that it relies on a single media source. Thus, future research could include comparative research across different media sources and across a longer time period. It, for instance, seems that veganism is still currently fashionable but it remains to be seen how its status continues to develop. Avenues for future research could also include comparative work across national contexts where, for instance, neoliberal tendencies are less pronounced and where lesser income inequality prevails. This is important because Brockington (2009) argues that, as the income inequalities are heightened in the UK, this leads to a higher propensity for celebrity obsession. This may then have an effect on the findings of the study.

Another possible avenue for future research would be to consider the issue from the point of view of institutional theory and, for instance, consider the role of the different institutional entrepreneurs

in more detail. One could, for instance, explore the role of animal rights organisations in the process. As noted above, PETA, for instance, has attracted a great deal of attention with its publicity stunts and with its collaboration with celebrities. One could then argue PETA to be an institutional entrepreneur in the legitimisation of veganism, and its role could be explored in more detail.

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