

Eco-pedagogy, total liberation and responsible planetary citizens

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study explored how family, society, and the education system, by neglecting to teach animal ethics to children, encourage speciesist and anthropocentric thoughts. Moreover, this study also investigates the factors that played a critical role in making animal rights activists sensitive toward justice for animals and the barriers and misconceptions that discouraged human rights activists from being involved in veganism and animal ethics. I used Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as a theoretical framework to better understand human and non-human animal relationships. CAS helped to employ intersectionality and ethics of responsibility to challenge the dominant speciesism and anthropocentrism in human and non-human animal relationships. I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight Iranian human rights activists and seven Iranian animal rights activists ranging in age from 20 - 35 years. The qualitative research revealed that all participants started to get involved in human or non-human animal social justice activism due to experiencing oppression and human rights abuse under a religious dictatorship in Iran. Human rights activist participants never had the chance to learn about speciesism through family, society, and the education system. They have so many misconceptions about veganism and animal ethics, and these misconceptions make them avoid joining the movement. They understand the intersectionality of oppression, but they don't bring animals into their moral circle. I argue animal rights activists who want to create an alliance with other social justice movements for the total liberation of human and non-human animals from oppression should show them how the issue of justice for human and non-human animals is intertwined and interlinked.

Keywords: Animal rights, human rights, Veganism, Education, Intersectionality

FOREWORD

When I started my undergrad in environmental studies, which was followed by my Master's in the same program, my main concern was about the intersection of environmental protection, education, and animal ethics. I wanted to develop an understanding of the impacts that human lifestyle and food choices have on issues of environmental degradation. Moreover, by studying speciesism and its impacts on both humans and non-human animals, I wanted to learn about the intersection of human rights and animal rights. Specifically, I explored different schools of thought, including environmental education, humane education, critical animal studies, place-based education, total liberation, and eco-pedagogy. By looking at my area of concentration and learning objectives, I realize how this research helped me gain a deeper understanding of both my learning objectives components in the plan of study 1) trans-species social justice and responsible planetary citizens, 2) Environmental education and eco-pedagogy.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to all human and non-human animals who have suffered oppression and cruelty and to all who fight passionately for the liberation of earth, human and non-animal animals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

All around the world, humans have imprisoned thousands of millions of sentient beings in horrible conditions. The number of animals killed for human consumption is more than a hundred billion per year (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, p. 29). This number doesn't even include hundreds of millions of others killed each year in scientific laboratories or sport hunting and fishing, nor those killed by habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, and other anthropogenic environmental destruction (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, p. 1). As Francione (2021) writes, "we kill more animals in one year for food alone than the total number of human beings who have ever existed on the Earth" (p. 63). An anthropocentric understanding of world problems leads humans to close their eyes to all the pain, suffering, and death we impose on other sentient beings. Our actions, lifestyles, consumption patterns, and food choices have numerous and diverse impacts on the environment. Animal agriculture is a significant contributor to environmental degradation such as climate change, deforestation, soil degradation, dwindling water supplies, air pollution, and loss of biodiversity (Aleksandrowicz et al., 2016, p.1). In addition to the environmental degradation, the livestock industry contributes to food insecurity in the world. This industry withdraws more from the total food supply than it provides. Animal agriculture consumes 77 million tonnes of protein in feeds while only providing 58 million tonnes of protein (Steinfeld et al., 2006, p. 270). The livestock industry consumes more human food than it produces. Moreover, it contributes to increasing overall demand and prices for crops and agricultural inputs, which adds extra pressure to food insecurity in the world (Steinfeld et al., 2006, p. 270). Education could be a powerful tool to inform individuals about the consequences of their daily decisions and to bring them together to demand changes in policies and practices. Unfortunately, the dominant educational discipline in the world is very anthropocentric and human-supremacist, and it lacks the attention to animal ethics.

Introduction to the research method

In this research, I examine how the educational system (in the case of this research, the education system in Iran) promotes anthropocentric thoughts and raises children with human-centered and speciesist attitudes. I argue, education needs to be used to support a more sustainable relationship between humans and the rest of the planet. In this relationship, nature and animals would not be considered merely as resources for humans but would be appreciated and preserved for their intrinsic value. We need to develop a pedagogical method that includes ecological sustainability and social justice issues beyond the human. In this study, I use qualitative semi-structured interviews to learn from the life experiences of Iranian animal rights activists and human rights activists. My goal was first to listen and learn from the life experiences of each group, and at the end, to compare the responses of animal rights and human rights activists and try to find answers to my questions. By interpreting the interviews, I hope to find answers to my research questions:

1. How can education encourage responsible planetary citizens who are open to changing their habits and lifestyles to protect the environment and respect the rights of nonhuman animals?
2. Why do many social justice activists (mostly belonging to the left side of the political spectrum) stop their activism at the border of animal rights activism?
3. Finally, how can we create a bridge between animal rights activism and human rights activism?

In my research, I wanted to hear Iranian activists because I believe there have been very few studies examining their views on the above topics. As an Iranian animal rights activist who has always been concerned with issues of women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and human rights in Iran, I wanted to hear more about the experiences of other Iranian activists who have lived under an authoritarian religious dictatorship. I assume, for us Iranian human rights or animal rights activists, experiencing oppression has led us to be concerned about other oppressed groups. Moreover, I choose Iranians because I want to

examine the impact of living under an authoritarian dictatorship on the personal choices and life experiences of these activists. The interviews with animal rights activists will also help me find the challenges they face and possible improvements in the animal rights advocacy movement. The interviews with activists from other social justice movements will help me understand why they stopped their activism at the border of justice for animals. It can also help me to understand their knowledge and sense of responsibility about animal ethics. Finally, the responses from both groups will help me understand what is missing from our education system regarding social justice for animals. By examining and analyzing these interviews, I propose that we need a pedagogy that de-anthropocentrizes our education system. Moreover, I believe we need alliance politics and a bridge between human and nonhuman social justice activism.

Introduction to the five chapters

My paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces my research context. Chapter Two is a literature review of animal rights movements, the context of anthropocentrism and speciesism in education, and the intersectionality of human and non-human animal liberation. I started the literature review by investigating the roots of speciesism in our society and how it has shaped our relationships with human and non-human animals. Animals have been key determining forces in how human psychology, social life, and history have developed. The domination of humans over one another and the natural world was only possible because of the domination of humans over non-human animals. Speciesism along with other forms of oppression like colonialism laid the groundwork for other forms of oppression, power, and violence (Horsthemke, 2018, p. 210). Similar to racism and sexism which create a false dichotomy between one group and another to justify some kind of hierarchy and domination, speciesism also creates a false dichotomy between one species—*homo sapiens*—and all other species on earth (Best, 2014, p.

33). Speciesist ideology justifies the domination of humans over other animals and the exploitation and commodification of them. In this way, the speciesist ideology creates a foundation for the domination of some humans and non-human animals. For example, the Spanish colonialists who invaded America in the sixteenth century characterized Indigenous peoples as less human than their conquerors to justify their displacement, enslavement, and genocide (Gosine, 2021, p.6). Next, I reviewed different animal rights campaigns and how they affect society. Then, I continued the literature review of anthropocentrism and speciesism in our educational system. Chapter Two also examined environmental education, education for sustainable development, and ecopedagogy. Finally, I finished the chapter by discussing total liberation and an intersectional approach to social justice for human and non-human animals. In Chapter Three, I described my research design and methodology. First, I explained why I chose a qualitative method, an interpretive research philosophy, and interviews as my methodology. Next, I discussed the factors that might have impacted my positionality, followed by the piloting process for practicing and possibly rewording some of the questions. I followed the chapter by explaining my research design and talking about the groups I interviewed, the reasons behind choosing them, and the recruiting process. I continued the chapter by writing about the procedure, the consent form, and the methodological limitations. Finally, I discussed the interpretation of data, the coding process, creating themes, categorizing them, sharing my findings, and writing the discussion chapter.

In Chapter Four, I presented the data I collected during the interviews. I divided my findings into three main categories connected with my three main research questions: 1) Education and responsible planetary citizens; 2) Barriers for human rights activists to involve animal ethics as part of their social justice concerns; and finally, 3) An intersectional approach to social justice and alliances between animal rights activism and human rights activists. These three main categories

have been divided into subcategories related to the themes I found in the interviews. For my first research question, I will discuss the memories these participants have from their relationship with animals during their childhood, the impacts of books and media, and challenges with their families. For my second research question, I discussed triggers that made my participants sensitive toward social justice issues, abuse of women's rights, religious oppression in Iran, motivations for advocating for animals, and social justice for non-human animals. Under the third research question, I will discuss experiencing oppression and sympathizing with other oppressed groups, intersectional approach to social justice, misunderstandings about veganism, opinions about animal rights campaigns, and finally, triggers that made animal rights activists go vegan. In the final chapter, I presented the key findings from chapter four, along with a discussion of relevant literature around my research questions.

Chapter 2: Literature review

There are a couple of main challenges and key theoretical assumptions underlying my work that I would like to address in this literature review. First, our society and the educational system (in the case of this research, the Iranian and North American society and education system) promote anthropocentric, human-supremacist ideologies to children. Second, speciesism is much older and more profound than racism, sexism, classism, etc (Best, 2014, p.1). We can only overcome other social justice barriers if we eradicate speciesism and seek social justice for human and non-human animals. We need to increase the awareness about the importance of animal rights advocacy among social justice activists and the importance of an intersectional approach among animal rights activists. In this literature review, I would like to investigate the roots of anthropocentric, human-supremacist ideologies, study the differences between current animal ethics movements, understand the weaknesses of our educational system and finally review eco-pedagogy and total liberation pedagogy. In the first part of this literature review, I will investigate the roots of speciesism and how it has shaped our relationships with human and non-human animals. Animals have been key determining forces in how human psychology, social life, and history have developed (Best, 2014, p.1). The domination of humans over one another and the natural world was only possible because of the domination of humans over non-human animals (Best, 2014, p.1). Speciesism has prepared the groundwork for other forms of oppression, power, and violence. Similar to racism and sexism that creates a false dichotomy between one group and another to justify some kind of hierarchy and domination, speciesism also creates a false dichotomy between one species- homo sapiens - and all other species on earth (Best, 2014, p.33). The speciesist ideology justifies the domination of humans over other animals and the exploitation

and commodification of them. In this way, the speciesist ideology contributes to the domination of humans and non-human animals.

Speciesism is deeply embedded in cultural and societal norms

During history, there were more sensitive men and women who had some widespread guilt toward how they treat non-human animals. This guilt about the mistreatment of animals had to be rationalized and justified in a way. This guilt could be the beginning of how humans asserted that God had created animals for human use or the idea that animals don't have souls and could feel nothing (Ryder, 2000, p.228). While Abrahamic religions promote a hierarchy of beings with humans on the top and everything else beneath them, in some North American indigenous teachings, humans are the younger brothers and sisters of Creation. On the other hand, plants and animals have been on the earth longer than we have been, so we have the least experience with how to live. That is why in the North American indigenous teachings, plants and animals are not our subordinates, but they are our teachers (Kimmerer, 2013, p.9). "For example, Anishinaabe and Haudenausee peoples in Canada believe animals are our kin and must be treated with respect as our elders. Humans were the last and youngest creation and so the least experienced and most dependent on all other beings. Compare this to a commonly held belief in Western culture that human maturity involves a critical separation from the animal part of ourselves." (Fawcett, 2014, p.262).

Religions are not exclusively to be blamed for the anthropocentric perspective that exists in humans. Until the nineteenth century, many dominant western philosophers believed that animals were things and that humans had no moral or legal obligations toward them. René Descartes' famous description of animals as natural automata or self-moving machines is just an example of

this approach. He claimed that animals are indistinguishable from inanimate objects and that they are not conscious nor experience pain and suffering on a mental level. Thus, he concluded that animals have no interests, preferences, wants, or desires (Francione, 2021, p.44). Darwin's findings on the similarities in physiology and intelligence between human beings and larger apes revealed a common ancestor between humans and non-human animals. All forms of animal life evolved from a common root. After his findings, the difference between humans and animals could no longer be viewed as one in kind but was revealed to be one in degree (Horsthemke, 2018, p.5). The truth is that millions of other nonhuman animals have their own unique biological and cognitive characteristics and capacities, ones that require a lot of effort from humans to comprehend.

Hammerhead sharks perceive the subtle electrical fields of other marine animals; Arctic terns make a round-trip migration each year of over 40,000 miles, navigating by starlight, sunlight, terrestrial landmarks, and the magnetic field of the earth; bats returning to their cave in Mexico somehow unfailingly find their own offspring among millions of other baby bats, in complete darkness. (Jagerskog & Jonch Clausen, 2012, p40).

Many species have materially similar brains to humans. It doesn't matter if an animal is intelligent or communicative. I believe all that matters is that they are conscious of pain and pleasure; and this must be the foundation of our moral judgment (Ryder, 2000, p.239). Whether rooted in religious beliefs or Western philosophy, all the domination and mass killing of animals can be defined by the term speciesism. Richard Ryder came up with the term speciesism to "describe the widespread discrimination that man against the other species practices, and to draw a parallel between it and racism" (Horsthemke, 2018, p.58). Most people widely accept the institutionalized exploitation of nonhuman animals and speciesism out of habit. We continue to exploit animals daily because it is a convention and a norm in our societies. We consider this exploitation normal

in the same way that many decent men and women once accepted slavery (Ryder, 2000, p.247). We, humans, are free beings to choose a relation with non-human animals based on ethics of care, nonviolence, and compassion. Instead, we choose mass violence and brutality, and we tell ourselves that we have no choice. "Speciesism operates as an existential structure, as a universal form of what the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre called "bad faith," by which he meant a mode of self-deception in which we suppress our own conditions of possibility or self-transcendence as free beings" (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, p31).

While some humans enjoy torturing or killing animals for "sport," hunting, and fishing, most people do not feel this way about animals. They don't desire to harm animals, but they simply don't care enough to protect animals from violence. Following the bad faith, many people refuse to choose better arguments, better solutions because they are convinced that they have no choice (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, p31). Finally, speciesism also includes when we value the life and wellbeing of one species over the life and wellbeing of another one. In the next section, I will investigate where our educational system stands in terms of these anthropocentric and speciesist attitudes toward non-human animals.

Anthropocentrism and Speciesism in Education

Children often seem to have a natural interest and more of a sense of oneness with non-human animals and nature (Lyons et al., 2017, p. 209). Babies notice animals at a greater rate than any other objects in their environment (Urquiza-Haa & Kotrschal, 2015, p. 167). Children have unique perspectives on other animal lives. In a research study, Canadian children were asked to tell stories about three common and familiar animals – bats, frogs, and raccoons. "While the younger children had less overall knowledge about animals, they had more positive attitudes towards all the animals. Younger children, who did not necessarily have high knowledge scores

for the animals, described very moral actions in their narrative relationships with animals. While older children knew more facts, they also had more misconceptions. For example, most older children believe that bats get in your hair, are blind, and are universally dangerous. One of the more startling results was that the younger children thought of the animals as their friends and were rarely afraid of them" (Fawcett, 2014, p.263). Ryder (2000) argues that the psychological difference that adults feel between themselves, and animals is probably gained through accumulated human knowledge and sophistication. The cultural elements of language and writing, which tend to obscure the similarities between humans and animals, are not present in children to the same degree as they exist in adults (Ryder, 2000, p. 230). Children are instinctively more attracted to animals and nature at a younger age (Andrianova, 2021, p.8). Family, society, and the education system are responsible for developing conflicting attitudes in children toward nonhuman animals.

Normally, Western children's books and cartoons provide a picture of farms that does not correspond with reality. The purpose behind these fake pictures is to tell children that even though it's an inevitable fate of animals to be food, still, they happily live on a farm until their time comes (Singer, 2002, p. 215). The dominant children's literature and media content in Iran and in North America represent animals as others and in this way, promote speciesist messages for children. Speciesist content represents animals as replaceable commodities, objects without individual characteristics, define animals based on their utility for humans, introduce humans as top of the food chain, and animals lower than humans in the circle of life, and finally, encourages children to lose empathy for animals in order to become adult (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 423). Of course, there is alternative children's literature that directs their empathy toward animals, but they are in the minority (Cole & Stewart, 2015, p. 154). Roth's "That's Why We Don't Eat Animals" is

an example of literature that helps young readers understand human and non-human animal relationships without promoting objectification and exploitation of animals (Cole & Stewart, 2015, p. 154).

Singer (2002) suggests a movement, similar to feminist efforts, in rewriting children's literature to change children's books and media content in a way that introduces them to the reality of animal lives, maybe without sharing all the horrors of slaughterhouses and factory farms (p. 215). The concept of anthropomorphism in children's books uses animal characters to tell human stories and normalizes the same patterns that adults subjugate animals (Andrianova, 2021, p.1). Anthropomorphic non-human animals in children's literature introduce children to wildlife and domesticated animals and teach them human skills like counting, sharing, socializing, etc. Moreover, by providing non-verbal communication, animals also help children to understand body language, sound, and the subjectivity of others (Andrianova, 2021, p.2). Another study suggests that anthropomorphic depictions of animals provide inaccurate knowledge to children, which prepares them for a human-centered and anthropocentric view during their adulthood. When we use animals in children's books for human ends, we teach children that it is normal to use animals for our own purposes, and it's normal to dominate and exploit them (Andrianova, 2021, p. 2). The dominant western children's books present an unrealistic view of farms and animal's lives and this unrealistic picture prevents children from understanding what happens in animal industries (Andrianova, 2021, p. 2). Moreover, these books and programs expose children to conflicting messages. On one hand they start to develop emotional relations with those animal characters in books and cartoons. On the other hand, parents expect them to eat the flesh of animals. The family, mass media, and the formal education system hide the reality of animal exploitation from children and teach them to channel their empathy elsewhere (Andrianova, 2021, p. 3). In another study,

researchers found that children are more likely to develop anthropocentric behavior after being exposed to anthropomorphized books compared to being exposed to books that present the reality of animal lives (Ganea et al., 2014, p. 8). Another consequence of anthropomorphism is that people start to pay attention to those animals with closer characteristics to human characteristics. For example, people pay more attention to the conservation of vertebrates than for invertebrates. This is even true in governmental decisions: those species with closer characteristics and appearance to humans receive more funds and attention for conservation (Urquiza-Haas, & Kotrschal, 2015, p. 168). In this regard, people have more empathy toward species with a lower phylogenetic distance from humans (Urquiza-Haas, & Kotrschal, 2015, p. 167). This is similar to the Charismatic megafauna or charisma of species, which scales positively with species body size. Large-bodied species have disproportionate importance for conservation due to their high appeal to people (Berti et al, 2020, p.1). "As a marine biologist working with whales, I had become well versed in Wilson's observations about charismatic megafauna – the public adores whales, but not zooplankton. Subsequently, taking a different tack, I chose to explore human relationships with common and familiar animals long before they reach endangered status, as well as the political entanglements that shadow such a designation" (Fawcett, 2014, p.263)

We need to encourage children and adults to see animals as they are, instead of an anthropomorphic version of them acting like humans. We need children to learn more about the actual lives and conditions of animals, and we need to change how animals are stereotypically represented in children's literature like chickens with fear, or asses with stupidity, and foxes with cunning, etc. (Andrianova, 2021, p. 17).

Today, the education discipline, to a great extent, recognizes the significance of addressing issues related to class, gender, race, and inequality among humans. Although the education

discipline identifies these issues related to humans, it has largely ignored the problems pertaining to non-human animals (Pedersen, 2004, p.1). Therefore, we need an alternative approach to the current order of anthropocentrism in education that values more inclusive educational research and practice (Pedersen, 2004, p. 1). Ecopsychologist Michael Cohen argues that we are at war against Nature because we are educated to do so. We need to re-educate ourselves to get rid of our nature-destructive conquests (Horsthemke, 2018, p. 155). Most educational institutions, for different reasons from cultural to religious and philosophical traditions, promote the idea that human beings are superior to other species, and that the earth and other species are for human use or “stewardship” (Andrzejewski et al., 2009, p. 136). Moreover, the animal industry is heavily present in educational institutions in different ways including collaborations between agricultural and pharmaceutical businesses and educational institutions, which offer courses on animal, meat, and dairy sciences. The industry targets students through their products in schools, with free samples, visits to farms, films, books, and sponsorships. These industries promote speciesist ideology while they hide the true nature of their exploitative practices (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 422). Meat and dairy industries have had huge influence over school materials by introducing children to the necessity of consuming animal products for health. They even fund research to manipulate government dietary guidelines and the government recommended food pyramid (Andrzejewski et al., 2009, p. 137).

Many humans are more sympathetic toward animals with closer ties to humans, while they neglect to pay attention to those animals they regard as food (Russell, 2019, p. 36). For example, in a school project, students visited a rabbit every week. When they found that “their ” rabbit was killed, they found this to be an ethical problem, but at the same time they were indifferent toward the systematic slaughtering of animals for food (Pedersen, 2004, p. 8). The main difference is that

slaughtering animals for food is socially accepted because it has been normalized by the institutions that seek power and economic interests. Pedersen (2004) argues that schools reproduce the idea that humans should care about the interests of animals as long as they don't need to modify their own purposes. We learn to look at animals from an anthropocentric perspective and how they best serve our interests (Pedersen, 2004, p. 8). Humans and animals are studied in two separate discourses, and within separate value systems which have constructed subject-object relations between humans and other animals. The human-animal relations discussions are framed in an anthropocentric and value hierarchical discourse which uses humans as a standard to determine and measure the value of non-human animals (Pedersen, 2004, p. 3). In an alternative approach, human-animal relations are linked with other values such as rights and equality. This approach could make animal ethics a part of a more holistic view of oppression in society, which contributes to a collective understanding of values in educational practices (Pedersen, 2004, p. 3). The elements of speciesism hidden in the curriculum are manifested through the absence of animal ethics in documents, separation of humans and non-human animals in values education, the messages embedded in the textbooks, and even in the way students' emotions are dealt with (Pedersen, 2004, p. 8).

Animals in the education sector are presented in a way that promotes the message of their instrumental use for humans. They are classified, represented, consumed, killed both for “educational” purposes, food, animal-assisted interventions, or even outdoor education including visiting zoos and farms. The way that animals are presented and treated in education is quite the opposite of any liberatory educational project (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 416).

Schools need to critically examine their hidden curricula about human-animal relations in an educational context. Critical theory of education can help schools and educators to recognize the

hidden curricula, resist dominating and oppressive structures, and try to change the situation of oppressed groups through critical awareness and active citizenship education. This critical pedagogy needs to recognize animals as part of its emancipation aims (Pedersen, 2004, p.4). School is not a place to just passively reflect established structures and worldviews; it has the potential to critically reassess these structures and mediate new values concerning the human-animal relation (Pedersen, 2004, p. 3). It is important for critical animal pedagogies to address the problem of factory farming at any scale, organic or non-organic. Animal production in any form and scale has its roots in speciesism and promotes and reinforces the instrumentalization of animals and reduction of them to resources for humans. Animal industries use the image of happy animals on a traditional family farm to deliberately hide their exploitative practices and gloss over the confinement, torture, and slaughter of animals (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 422)

An interspecies education, in contrast with an anthropocentric and human centered approach, argues that all forms of life on earth are interconnected and interdependent with one another. Teaching about animal, environmental, and social justice issues in classrooms is very challenging and sensitive. Disagreements and emotions emerge when the conversation about food animals, hunting, dissection, animal experimentation, and zoos start in a classroom. Different forms of emotions, from wonder, love, to sadness, frustration, anger, guilt, and shame, emerge when students learn about various forms of human and non-human animal relationships. Despite all those emotions, a sense of hope also emerges when students think about ways that they could make a difference in the education system. (Russell, 2019, p. 41). In most cases, students think that they have no knowledge of animal-focused education, while this is not true and, in most cases, they already know much more than they think they do (Russell, 2019, p. 41). Animal-focused education needs to provide answers for the following questions: why do we love some animals and ignore or

despise others? What are children learning in schools about animals? What lessons could they learn from visiting a zoo? Why do students visit family farms but not slaughterhouses? Animal-focused education needs to show students that what they have taken for granted as “normal” is culturally and historically constructed and is deeply defiled by social inequities (Russell, 2019, p. 41). Students from different education levels, depending on their age can have participate in any of the following activities: investigating their own emotions when they encounter animals and the challenges of their encounter; reflecting on ethological insights about animals' feelings toward their own species, their environment, and humans; critically investigating and analyzing animal-related education materials; study visits to farms and animal shelters and interviewing employees about their feeling regarding working there; watching and discussing documentaries about what happens to animals in factory farms and slaughterhouses; discussing a double standard about loving an animal and ignoring others; and critically investigating the anthropocentric roots of all the above practices. These practices will hopefully help students to realize that humans are not the only ones with emotional experiences and emotional lives (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). Here Dinker, & Pedersen (2016) discuss some exercises to introduce students to the animal–industrial complex: showing children where their food is coming from, discussing the truth behind the "happy family farm," and identifying hidden messages in children's books and films that justify animals as resources for humans. For younger children, They suggest using books that focus on justice for animals instead of love for animals, visiting farms and slaughterhouses with a critical lens, investigating where our school stands in terms of animal products and where the school's food comes from, and learning about capitalism and commodification of nature and animals and maximizing profit with the cost of exploiting humans and animals (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 425). For example, educators can assign students to observe an animal, plant, or natural area over

a period or ask them to engage in some animal-focused educational activity like a critical food studies course to 'meet their meat' (Lloro-Bidart, 2018). Finally, educators can use the pedagogy of discomfort, especially regarding topics of food animals and dissection, or the pedagogical potential of humor in animal-focused or environmental education (Russell, 2019, p. 43). The education sector needs to re-think, re-learn, and re-invent our relationship with animals. It must leave animals in peace and give them a safe space from human interference, deconstruct the knowledge we have about human-animal relations, promote alternative and non-intervention ways of relating to animals, and keep a respectful distance from their lives. Education should go beyond just reflecting and reproducing the speciesist (sexist, racist, classist, ableist) ideologies of society (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p. 427).

Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and Ecopedagogy

An alternative proposal to the current model of education is learning for the environment instead of environmental learning. While environmental learning addresses an anthropocentric way of learning about the environment for the sake of human beings, learning for the environment, on the other hand, focuses on the intrinsic value of the environment and natural world (Horsthemke, 2018, p.148). Environmental education emerged within the last three decades as a formal multi-disciplinary field of education. After the first Earth Day, occurring on April 22, 1970, there was growing wide publicity and academic debate for the protection of the global environment (Kahn, 2007, p.1). "Environmental Education is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experiences, and the determination, which will enable them to act - individually and collectively - to solve present and future environmental problems" (Stapp et al, 1969, p.34). Environmental education pedagogy (EE) integrated further information and strategies to transform the traditional curricula toward a more

ecological direction (Kahn, 2007, p.4). EE has been historically criticized for neglecting to address the social issues caused by environmental problems (Misiaszek, 2019, p.616). Environmental education must avoid human/animal and culture/nature dichotomies. Pedersen (2004) argues that "The environment" and "nature" are not something outside of ourselves. We should not see animals as part of nature for us to explore and discover (p.4). Another form of environmental pedagogy, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), emerged in response to critics of Environmental Education. ESD attempted to address socio-environmental issues with the goal of sustainability (Misiaszek, 2019, p.616). Education for Sustainable Development's purpose is to minimize environmental problems, minimize social injustices, and warn about the Earth's carrying capacity and resource limits. However, one of the main problems of Education for Sustainable Development is its development as a determinant of progress and focuses on nature as a resource for humans instead of respecting nature's intrinsic value (Misiaszek, 2019, p.616). Kahn & Humes (2009) argue that environmental education has failed to integrate non-human animal advocacy as part of their educational commitment. They believe that environmental education needs to develop pedagogical methods to work both for ecological sustainability and social justice (p.179) The authors offer hope in the form of total liberation pedagogy that works for human and non-human actors. They suggest a new paradigm of what might be inclusively termed "total liberation pedagogy," which attempts to work intersectionality across and in opposition to all forms of oppression (including those of non-human animals) and for ecological sustainability (Kahn & Humes, 2009, p.179).

Hung (2017) proposes the concept of Ecophilia as the love of nature, and Ecopedagogy as an Ecophilia-oriented education (p.45). Ecopedagogy is a transformation-based teaching model that has its roots in critical theories and Freirean popular education movements of Latin America.

In this model, educators dialectically problem-pose the politics of environmentally violent actions, from local and global points of view, and critically study how these actions are connected to social violence (Misiaszek, 2019, p.617). Freire argues that educators must not require children merely to be depositories to receive and memorize the information deposited to them. Instead, educators must teach students to reflect, understand, and critically and consciously raise their voices (Freire, 2000, pg.71-87). We need to show children that the future relies on their hands and dreams (Grigorov, 2012, p.17). “Ecopedagogy goes beyond conventional environmental education as it involves a wider awareness of how to be in the world. Related to this idea is the importance of acting collaboratively and non-anthropocentrically with a diversity of others, having openness toward different knowledge systems, involving a critical understanding in our ethics, and constantly integrating our own life practices with our ethical responsibility to act on behalf of the world” (Pedersen, 2004, p.4). Richard Kahn defines Ecopedagogy with the following principles:

Ecopedagogy aims to realize the planetary peace, happiness, justice, and beauty that would be manifested by sustainable social and cultural relations between the peoples of the Earth. Ecopedagogy involves: Mounting creative and emancipatory political action based on formative dialogue across a wide range of interested parties. Ecopedagogy is unabashedly utopian—not in the sense of idealistic daydreaming about the possibility of another sort of world, but rather Ecopedagogy is uncompromising in its refusal to accept the suffering of this one as *de facto*. Ecopedagogy seeks the emergence of planetarity but also place-based regionality. We must recognize ourselves as earthlings, with all beings representing our brothers and sisters. Yet, sound ecological practice will result only from bioregional acts and understandings of our location and dwelling. Ecopedagogy is anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-sexist, and anti-speciesist. It is against the ranking of oppressions and instead seeks to

understand the complex ways in which various forms of oppression co-originate or intersect due to common causes. Ecopedagogy can and must occur in numerous points of struggle—in governmental and non-governmental institutions, in universities and colleges and secondary and elementary schools, in grassroots activist organizations, and the public at large. Each sector will face different challenges and require different objectives as part of a broad-based movement for ecologically sound social transformation. Sometimes this will require emphasis upon theory, other times practice. (Horsthemke, 2018, p.192)

Kahn uses the term eco-pedagogy for his work with an extension that includes a critique of Paulo Freire for his anthropocentric humanism that justifies human freedom at the expense of objectified animal and natural domains (Kahn, 2007, p.6). Environmental education is one of the first attempts to transform traditional curricula by integrating knowledge that shifts the curricula to a more ecological direction. Ecopedagogy, as a more radical transformative pedagogy, has its roots in ecological education, which is intimately combined with environmental education. Many educators who wish to be environmental educators of tomorrow find this field narrow in theoretical scope, too connected with governmental and corporate agendas, and ineffective in developing considerable educational policies and practices. These limitations have inspired educators to re-theorize the environmental education field to harmonize it with the ideas of “deep ecology,” environmental justice, and planetary interconnectedness (Kahn, 2007, p.4). Ecopedagogy tends to help children and students of all ages with an understanding of how to cope with our many contemporary and future problems, including climate change, ozone depletion, technological dependency, endless wars, and most importantly, the destruction of Nature, forests, plants, animals, air, and water. But unfortunately, educational systems and sciences worldwide have

already neglected to address these problems for a long time, and we can no longer afford this. (Grigorov, 2012, p.14).

Ecopedagogy moves beyond conventional environmental education and gives us a broader awareness of being in the world. It summons us to act collaboratively and non-anthropocentrically, value the diversity of life and knowledge systems, and constantly renew our life systems with our ethical responsibility toward nature, human and non-human animals (Pedersen, 2004, p.4). Justice and sustainability movements will not succeed in their fight unless they recognize the critical intersections of animal liberation with justice for the earth and humans. Also, animal rights movement activists and scholars must find ways to bridge this movement and those resisting corporatism, patriarchy, racism, colonialism, sexism, classism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, etc. (Pfeffer, 2014, p.2). Another animal ethics scholar, Steven Best uses revolutionary critical pedagogy to challenge the solely dependent on education and legislation as defensible tools against oppression. He criticizes both animal welfare and other animal ethic approaches that uncritically rely on education and legislation campaigns (Horsthemke, 2018, p.186). He believes that both the educational system and legislation are more often representative of capitalist interests (Best 2014: 83, 84). Best (2014) believes that we are in the middle of an ongoing planetary crisis, and we need a new politics of total liberation to deal with this crisis. This new politics of total liberation will unite the liberation movements for humans, animals, and earth. He argues that the fate of all life is interconnected on this planet and what we do to animals and nature we do to ourselves (P.137). In the final part of this chapter, I will talk about total liberation pedagogy and the necessity of bridging between different social justice movements, including the animal rights movement, to dismantle oppression and exploitation against human and non-human animals.

Total liberation and an intersectional approach for animal right and human rights

For many people, the concept of animal ethics advocacy, and the related idea of veganism is unknown or strange. The animal rights activists' task, according to Scott, is to normalize this cause and turn it from an exotic issue to an emergency (Scott, 1990, p.10). The challenge for animal rights' activists is to break the dominant anthropocentric perspective in civil society and draw people's attention to an ecocentric morality. Many animal rights activists use drama and morally challenging images, extreme rhetoric, and shock effects. The Eliasian theory, which has played a promising role in changing attitudes toward animals in the past several centuries, is to provide information and moral outrage to consumers in civil society and reveal severe defects in food regulations (Munro, 2012, p.167). Elias emphasizes the importance of the 'civilizing process,' which involves shaming and changing thresholds of repugnance towards violence. Elias shows how cruelty and violence towards animals, including the display of animal bodies in public, has come to be seen as repugnant by most people in the West (Munro, 2012, p.167). Eliasian theory is a popular approach among animal rights groups to promote veganism and less cruel practices toward animals.

The animal rights movement should not exclusively be about providing knowledge to the public. Animal rights activism also needs to engage the public and increase their sensitivity, approach, skills, and regard for animals, the environment, and human health issues (Dopelt et al., 2019, p.14). Most consumers are not aware of the destructive environmental impact of the livestock industry. Researchers have found a positive relationship between the level of knowledge, the attitude, and the behaviours of people with respect to the livestock industry's environmental impacts (Dopelt et al., 2019, p.5). Many studies have shown that although having knowledge of the environment is a prerequisite for responsible environmental behaviour, it is not enough. The

relationship between attitudes and behaviour is much stronger than the relationship between knowledge and behaviour. Attitudes, values, and a personalized, emotional element are a significant driver in transforming knowledge into responsible behaviour. The general understanding is that, when we increase individual knowledge about the environment, we can expect to see more responsibility, and more pro-environmental behaviour from the public. But learning about values is not always equal to implementing those values. As Dopelt (2019) notes, encouraging environmental values requires the individual's knowledge and positive attitudes, and social norms that call for environmental conservation. This combination will generate motivation and intentions for individuals to reduce their environmental damages connected to the livestock industry (p.12).

My question is why, despite all the philosophical arguments and animal advocacy activism, speciesism still exists as strongly as before. As Sanbonmatus (2014) argues: “Why, almost 40 years in the wake of Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, a century after Henry Salt’s *Animals’ Rights*, and, indeed, more than 1,800 years after Plutarch’s ethical critique of meat-eating, are the vast majority of human beings either unaware of the abolitionist critique or openly hostile to it?” (p.1). Is there a lack of philosophical argument and dialogues in this field or a lack of eccentric pedagogies in our educational systems? My hypothesis is that first, our educational system is very human-supremacist and anthropocentric. And secondly, social justice activism suffers from a single-issue paradigm. We need a new pedagogy that addresses all the oppressed.

While keeping its collective identity, the animal rights movement must identify common causes with like-minded activists in the race, gender, sexuality, and equality activism, and act accordingly, in intersectional ways. An intersectional approach to the complex relationships of animals, the environment, and social justice requires more attention considering that some groups

of humans have historically been denied full humanity (Russell, 2019, p.36). The animalization of conquered indigenous communities in North America allowed the colonizers to justify their exploitation. (Gosine, 2021, p.70). "The animalization of some to define others as human continued in the postcolonial period. This program, created and enforced through cultural constructions of civilized behavior that model and police dress, manners, speech, self-fashioning, and self-conception, has been called the politics of respectability" (Gosine, 2021, p.27)

Some academics in social science and humanities who were concerned with animal ethics started to design the interdisciplinary fields of animal studies and critical animals' studies and to bring the topic of animals into disciplines such as geography, literary theory, feminism, anthropology, philosophy, and cultural studies during the past few decades (Spanning, 2017, p.63). The development of the theory of intersectionality has its roots in black feminist thought and the diverse writing of women of color in academia and activism (Russell, 2019, p.37). While intersectionality studies are defined as a collaborative open-ended investigation of overlapping of oppression, it's still challenging to go beyond the human and involve oppression and domination of non-human animals and the environment under the same umbrella (Russell, 2019, p.37).

In order to approach intersectionality education, students need to study different types of traditions and culture, religions and how they justify animal and human exploitation, and how they promote the misrecognition of human's place in the world. Students also need to investigate the consequences of animal exploitation for both humans and non-human animals. They can also learn through comparing the histories of social justice movements for human liberation and animal liberation. Moreover, students need to study the use of language perpetuating "easygoing speciesism" (Yates, 2004, p.34), and the consequences of using animals as an epithet for humans to humiliate and belittle humans (Dinker, & Pedersen, 2016, p.422). The theory of intersectionality

acknowledges that all various forms of discrimination and oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, are part of a matrix of domination and need to be addressed and dismantled together (Greenebaum, 2017, p.3). This is where the theory of total liberation emerges. In total liberation philosophy, speciesism is a social problem in the same way that sexism, racism, and other forms of intraspecies exploitation, are considered social problems.

The animal rights movement needs to make bridges with other social movements to gain new critical perspectives on the history of oppression, hierarchy, and domination. On the other hand, other social justice movements need to make bridges with the animal advocacy movement to learn about the roots of oppression, hierarchy, and domination. Speciesism has prepared a groundwork for racism, sexism, classism, etc. (Best, 2014, p.18). I would like to see total liberation dialogues to bring all the social justice movements and animal rights movements together. Socialist and anticolonial philosopher Franz Fanon first used the term total liberation to describe a political movement for colonized and working-class people to emancipate themselves from colonization and enslavement (Colling et al., 2014, p.56). He argues that the colonialist oppressors have devalued people and reduced them to animals to justify their oppression and enslavement. In this way, humans are only characterized as white, civilized European males, while non-white people are devalued as animals, not worthy of equal moral considerations. This speciesist hierarchy has been used throughout history to oppress humans and non-humans alike (Colling et al., 2014, p.56).

Total liberation has its origins in Aldo Leopold's land ethic and deep ecology's biocentrism. This methodological framework offers solidarity with all oppressed in history, whether humans or non-human animals (Colling et al., 2014, p.52). Total liberation points out that human liberation is not complete when other forms of oppression and domination against non-human animals and nature still exist (Colling et al., 2014, p.54). Critical Animal Studies (CAS) promotes a total

liberation method that includes humans, nonhumans, and the Earth. Humans have pushed the planet to the edge of an ecological collapse, oppressed and abused all other species, and even created threatening conditions for themselves. In the same way that education has helped promote the inclusion of other social minorities and discriminated groups into the moral sphere, it can also include nonhuman animals under this moral sphere.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to identify how speciesism and anthropocentrism have been embedded into society and the educational system. Our society and the educational system perpetuate speciesism, anthropocentrism, and promote human supremacist ideologies to children. Speciesism is much older and more profound than racism, sexism, classism, etc. We can only overcome other social justice dilemmas if we eradicate speciesism and seek justice for human and non-human animals. Based on the analysis conveyed, it can be concluded that our current educational ideas and practices reinforce an exploitative way of thinking and doing without any consideration of life and wellbeing of non-human animals. Hence, we need to develop pedagogical methods that work both for ecological sustainability and social justice. We need a pedagogy and educational system that teaches us how to respect the intrinsic value of nature and non-human animals instead of looking at them as merely resources for humans. Moreover, we need to find effective strategies to increase awareness about the importance of animal rights advocacy among social justice activists and the importance of an intersectional approach among animal rights activists. Finally, we need a new politics of total liberation to deal with the origins of hatred, hierarchy, violence, war, genocide, slavery, colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and speciesism. This new politics of total liberation can unite the liberation movements for humans,

animals, and the earth. This is our common fight, we can only win this battle when we fight together, not against one another.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this research, my overall goal was to explore how education can encourage people to change their habits and lifestyles to protect the environment and respect the rights of nonhuman animals. Moreover, I wanted to investigate how we can create a bridge between animal rights activism and human rights activism. I used Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as my theoretical framework for this research. The key concepts that I used from this theoretical framework are speciesism, anthropocentrism, and trans-species social justice. CAS provides a different ontological view of human-animal relationships and extends concepts like inherent worth, equal consideration of interests, legal rights, and the fundamental principles of social justice to nonhuman animals. CAS advocates for animals' fundamental right to have agency and not to be regarded as properties of humans. It recognizes the intersectionality of oppression of humans and nonhuman animals. (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2022, p.6). I chose an interpretive research philosophy because I wanted to use interviews as a method to integrate human interests and life experiences into my study. An interpretive research philosophy was developed in response to positivist science that is mainly used as a method for quantitative research. Humans are not solid scientific objects; they are shaped by the culture where they live and the institutions in which they participate (Balushi, 2018, p. 726). Reality and human knowledge are socially constructed. The world and culture construct us, and at the same time, we construct this world and its culture (Balushi, 2018, p.727). One limitation with the interpretive research method is that the data cannot be generalized because it comes from personal life experiences and views. On the other hand, one of the advantages of the interpretive research method is it can diversify the viewpoints on a particular phenomenon, which will help researchers to not only describe humans but also understand them in their social context (Pham,

2018, p. 3) In the following part of this chapter, I discussed my personal position, the piloting process, research design, participants, procedure, and the interpretation of interviews.

Personal position

Before discussing methodology, I need to consider several factors that might have impacted my positionality. About ten years ago, I had a two-hour discussion with a friend about veganism that entirely changed my life. It took me two hours to learn about animal advocacy movements and the vegan lifestyle, and I decided that I did not want to be part of this oppression and cruelty any longer. I have been actively talking to many people about animal cruelty and the environmental impacts of their food choices for the last ten years. My biggest question is why something that only required me two hours to comprehend is not provoking enough enthusiasm in many other people. I want to know if a lack of education is the main barrier to accepting animal ethics or if there is a more fundamental problem in our societies that has closed the gate for people to be open about animal ethics. When I was a teenager, I decided to convert from Islam to Zoroastrianism. I believe reading Zoroaster's thoughts and following his devotion to doing good deeds for all, human, and non-human animals, had an unconscious impact on my future behavior. In this regard, my middle-class family background should be considered. I had the privilege to have access to safety, comfort, and education. This means that I had the privilege to live safely, so I could and can continue to think about concepts like social justice for humans and non-human animals. It is very important for me, as an animal rights activist, to understand how people from different communities never got the chance to spend time reading about animals and educating themselves about these topics because they had to struggle with other economic and social issues. In conducting my research, I feel obligated to develop an empathetic approach to interviewing, especially with those who may not share the same beliefs or practices as myself – for example,

those whose reasons for not practicing veganism might be rooted in economic and cultural factors. Another factor that might have impacted my positionality is that as a member of the LGBTQ community living in Iran, I have the experience of being oppressed and dominated by an authoritarian regime and society. This could be a major contributor to me being more sympathetic to other oppressed groups, including animals, and to being more pro-liberation. Finally, as someone who has had varied life experiences, including living under authoritarian religious regimes, I have been involved with human rights activism and supporting the poor and oppressed groups in society. This might be another factor that has influenced me to be more sensitive toward social justice issues for non-human animals. When interviewing human rights activists, it's very important for me that my questions do not sound judgemental. I need to make sure that I am not interviewing them as animal rights activists, but as a researcher who wants to learn more about their activism. I will not divulge to my participants my personal involvement in animal rights activism. I should try my best to not be emotionally involved during the interviews. In interviewing both groups, I would try to be a good listener.

The Piloting Process

Prior to conducting interviews with my participants, I arranged an interview with an animal rights activist friend and a human rights activist friend to analyze my interview questions. Piloting the interview questions with these two friends helped me to hear my questions in the interview process and find the chance to edit, summarize, and reword them. After these pilot interviews, I changed the order of some of the questions and reworded them to help the conversation flow. I realized that I needed to merge some of these questions, and I also needed to dispense with two questions from the animal rights activist interviews, and one question from the human rights activist interviews

because they were redundant. The piloting process also helped me to realize that my interviews would take longer than 30 minutes. The pilot interviews took around 39 and 47 minutes respectively. This helped me to realize that the interview questions would probably take around 30 to 45 minutes of the interviewee's time. I edited my verbal content and changed the time from 30 minutes to 30-45 minutes. Finally, as this is my first time conducting qualitative research, I needed these pilot interviews to practice my interviewing skills.

Research Design

To date, there has been little research that covers Iranian animal rights activists' and Iranian human rights activists' viewpoints on the issue of animal ethics. In this study, I wanted to interview Iranian activists who moved from Iran to North America because I think they had the opportunity to explore two different and unique experiences in Iran and in North America. First, I interviewed Iranian animal rights activists. I wanted to learn about the challenges and obstacles each of these activists encounter in their activism. I wanted to understand what the main triggers were that made them sensitive toward animal ethics. I assumed that there are many common challenges among Iranian animal rights activists and animal rights activists from other geographical locations. There are also some unique challenges that have their roots in Iranian culture and society. Second, I interviewed Iranian human rights activists, including women's rights and LGBT rights activists, to learn more about their experiences regarding social justice issues and understand why most of them are not concerned with animal ethics. In these interviews, I wanted to know about their level of knowledge and sympathy regarding animal ethics and the environmental impacts and social justice issues related to their food choices and lifestyles. These interviews provided me with a better understanding of the obstacles against a shift toward responsible planetary citizenship. In

terms of the interviewing process, I prepared semi-structured interviews, which were conducted online due to health regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before starting the interviews, I submitted my plan of study, research proposal, Major Research Ethics Protocols, an informed consent form, and TCPS certificate for approval at the MES II-III exam. After receiving a confirmation of approval from OSAS I started the piloting process and interviews. The semi-structured interview style allowed the conversation between participant and interviewee to flow more smoothly. As a former Iranian political prisoner, I chose to interview Iranians because I know any kind of activity in Iran can be more complex in terms of the social and political atmosphere under an Islamic dictatorship. I hypothesized that those who have experienced oppression and cruelty are more susceptible to accepting social justice for humans and non-human animals.

My questions for animal rights activists were about what convinced them to change their lifestyles and food choices and to advocate for animal rights. I also wanted to learn if they are religious and whether their spiritual, and religious beliefs have had any impacts on their activism. The interviews were then followed by investigations of the challenges and obstacles they face in their activism. I also asked questions about their opinions regarding other social justice movements and if they think of this as one ongoing fight against oppression. I was also interested to know how much they know about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture. I was also interested to know their opinion about capitalism and its fundamental role in the commodification and exploitation of animals. In the end, I asked them what kind of education and pedagogy they suggest we take for our fight against speciesism.

For human rights activists, I asked them if they have been exposed to the ideas of animal rights, social justice, environmental protection, and what they have done about it or how they felt about it. Finally, I interviewed them regarding what they have learned about animal rights in

school. Do they think animal advocacy has been absent from their education, and what have they done about it? Do they think that social justice can be extended to animals? How do they feel about an intersectional animal rights approach? Thus, through interviewing different communities of people, I aimed to find some answers to the questions I brought up at the beginning of this section.

I discussed the findings by using a CAS theoretical framework. Using CAS's ontological point of view, I can argue that animal rights activists have expanded their ethical and moral circle to nonhuman animals. Moreover, human rights activists need to redefine their understanding of oppression by looking at it from an intersectional approach and potentially broaden their moral circle to include justice for non-human animals. Nobody's free until everybody's free. CAS framework challenges dominant anthropocentric and speciesist ontological and epistemological assumptions and provides a new insight for understanding and analyzing human and nonhuman animal relationships at an individual and societal level (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2022, p.6). I used the CAS framework to understand how we can create a bridge and alliance between human rights and animal rights activists.

Participants

Participants for this research were recruited from Iranian animal rights activists and Iranian human rights activists who have moved from Iran to live in North America for various reasons. I created a list of 50 potential candidates who: 1) live in North America; 2) are in the age gap between 20 to 35; and 3) can speak English fluently. I randomly chose seven candidates from animal rights activists and eight from human rights activists. I selected participants from my friends on social media platforms based on ease of access. In total, I interviewed 15 participants. I used a cross-sectional option for data collection because my topic is not changing over time, and my sample

size included only 15 people, which allowed me to finish data collection in less than two months. I interviewed my participants between April to May of 2022.

Procedure

I used a qualitative research approach to study a small sample of animal rights activists and human rights activists. The qualitative method helped me to extract information from the unique life experience of each individual and develop a meaningful conclusion. The semi-structured interview method allows for new ideas and themes to emerge that were not expected in the first place. I sent my participants a letter of invitation with a copy of verbal consent and the interview questions in advance. To those who showed interest in my invitation, I explained the purpose of my research and how their contribution will add to the existing knowledge and benefit human and non-human animals. I informed participants that their participation will remain anonymous. I also informed them that participation in this study is completely voluntary; they are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer any individual question without penalty. Moreover, I informed participants that the interviews are recorded for the purpose of transcription. I informed them that only the researcher involved in this study and those responsible for research oversight will have access to the information they provide, and their audio files will be erased by the end of July. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their time and told them that they will receive the transcript in the following weeks, and are welcome to revise their answers.

The methodological limitations

Due to covid restrictions and geographical distances, I decided to conduct all my interviews online through Zoom, Facetime, or Google Duo. I must use Google Duo and Facetime because Zoom is filtered in Iran. Online interviews provided so much flexibility in terms of time and

space, and access to participants. On the other hand, the main challenge was losing some facial expressions, gestures, and other body language that I could observe in a face-to-face scenario. I knew an online interview would have these limitations, so I asked my interviewers for a video call instead of a voice call if it was possible for them. A video call helped to communicate some of those facial expressions and gestures.

Interpretation of interviews

I used an inductive reasoning method for interpreting my interviews because I needed to learn from the life experiences of these activists. I used Microsoft Word and Quirkos for the coding process. First, I Added all the transcripts in separate word documents and uploaded each document in Quirkos. Then, I carefully listened to each interview one more time and read the transcript simultaneously. At the end, I coded all the transcripts with the Quikos application and extracted two separate word documents. Quarks allowed me to find similar codes and add them under the same category. Then, I grouped the codes and created the themes of my research that are relevant to my research questions. I coded interviews of animal rights activists and human rights activists separately, and in the end, I found mutual themes like capitalism, religion, and oppression that belonged to both groups. I also found themes that exclusively belonged to animal rights activists, for example, their thoughts on speciesism. I also found themes that exclusively belonged to human rights activists, for instance, their criticisms about shaming campaigns for animal ethics. I also found themes that I didn't plan for, including topics related to women's rights and the role of the family in implanting unconscious speciesism in children. For the interpretation, I asked myself what activists say about each concept, how they feel about it, and what I learned after each interview. In the following chapter, I will interpret and analyze the transcripts and codes based on three different categories: common questions between two groups, questions exclusively related

to animal rights activists, and questions related to human rights activists. The research findings are presented in accordance with my three main research questions, followed by some sub-question in each section.

Chapter 4: Research findings

The two main themes in my literature review are education and intersectional approach to justice for human and non-human animals. The themes that I found through the coding process include: the role of education in creating awareness and sympathy for animal ethics; understanding the barriers for human rights activist to involve animal ethics as part of their advocacy; understanding the motivations that animal rights activists had which led them to a path toward animal ethics; and finally the necessity of creating a bridge and alliance between all human rights and animal rights activists. In the following section, I share my findings from the interviews and In the final chapter of this paper, I will interpret and analyze those findings and discuss them in relevance to my literature review.

- 1- First research question: How education and pedagogy can help create responsible planetary citizens concerned with social justice issues beyond the human realm?

I found the following themes relevant to how participants feel and think about animal ethics today:

1. childhood memories of animals;
2. impacts of books and media;
3. family structure and limitations;
4. how we learn about the environment, and finally;
5. the hidden speciesism in society and education systems.

What early childhood memories do Interviewees have about animals?

When I asked this question to human rights activists, they all started to talk about dogs, cats, and pets. It is as if only an animal who "belongs" to humans is considered an animal to them. Moreover, these activists have only memories of those animals around them.

Mojtaba: "Oh, yea. I have always loved animals. I grew up with animals. I got beaten in Iran when I was 12 years old just because I had a dog. I got arrested once because of my dog."

Jivan: "Well, I am. I'm going to be honest. I didn't grow up in a pet-friendly environment, but we were one of those families that didn't like us to grow up with animals or pets. So I never had one, but yeah, I always had sympathy."

Farhad, one of the animal rights activists, talked about his different levels of relationships with different animals. He loved animals that "belonged" to him and hated those who hurt his belongings.

Farhad: "It was very different depending on different animals. I guess I had a lot of animals that cats caught. I had a bunny and a bunch of fish that cats killed, so I hated cats. I remember even throwing stones at them never actually heard it hurt one, but I remember doing that. I did have a chicken. Every time I had a chicken, I really loved them, so if they were my animals, I definitely loved them so much."

Another animal rights activist, Roya, remembered fishing or sacrificing animals as the first childhood memories she had about animals. Two other activists remembered the same memories of sacrificing animals and how those experiences were heartbreaking to them. One of them blames herself for not realizing that eating animals was wrong when she was a child. Another participant revealed that even though the experience of witnessing animal abuse was horrible, she considers herself fortunate for understanding that killing and eating animals is wrong at those early ages.

Roya: "The earliest one was about the fish. It was so big and so full of life it was fighting for its life in front of my eyes, and it was killed and then grilled in front of us, and everyone was enjoying this, and I wasn't eager to eat that. Another time was, a short time after that actually, that my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, had some, you know, small sheep to be sacrificed, and they made food out of that., That was very upsetting and saddening and frightening for a child to witness that."

Fateh remembered visiting the zoo with his father and how he didn't understand the cruelty behind the imprisonment of animals in cages then.

Fateh: "I remember my dad was taking me to zoos. So, I really like watching animals, but I wasn't conscious as a kid, and I think my dad also was unconscious that those animals are also in jail. So, we just captured and kept those animals in captivity for our own favor and fun. and that was something which I had to think about later on in my life."

What were the Impacts of books and media on how they feel about animals today?

I asked my participants about the effects of books and media on what they learned about animals in their childhood. I also specifically asked them about the impact of anthropomorphism on children's experiences with animals. Four animal rights activists thought that children's books, literature, and cartoons create a false image about animals for us and promote human-centered cliches. In comparison, three other activists believed that childhood books and literature positively impacted how we define our relationships with animals. One animal rights activist also mentioned an important point about how children's books and literature introduce animals to children as friends. Still, family, school, and society push children to eat the same animals. This double standard creates contradiction and confusion for children. Finally, one of the activists talked about his challenges in buying books for his nephews because today most children's books include human-centered cliches about animals.

Beni: "I try to be very aware of what I buy nowadays for my niece. I examine the content, and most of the time, I am frustrated by the cliches, and portraying animals as for example the fox is decisive. that's why buying a book for my niece is very hard."

Three participants mentioned that some animals were represented as mean or manipulative in their childhood books, which could create negative stereotypes about animals.

Farhad: "I think perhaps certain animals were represented as evil like a fox for instance in all books was the bad animal..... I think many farm animals were always represented as properties of people."

Another activist talked about tv commercials and happy cows and how that creates a false image in children's minds about where milk and animal products come from.

Niloofar: "You know when you see a commercial, and there's a cow, and then the cow is smiling. That is not helping. The cow is in the body of a human, and we think, oh, so that's how it should be. Right? They are happy. They are smiling; their babies are happy and with their mother. But the reality is not like that. So,..... literature, cartoons, or commercials that hide the truth about animal lives are not helpful. For example, I saw in a child's book that a cow said milk is healthy. That doesn't help at all. But if I show that kid what they're doing with the cow, that kid would never touch or drink milk."

One of the participants mentioned that animals were represented as friends in books and cartoons, but in reality, we were eating them, and this created confusion for children.

Roya: "I think you know, having them personified as friends, having dressed up, and talking in a way that humans are is helpful for the children. As a child, I had a great imagination. I was always talking to myself. I had some sort of fantasy going on in my inner self. So, I used to talk to the animals around me. Maybe now that I look into it through the lens of your questions, maybe that was one of the reasons I was used to children's literature, literature that animals were more like humans and talkative and had characteristics that we usually address for humans. So, I think that was helpful for not considering animals as things and objects and food. But at the same time, there was this sort of confusion between animals presented to children in those books and cartoons as friends, and at the same time, parents insisting and pushing their children to have animal protein to get strong and grow up."

And finally, another activist thinks that anthropomorphism in children's literature actually helps children to realize that animals feel pain and suffering too.

Mahsa: "Anthropomorphism. I believe that's a good thing because it lets children know how animals have feelings and could feel pain, fear, joy, and all these feelings. The same thing that we do. So, I believe that that's a good thing."

I asked the same question from human rights activists. Three of these participants think that the literature of children's books, precisely the concept of anthropomorphism, positively impacted children. They believe that children would love imaginary animals to talk to them, which helps them understand animals better.

Bahram: "I think it helps when we see them as equal beings that talk, and then they have fathers, mothers, children, brothers, sisters just like us. I think that kind of thing helps develop some kind of sympathy or closeness to the animals."

Two of these interviewees recalled when animals were represented as mean or evil, believing this could create a false impression on children.

Iman: "It was like certain animals were represented by certain characteristics like foxes, were always represented as manipulative and kind of evil personalities and, like, sketchy and that kind of stuff. Some of them were represented as Useless, Some of them funny, Some smart, some compassionate and fuzzy. Um, so, it was stereotyping animals based on."

Two interviewees believed that even if the images represented in those books were positive, those images didn't teach them anything about animals..

Jivan: "Well, I can't say it was negative, but I know I didn't learn anything from those books. I didn't learn anything about animal rights. Animals were just animals in our books. You know, we weren't supposed to treat them in a better way. we weren't supposed to learn to treat them as part of our family."

Opinions regarding the environmental impacts of animal agriculture.

I asked human rights activists about the environmental impacts of their lifestyle and their understanding of the environmental effects of animal agriculture. Four of these participants argued that even though they will try their best to have an environmentally friendly lifestyle, they don't see the solution to our environmental crisis through the lenses of personal actions. Instead, they all believed we must focus on systemic change and governmental actions.

Simin: "Of course, I am concerned about the impact of myself on the environment, and I have heard about the impact of animal agriculture on the environment. However, I don't think the individual impact is necessarily the answer. It's not necessarily just the individuals that can change because I know the impact of what I do on my daily life; as much as I try to change, like using less plastic.....However, I think these would be minimal compared to impacts of the production and so on, which have a greater impact on the environment.

Another interviewee mentioned that he is into more environmentally friendly options, including eating kangaroo, insects, lab meat, or trying a vegan diet.

Iman: "In terms of animal agriculture, yes, I heard that. I know that it really has a drastic impact on environmental resources. Especially, you know there was this, there are all these

conversations about the methane-producing by cows' digestion system and how farmland destroyed forests to create habitat for these animals for these farm animals. These are some of the things that I'm really concerned about and of course. There's also probably the issue of how these animals are treated, which is not part of this question, but... Yeah. I think I considered all the alternatives how you know some people think of. Moving on to insects or from eating beef to eating kangaroo meat, and so because it's more environmentally sustainable. Or becoming a vegetarian or vegan, which is a very dominant issue in the place, I live in Vancouver."

One of the interviewees thinks that closing traditional animal farms would lead to more transportation, environmental issues, and carbon emissions.

Simin:"Another issue with that is that I know in certain areas where traditionally animals are the main food source. I'm not talking about like huge factories are built, but like where traditional farming is happening when you are switching, the environmental impact might be worse because now they don't have the local capacity to grow certain vegetables and so on, and now you're importing all these vegetables from another part of the world, and I think that has the higher carbon footprint. that's as far as I have heard about it."

I asked animal rights activists about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture and if they use environmental reasons as part of their advocacy for animal rights. All animal rights activist participants in this study were very well informed about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture. I received various responses in terms of engaging environmental concerns as part of their advocacy. Three of these activists believed that we need to use environmental reasons because people might care when they know something will impact them. One of the activists argues that we can use environmental reasons, but framing is crucial, and we should always prioritize the ethical aspects of our advocacy. Finally, one activist argued that he is not using environmental reasons anymore because he finds it offensive to talk about the environmental impacts of slaughtering animals while we can focus our advocacy on the pain and suffering those animals face. His reasons sound very legit. In the following section, I will share his reasons.

Farhad: " I started using environment less and less in my outrage for a few reasons: first of all, you have to be very knowledgeable in what you're talking about, and it requires a lot of statistics,

and there is a lot of agenda by dairy and meat industries, so they support you know articles and publications that say otherwise, and you get into that loophole..... Another thing is I feel like when people talk about environmental factors, it is a selfish thing. They're not thinking about other species. They are still thinking about themselves. So it's mostly like not because they care about animals or other people but just because they care about themselves. The last reason I stopped using environmental aspects is after I heard this comparison. Imagine during World War Two, the Nazi forces are killing Jews, and you have these concentration camps, and you're an advocate. You argue that It is bad for air pollution when they burn Jews. Do you realize how ridiculous that sounds? Or when you talk about child trafficking, imagine your argument against child trafficking was the transportation and carbon emission instead of the ethical reasons. it's just like it's offensive."

Another animal rights activist articulated her vision of the activism of the 21st century, which is the lifestyle of veganism, which includes all the concerns for injustices toward human and non-human animals and environmental concerns.

"I wanted to talk about the activism of the 21st century. I actually think that all the issues that once were my priority about women, about injustice classes of society, religions, fear of expressing your ideas, and freedom of speech, in my view, have somehow become a lifestyle of veganism. Because you cannot be vegan and care only about your plate and food on the table, you need to think about your surroundings and all the things around you in your environment. And your environment as a whole. This is all entangled with being vegan for me, and I think if you are true to yourself and if you are willing to do something as a person and individual for your environment, this is almost the only way of being very effective, true to your ethical values and I find it very empowering to actually think this way about my fellow beings and environment and non-human animals and in a wider perspective to our planet, veganism is far more than being obsessed about food. It is more a lifestyle and a way that I look at almost everything."

What are the challenges with family regarding animal ethics issues

Even though I didn't plan to ask about the family's role and impact in teaching children about animal ethics, many participants, especially animal rights activists, revealed stories about how their families created challenges for them in changing their lifestyles. For example, one of the

human rights activists talks about how his family resisted his wish to go vegetarian. His mother believed that going vegetarian at a young age would affect his health and growth.

Mojtaba: "I always had that desire from a very early age. I always wanted to be a vegetarian. I started it in middle school and high school, and my mother was going crazy, saying that you are growing up and not eating will affect your height and affect your future. And don't do that now, and let's wait until you are twenty and if you want to do it at that age".

Other activists talked about the tradition of sacrificing sheep in Al Adha and how this happened in front of children. They argued that their families didn't understand the brutality of this ceremony for children and didn't protect their children from experiencing this ceremony.

Jivan: "It is upsetting, and when I think about that right now, I think that's brutal when you do that in front of children. Yeah. When you do that in front of children. That is brutal, and I don't know how parents were ok with this to let children witness such a horror."

Five of animal rights activist interviewees struggled with their families when they started a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. They have memories of their families killing and cooking their chickens for food without their consent. The experience of losing your companion animal and turning it into food and pushing you to eat that animal has created such horrible memories for them.

Farhad: "I had a chicken that became a big rooster, and then I gave him to my grandma because she had a big back backyard, and one day she told me that the door was open and my rooster had run away. and then I was looking around the neighborhood for like two or three weeks just trying to make sure he is safe. I always imagined that he would get hit by a car. Then years and years later, my mom accidentally said that the soup we had that day was made with my rooster."

Roya: "my mom was using all of her creativity to trick me into eating meat and animal products without knowing it. From that time, I started a non-stop fight, constantly checking to make sure there was no animal in my food. Even up until very maybe seven years ago, when I became vegan, from being a vegetarian. When I became vegan, I heard my mom talking about me, talking to my aunt about "now I understand from that very early age that maybe this wasn't nature of her not eating meat and all you know fighting over food all this time" I mean it took

her almost 40 years to understand that this was a natural choice for me, not some sort of spoiled childish decision or some sort of defense attitude from an angry child."

One of the activists shared her experience with her mother and brother, who are kind to birds and other animals in their backyard, but at the same time, they eat meat and chicken. She is frustrated with this double standard.

Mahsa: "For example, my mom and my brother, we live in the same house, they're downstairs, they enjoy feeding birds in the backyard, but this makes me really sad that at the same time that they are feeding those birds, they are eating their rice and chicken....what's the difference between that bird you're feeding and the other bird on your plate?"

The family structure and limitations could still be a challenge for activists even after they grow up and live independently from their families.

Roya: "My mom talks as if I have lost the biggest joy of my life. She asks me why are you doing this to yourself? And I answer I like to do this. I want this, but she feels sorry for me. My sister sometimes taunts me. My sister tells me that vegans are radicals. Sometimes it feels so lonely, and they don't get it. And that is ok if they don't support us, but at least they shouldn't be cruel, and they shouldn't bother us. "

Integration of animal ethics into the education system

I asked activists how we can promote animal ethics in the education system. Participants talked about teaching children about speciesism in schools and a pedagogy based on the history and philosophy of our relationship with non-human animals. I wanted to learn about what is missing from the education system that enables speciesist attitudes among people. One human rights activist who believes in ethical animal consumption argued that we need to teach our children about the history of human and animal relationships.

Bahram: "A few things. For example, in late high school, when the kids are more mature and ready to understand, a part of the history should be like teaching the pre-history subjects like how human beings used to be an equal part of nature. That's something that most people just take for granted that human beings are superior to other animals..... we need to educate students about a part of our history, the human being history, where the human was an equal member of existence, then that might be a major way to change how we look at our relationship with non-human animals..... if we somehow increase this awareness, and this education, things will change in the society. Especially if we make it part of the curriculum, school curriculums, teach the kids that they should be responsible towards non-human beings and be concerned about those things. I think that's the most efficient and strongest way to change society."

Some animal rights activists suggested that we should create more connections between children and farm animals. They suggested that schools need to teach children the idea of justice in a more fundamental way beyond a specific race, gender, or species. Another activist argues that there is so much conversation about dogs and cats, but we need children to learn about other animals.

Mahsa: "I think it is important to either make routine visits to animal sanctuaries or just have a trans-species school with other animals just in plain sight because it's very important for students to interact with these animals. If students are closed to hens and pigs and chickens and cows, they cannot accept the idea of eating them. So yeah, just more connection with animals, farm animals, is number one, I think. And maybe number two would be communicating about justice and fairness in a fundamental way, not narrowing it down to a specific race, a specific gender, or specific species as it usually is being portrayed."

Finally, three animal rights activists specifically identified speciesism as the primary root for exploiting animals and discussed the necessity of addressing it in education.

Nahid: " Definitely defining speciesism like in philosophy classes and mentioning the environmental impacts in environmental courses in high schools.... Also, bringing the health aspects and nutritional education in classes."

Two animal rights activists believed that teaching children about the environment and how our environmental footprint is destroying animals would be a good step for them to be aware of animal ethics.

Niloofer: "I would have a class teaching humans, which are animals again, to be more involved with animals....showing them how we're producing a lot of plastic and that plastics are killing animals. Even plastic hair ties, even cigarette filters that would kill animals."

Another participant suggests that instead of directly attacking the issue, we need to work on pedagogies based on the history and philosophy of how humans developed this human-centered world.

Roya: "I would say instead of attacking the main issue upfront, I would suggest a pedagogue based on history and also philosophy. Before you know, thinking about animal rights, or speciesism, I would suggest that we think about the path of thoughts and way and ideas of humans as the center of the world happened and got developed. That requires some basic, you know, lessons in philosophy.... At what exact moments in our history did humans think that they were much above their environment and that they were the owner of all resources around them?"

- 2- My second research question is why so many human rights activists, especially from the left side of the political spectrum, stop their activism at the border of humans and animals.

Triggers that made them sensitive toward social justice issues

I asked both human rights activists and animal rights activists about the first triggers that made them sensitive toward social justice issues. First, I asked animal rights activists about what motivated them to become vegan. In addition, I also asked human rights activists about the barriers which keep them from going vegan. During my conversations, two other themes, including women's rights and religion, came up, which I will discuss under this research question. All participants, one way or another, identified oppression in Iran as one of the primary triggers for getting involved in social justice campaigns. Three human rights activists, all women, specifically mentioned women's situation in Iran as the first trigger to be sensitive about social justice.

Nazanin: "I think it was related to the background. So, coming originally from Iran, witnessing the social injustice and abuse of human rights or, even better, the lack of human rights at all. I

think it makes you feel more sensitive towards these kinds of things. Even if it happens to other groups, not necessarily you know your ethnic or sexual or whatever group."

Another activist also talked about general injustice in Iran, specifically hijab and injustices against women as the primary triggers.

Simin: "I mean, living in a country with so much injustice in your face. You see injustice everywhere. Even as a kid, going to school, you have to wear a Hijab. You feel it everywhere."

Rahima: "As a woman, I am the first target of discrimination no matter which part of the geography of the world you're talking about because we don't have any complete equality in the world."

I asked the same question from animal rights activists. Four interviewees considered abuse of women's rights in Iran as the primary trigger to be sensitive toward social justice. Three shared their experiences observing marginalized communities and poverty as the primary trigger. One of the activists also talked about experiencing racism in Iran.

Roya: "I was the last child of a family with three children. Even though I was from a middle-class family, both culturally and economically, I thought there was a sort of injustice and discrimination between my big brother and myself and my sister. So I realized that there was a difference between boys and girls at that time. We were supposed to be more socially preserved and more careful. And it wasn't that easy to go outside and play with neighbors' children like the way that my brother would. And even with our relatives and friends' children, although we were not from a religious family, we were raised by two atheist parents, but still, culturally, there was a fundamental difference between boys and girls. so that's when I felt injustice, and it made me uncomfortable and angry at times."

A male activist also mentioned oppression against women and the traumas he saw in his female friends and sister as the first trigger for him

beni: "The first trigger, I think it was the traumas that I saw in my female friends, my sister, or just about any female near me when we were close enough, they would reveal themselves, and I would talk about the problems that had been bullied, being harassed, or any form of assault."

Abuse of women rights in Iran

Four human rights activists, all women, share their experiences of oppression as a woman in Iran.

Two animal rights activists also shared their experiences as immigrant women of color outside of Iran. They all feel this oppression makes them better understand and sympathize with other oppressed groups.

Rahima: "As a woman of color and an immigrant, I experience different kinds of it, and I can go in different directions explaining such a situation. And actually, experiencing inequality and oppression helps me to understand other communities' experiences in the same way or I might say having this sympathy and empathy for their verbal history when they talk about their stories."

One of the human rights activist interviewees recalled women in Iran as third citizens.

Nazanin: "My background, born and raised in Iran, went through the Islamic revolution and the war after that, losing all the human rights that people had before the revolution. I was a little kid before the revolution, but still. As a woman and a nonreligious woman, you could feel like a second citizen, basically, or maybe a third. I will say that nonreligious straight men probably would be the second citizen, so everyone else would be the third citizen. Or LGBTQ+ citizens are even worse than this. So anyway, it was hard at pretty much every imaginable level. If you're thinking about social justice and human rights, then yes, that made me very, like, you know, sympathetic to other people."

One of the animal rights activists, speaking of women's oppression in Iran and outside of Iran, criticized PETA for its sexist campaigns. He thinks all forms of oppression are interlinked and intertwined and come from the same root. I will discuss this topic in more detail when working on intersectionality, alliance, and bridging between campaigns.

beni: "The one that I cringe or oppose the most, of course, number one, is PETA and their sexist campaigns and commodification of women and as a part of their animal activism. I am very opposed to that because (he used Persian slang) we try to fix the eyebrow, and we blind the eye. I think yes, and they are wrong in their approaches most of the time."

Another activist shared her experience of discrimination in the education system. She wanted to study veterinary medicine, but her hometown university only offered veterinary training for men at that time.

Zahra: "when I was in high school, I wanted to apply for veterinarian medicine at a university, but back then, at Azad university, girls couldn't apply for that program. Right now, it is for everyone, but back then, it was only for men..... And all everything else like Hijab, and there are a lot of injustices for women in Iran."

Negative impacts of religion and religious government on the lifestyle of these activists

One other subject I learned through these interviews was the negative impacts of religion and religious government on the lifestyle of these activists. Interestingly neither of the interviewees identified themselves as religious. Three human rights activists identified themselves as spiritual, and five identified themselves as neither religious nor spiritual. Almost all these activists talked about their experiences living in Iran under a religious dictatorship and feeling oppressed by the religion. While none of the animal rights activists identified themselves as religious persons, one of the animal rights activists calls religion a foundation of injustices toward human and non-human animals.

Roya: "I do think there is a maybe very main root in all these social justice issues about LGBT or women and also non-human beings in our society. Basically, I think one of the major reasons that we still have so much, we are witnessing so much injustice in all those branches, should be a cultural and then, I would say, even more deeply religious issue. Because in Islam and like most of the other major religions like Judaism and Christianity, there is this sense of humans as the center of the board and the master of the word actually. I think this is a major issue both in man's hierarchy and in how humans access nature, environment, and animals".

One animal rights activist compared society in Iran and Canada and argued that religion has demonized animals in Iran. Another activist called religious oppression in Iran as the worst form of oppression.

Mahsa: "Here, I mean, kids growing up with pets, and then they learn that sort of thing. So at least, I mean, there are things, there are some levels of respect for animals. But where we grow up, no, you know for religious people even, so if you consider yourself a Muslim, even in your religion, living with an animal is Haram. So for many religious people, there is nothing in the religions to encourage them to think about animal rights."

Two animal rights activist participants identified themselves as spiritualists, but their spirituality was more in the form of a holistic way of thinking and connecting with nature. None of these activists identified their animal rights advocacy as related to their religion or spirituality.

Fatih: "I do not believe in any other creator. I believe in nature as a home, as a holistic way of thinking about nature. I think nature has some sort of rules, and it is smart. That's all.....I believe that we are connected all through nature as some sort of part of a very big system. So, if we start to spoil other parts or other factors in nature, we will all be influenced by this."

The Al Adha sacrifice ritual was one of the most challenging and upsetting moments for animal rights activists.

Roya: "My grandparents had some small sheep to be sacrificed, and they made food out of that., That was very upsetting, saddening, and frightening for a child to witness. It was a family event, and all of us children were looking at this. Unfortunately, our parents didn't bother to warn us that it is not suitable for children to watch this. But at the same time, I'm happy that I witnessed that. Since that moment, I have stopped eating any animals up until now. And I was around 8, I think. My grandfather bought the sheep early in the morning, and all the children were playing with the sheep. We had so much fun looking into its eyes and communicating with the animal. And then, in front of our eyes, they came and butchered that poor sheep. The younger ones were crying, and no one cared to put us away from that scene. We watched the animal become meat and to become food, and we watched everyone eating the dish made out of that creature who was just alive a couple of hours ago"

Motivations of animal rights activists for advocating for animal ethics, and limitations of human rights activists to join this cause

In this section, I wanted to learn about animal rights activists' motivations to care about animal ethics and the barriers that keep human rights activists from doing the same. I asked human rights activists if they ever considered changing their lifestyle to a vegan lifestyle and, if not, what are their reasons. I also asked their opinion about social justice for animals. Finally, I asked them about the future generation of humans and the current and future generations of non-human animals. When I asked about changing their lifestyles, the majority of human rights activists argued that individual actions don't change anything, and we need systemic change.

Rahima: "But this is not a personal issue; this is about how the population is facing these sorts of concerns. with the individual lifestyle, these kinds of problems are not going to be addressed or solved."

One human rights activist argued that too much focus on individual changes would repel people from joining the cause. Instead, we must come to a common cause with all oppressed groups.

Simin: "Instead of coming to a common cause with all these people, for example, the working class, where they can eat at McDonald's for 3 dollars, but the cheapest vegetarian food they can get is the falafel sandwich for 6-7 dollars at least. So, when you look at that contrast, instead of, for example, shaming, it's better to think about the limitations of people. You cannot tell a human who has been eating meat for like 6000 years that, oh, you are shameful for doing that.....You have to create that connection where they come to that understanding, and they see a common enemy with you. If I were in most of this campaign, I would come in as an ally with others. I come in as allies like do you see how this system is exploiting you and animals equally, and how we can fight against it. You don't have to be vegetarian tomorrow, but you can see very strong, and if we fight the whole system, then maybe in 10 years, naturally, there will be local vegetarian foods involved."

Another human rights activist argued that inviting individuals to change their lifestyle to a vegan diet is more the neoliberal way. This shift needs to be done from a collective level and policymaking instead of focusing too much on individual actions.

Jivan: "we shouldn't accept the neoliberal approach and put the responsibility on people's shoulders. Even going to be a vegetarian, going to be a vegan is also one of the politicians' responsibilities too. Because they can educate people, they can stop or reduce the subsidy of industrial agriculture and add subsidies to organic agriculture and more plant-based food and go in that direction. So we should not point at people all the time and lecture people all the time. But, on the other hand, it is a political act. I would think that environmental issues right now are the most political issue at the moment. Individual acts are good and necessary. But if we don't pay attention to the cause of the problem, capitalism, and how we treat nature, we're not going to solve the problem."

Social justice for non-human animals

My next question for these activists was whether they believe in social justice for nonhuman animals. Six human rights activist participants consider justice for animals in changing how we eat them and treat them, not eliminating the exploitation of animals. Some of these activists argue that they support traditional farms because they are not cruel to animals.

Bahram: "We should minimize the consumption of meat and animal products or things like that to the level that they could have a proper life. What does a proper life mean? I'm not an expert in defining it but eventually, what I feel is that it should be brought down. like consumption should be brought down to the level that the average person in human society would feel comfortable in terms of guilt or responsibility for nonhuman beings."

One participant argued that she doesn't have that much sympathy for animals, and sensitivity toward ethics is something that has evolved through history. Unfortunately, we are still not there to fully care about animal ethics.

Simin: "I don't have that kind of connection with animals that somebody else might have. I am not saying that as an excuse, but I just don't have that connection for a huge sympathy for animals, to be honest with you..... I think our sensitivity toward ethics is something that has evolved through history, and it is not a one-night thing. Same as it was ok; for example, during the Roman time to go to a stadium and fight another human, one of them ended up dead at the end just for entertainment. That was ok in terms of human ethics at a point in human history. And now that we have evolved to all these different ethical questions and every day it's getting better, I don't know if better or what you call it, but it's evolving into something that includes more items. There was a time when we enslaved people, and their life didn't matter."

Another activist who preferred to call herself semi-vegetarian said she changed her diet because she believes in animal social justice. She thinks even reducing animal consumption or buying products from small farms can fulfill this purpose.

Nazanin: "I eat fish. I don't eat much dairy, but like, I might. Maybe I could track to make sure that this is coming from a humane condition, like not those horrible pictures that we see from, you know, Chickens, ten of them in a small box, and they just give them antibiotics. So I think that those are the things we could do. Even non-vegetarian people could do that. I mean, you don't have to be vegetarian or vegan just to do that."

And finally, one of the activists said he stopped eating meat six years ago for ethical reasons. But he still doesn't consider animal products unethical.

Ebrahim: "I stopped eating meat six years ago. The whole point was my affection for animals. As I told you before, I studied Peter Singer (a leading moral philosopher), and I believe deeply that causing animals any pain is cruelty. As Nietzsche said: man is the cruelest animal."

- 3- How can we create an intersectional approach to social justice? How can we create a bridge between animal rights activists and human rights activists?

After coding the transcriptions, I found mutual themes between responses from human rights and animal rights activists: a) experiencing oppression and sympathizing with other oppressed groups; b) the necessity of an intersectional approach to social justice. Next, I asked human rights activists and animal rights activists separate questions to understand their visions and ideas about veganism, animal rights campaigns, and an alliance between different social justice movements. From these questions, I found the following themes: Individual actions versus system change, human rights activists misunderstanding veganism, opinions about animal rights campaigns, big animal factory farms versus small farms, triggers that made animal rights activists choose a vegan lifestyle, and animal rights challenges for their animal ethics advocacy. In the following section, I will go through each of the above themes.

Experiencing oppression and sympathizing with other oppressed groups

Four human rights activist participants, all women, described experiencing oppression for being a woman in Iran. One of the participants argued that his experience growing up as a gay man in Iran helped him sympathize with women. Another participant shared his experience of being in prison for human rights activism and meeting other oppressed groups like LGBTQ+ activists in prison.

Ebrahim: "When I was arrested and confined in a cell, I could hear others crying, and at that time, I felt what I was doing my whole life was the right thing to do. I met a few people at that time and listened to their stories and the false accusations that were the reasons for authorities to arrest them. I felt and thought that what we need is a massive and deep change for a just system, and we all need to stand by each other to win this battle. Besides, a few of my own friends have been arrested, and they are LGBTQ+, and I was so worried about them. After I got out and had a chance to meet them, I saw what they have gone through, and their resilience was breathtaking."

Another activist shared her experience as a woman of color and immigrant and how this experience helped her to understand other oppressed groups.

Rahima: "As a woman of color and an immigrant, I experienced different kinds of inequality and oppression, which in fact, helped me to understand other communities' experiences in the same way. It helped me to have sympathy and empathy for their verbal history when they talked about their stories. If you are not part of a suppressed population, you would not understand what their experience is. You cannot feel it, you don't have a complete comprehension of what is going on in their lives"

One of the activists talked about the pattern of oppression that runs through society.

Iman: "I mean micro-oppression as immigrants, we face it all the time. But. Oppression. You know, living for two decades under an oppressive regime. That definitely has affected me. In terms of sympathizing with other oppressed groups, Yeah, definitely because You could see how there's a pattern of oppression similar to what I experienced and maybe worse, so I can understand the dynamics of it. I can understand the reactions of people and how it affects lives. So it definitely makes me more sympathetic towards other oppressed people and how they're coping with those in the face of those oppressions."

The animal rights activists' experiences of oppression covered a more comprehensive range of topics from domestic violence, women's rights abuse, religious oppression, the experience of

racism, and family oppression to the philosophy of boredom and how mandatory military service made one of these interviewees to sympathize with animals who are in small cages all their lives.

Beni: "I think all the oppressions are interlinked and intertwined.... for example, if I'm a sexual predator or anyone that is going to assault or harass a woman, I should first dehumanize her to a degree and making comparisons to animals, is a very effective form of dehumanizing, and even the act of oppression, the act of violence is very similar. If it's punching, if it's choking someone, all the oppressive behaviors that target the body of a victim between a man and woman is very similar to the cruelty and oppression that is done against animals".

One animal rights activist mentioned her experience of being harassed by a racist man in Canada at her workplace. She explained how she felt protected because this country's law and order protects her. She argued that we need to fight today, so some oppressed groups feel protected ten years from now as some people fought against racism, and now, we feel protected against racism.

Nilofar: "When something is the law, when you know that you're protected by law, that's where you feel safe.... people fought for the right to vote, people fought for equal treatment of humans, and actually, people died for it, and now I feel protected. So, when I see something wrong, I have to fight for it so one day, I don't know, another person would feel protected in 10 years, in 15 years. I think the point of being an activist today is that if there's something wrong, you can fight for it. I'm fighting for veganism, hoping that in 10 years or, I don't know, 20 years, other human and non-human animals will feel safe.

Finally, another animal rights activist shared her experience of domestic violence and how she and her cat were her ex-husband's victims. After being violated by the oppressor, she and the cat both faced the same rage and violation.

Mahsa: "One day, I remember my ex got mad because I wasn't paying attention to him. He wanted to be loved. Obviously, that was the case. And he got mad. He yelled at me, and he grabbed my cat and threw him into the other room. I mean, luckily, cats are good at landing. If it was any other animal, I don't know what would have happened. So you know it's I don't know what to call this, but my cat and I, at the same moment, we're facing the same rage at the moment. Anyway, yeah, I have experienced that, and that helped me to sympathize with other oppressed humans and nonhuman animals."

Animal rights activists doing human rights activism

I asked animal rights activists if they had been involved in other forms of human rights activism before they started animal rights activism. Four of these activists have been involved in women's rights activism; one was engaged in LGBTQ= activism before they began animal rights advocacy.

Mahsa: "We established a non-profit society, called Yarra women aids, a couple of years ago here in Vancouver. Our mandate is to help women in Iran who are basically either single moms or their husbands are unable to work, and basically, they are the main breadwinners. We help them to start a business in whatever they're good at, like handmade carpets and rugs, Persian rugs, or other things. We help them to start a business. So basically, we don't give them money directly. we help them, we make a small investment in whatever tools they need to start that particular"

One of the activists argued that it is good for animal rights campaigns if the activists start to get more involved with humans because we are often accused of having our priorities misplaced.

Beni: "One of the criticisms animal activists routinely get is that their priorities are misplaced, and there are other "important" issues to pay attention to. I think it's important and very effective and helpful for vegan activists, animal rights activists to discuss topics about slaughterhouse workers, about the indigenous people that are on the frontline of suffering from climate change."

Necessity of an intersectional approach to social justice

I asked both groups of participants about the necessity of an intersectional approach to social justice. It seems like all of these participants believed in an intersectional approach. One of them defined justice as a socially constructed concept that only an intersectional approach can define.

Two human rights activists referred to a quote from a famous American womens' rights activist, Fannie Lou Hammer, that nobody's free until everybody's free.

Nazanin: "I think it was Mandela who said that "nobody's free until everybody's free," or something like that. I mean, we are all connected one way or another, so we can't just say that; for example, the only thing important to me is women's rights, and I don't care about LGBTQ+. This is not just possible. And I don't think people are like that because as soon as you get

involved in one of these issues, your sensitivity level and your level of care are just heightened. It's really hard to be indifferent, you know, towards other stuff, towards other kinds of activism or social justice issues.

Another human rights activist argued that our identities consist of different layers, which means we can't avoid an intersectional approach to the issues.

Iman: "Our identity consists of layers of different layers. Like I am a community activist, I'm also, you know, an Iranian immigrant. Also, I'm. I'm still young, I guess under 40, like all these different dimensions to your personality mean that you cannot avoid an intersectional approach to issues. Otherwise, you will face serious contradictions."

And finally, another participant argued that when different layers of oppression would add to each other, only an intersectional way of looking at things can help us better understand the whole concept.

Jivan: "An intersectional approach would help you to consider, as I mentioned before, marginalized groups in your approach because not everyone is on the same level when it comes to justice in general, like food justice, health justice, environmental justice, and human rights. If you belong to one of these marginalized groups of people, your access to all of this will be affected. Many of the people around us do belong to two or three of these groups. I will give you an example to explain and make it clearer. Imagine you are a black lesbian woman. Many immigrants and black people live in marginalized areas around cities with high environmental pollution. And then being a lesbian would affect you and makes you even poorer because you are a woman, and your sexual orientation would affect you to have a better education and a good job. You are gonna be poorer and poorer, and you are gonna end up in those marginalized areas around the cities, where environmental pollution is high. You are not gonna have access to insurance, health insurance, or enough healthy food. We know that many of the diseases related to environmental pollutants or not having access to healthy foods are higher in those marginalized groups. So, using an intersectional approach would help us to understand the whole concept better."

All animal rights activists except one considered an intersectional approach essential for their advocacy. They believed that different forms of oppression are intertwined and interlinked.

Roya: "I would definitely say speciesism is very much aligned with the other social justice issues. It's exactly the same, racism and speciesism.... There's no real difference between the value that racism gives to one specific race and the value that speciesism gives to a specific species, in this case, humans.... Acknowledging that these are aligned it's not enough. I think we

have to find the roots, and I think the roots are not just religious reasons. Specifically Islamic beliefs in this case. It is far deeper than that. It is a culture and involves patriarchy."

Only one animal rights activist participant insisted that animal rights activism is only related to animals, and our activists don't need to concern themselves with other social justice issues. Although I only had one of my interviewees look at the intersectional approach from this perspective, this view exists among many other animal rights activists I have met.

Farhad: "I don't think the animal rights movement needs to focus and address everything else because animal rights are about animals. I don't disagree that sometimes it might be helpful to help other movements so that they can come on board, but I don't think that animal rights activists should be bashed for not thinking about other issues. I think animal rights is such a massive problem, and it's like literally in a different category in terms of how neglected it is,...so because of that, I think it deserves some people but solely focused on that. Veganism is about animals. It's not about people. It's not about black people, is not about gay people, that's about factory farm animals and other animals to suffer in that setting for entertainment, fashion, etc. that's what by definition of veganism is."

Misunderstandings about veganism

In this section, I will cover what I consider human rights activists' misunderstandings of veganism and animal rights advocacy. Some of these misunderstandings are related to health issues, some are about affordability and costs, and some are about the ethical consumption of animal products. I will present their responses here and discuss this topic in the next chapter.

One of the issues I consider a misconception about veganism is the issue of the cost and affordability of a vegan lifestyle. Many think a vegan lifestyle will be expensive for them, and they can't afford it.

Rahima: "The industry of meat, animal meat, has made it really easy and cheap, and affordable for the population of the world. It is still very difficult and expensive and not affordable to pay for plant-based options. If you look at the cost of living for a vegan or vegetarian person, if they want to have a really healthy diet and replace the nutrition with plants, they have to pay two-

thirds of their paycheck for food. Yasmine and I have tried to follow vegan and vegetarian diets. I need to tell you the truth; a family in the United States can't afford it."

The ethical consumption of animal products is another misconception among some human rights activists.

Bahram: "We should minimize the consumption of meat and animal products or things like that to the level that they could have a proper life....like the consumption should be brought down to the level that the average person in the society in human society would feel comfortable in terms of guilt or responsibility for nonhuman beings."

Another concern, which I believe to a great extent is a misconception, is that veganism is not healthy for humans.

Nazanin: "One night in February 2002, I decided, you know what, That's it. So, I stopped eating everything like chicken and meat and fish, but I had to go back and eat fish because I felt bad. I guess I feel better because I eat fish, but this is just my opinion. I don't have any logical reason for it."

Mojtaba: "I stopped vegetarianism because of my lifestyle. I travel a lot. In 2019 we traveled in Europe to so many different countries, and at one point, my partner got really concerned and angry that you are not getting nutritious food, and you are eating salad for months now. Because like at these restaurants, we didn't have a chance, and it's really difficult to find vegan food in some European restaurants. So, unless like Germany. He said this is very unhealthy and you should stop it. So, it was more like lifestyle reasons that I decided that I couldn't afford to do this now, and I always wanted to go back, but it hasn't happened yet."

Some of these participants are convinced that no matter how hard we try, there is no option for ethical consumption.

Simin: "I don't think there are better options. I don't trust the label that says ethical to be really more ethical than others. I worked in the coffee industry, and I know like, for example, when the fair trade came, it was a big thing. I know it is better than the regular coffee beans that you buy, but then there was so much backlash about what fair trade. So I think even a little bit less Evil is better than the full Evil, but that's one thing I can do..... but is there any ethical option that I have access to? I know there is very little, maybe a small local business, but this is not something I have to rely on for my daily life."

Some participants believed that humans are more important than animals, and at the moment, we just need to focus on reducing the pain and suffering of humans.

Simin: "For me, based on my experience and my understanding, I have chosen my path within social and human justice because that is personally more important to me and I think to a lot of people. I think humans come first just because we're from the same species, and we have a different kind of emptiness when it comes to our own species. So when I see so much unjust, so much cruel behavior towards humans, I cannot wait. Like we're living in a world where slavery is coming back....I personally cannot and do not have that relates to care as much about animals. At the same time, there's still so much to do about humans. But if I see the connection between the two then, of course."

Another popular misunderstanding among these activists is that we need to produce more food if everyone goes vegan. Therefore, we need more land, and that will damage the environment.

Simin: "We have heard, we have seen that for example what does soy farming do to like Amazon Forest. and we know that whatever step we take, we have to keep in mind the production system that does it and make sure that it is environmentally friendly."

Many of these participants thought that the problem was not with eating animals but with big livestock companies that are cruel to animals.

Simin: "if there is any relation with any animals for production for food, or their wool, or whatever, their hair or milk or whatever, there needs to be mutual respect. I think of it as very traditional farming when people actually look at animals as part of their family. So when their animals reach a certain age or they would get naturally pregnant, they will use their milk or whatever but that they were part of the family for them that they were sad that anything happened to those animals."

Some participants argued that maintaining a vegan lifestyle is time-consuming.

Iman: "The barrier here is money and time. A lot of times, in vegan diets, they're trying to replicate meat. And, you guys spend a lot of time and money on those products. And I get that, because certain tastes, certain textures, certain things you experience as a meat-eater, you have a tough time finding that as a vegan person, and so it's not a justification, it's just a reality."

Another point is when these activists see veganism as an ethical trend that high-income people in higher neighborhoods follow.

Simin: "And these are becoming a trend too. The ethical market has become a trend, and there are so many problems with it that come. You can see them in higher neighborhoods with higher

prices. I see pictures of, I don't know, like black kids on clothing for selling a product and using "ethical" reasons for selling it higher price, but you still are paying that child a dollar, probably, while maybe other companies have paid that child 90 cents. You're putting all these fake masks, but just following the same pattern, same system."

What are the barriers for people to adopt a vegan lifestyle?

I asked human rights activist participants about what prevents them from going vegan. As I already discussed this topic, many of these activists considered financial issues and the high price of vegan products as one of the main challenges. Participants also mentioned a lack of awareness, education, limited time, and selfishness as other reasons for not going vegan.

Rahima: "Some of the reasons are not having access to academic resources, to social media, and the knowledge of the day. In Iran, people don't know anything about animals and animal rights. There are kids in the middle of the street who bully dogs and cats. In Iran, people don't have knowledge about animal rights, and I do not see them being guilty about it. As I explain about the American system, in the Iranian system too, there is something about surviving today. Politically and also economically, they don't have enough time to do the research to think about it, understand it, and have empathy for it. And learning about those kinds of topics is some sort of luxury. You need to have the time, money, and resources to research and learn about animal rights."

Three activists called the lack of awareness and education a significant barrier for people to go vegan.

Bahram: "I think the major thing is the lack of awareness....So, I think if we somehow enhance and increase this awareness, this education, things will change in society. Especially if we make it part of the curriculum, school curriculums, teach the kids that they should be responsible towards non-human beings, and they should be concerned about those things. I think that's the most efficient and strongest way to change society."

One thing that makes people think veganism is expensive is that they believe a vegan lifestyle is equal to buying organic products.

Nazanin: "it is not that cheap if you want to eat organic or if you want to replace this with that and still be healthy and that kind of thing. And it takes a lot of time. I mean, I don't know workers who work 14, 15, or 16 hours a day, and we cannot expect them to think about these things because they have to go to McDonald's, right? Cheap, whatever, meats, chicken,

whatever. So, I understand that completely. I mean, we are privileged basically to have the time and a little bit of money to make this choice"

Some participants also mentioned selfishness as one of the barriers for people to go vegan.

Nazanin: "I mean, you could say these people are selfish, but on the other hand, the things that you enjoy in life are so limited. One might say, okay, don't ruin my food for me. I mean, I have to confess something to you. I love leather, okay? I mean, as a semi-vegetarian person, I am ashamed of that. I only buy leather that is coming from a cow, or you know, something that people eat the meat."

Opinions about animal rights campaigns

I asked human rights activist participants their opinion about animal rights campaigns. They all criticized and disapproved of shaming in animal rights campaigns. They believed that informative campaigns without shaming are more successful.

Simin: "I don't like any shaming campaigns, and a lot of them are shaming campaigns. You cannot come to an understanding with society and make them believe your point of view if you're constantly shaming them for something very normal to them, and I need to be honest. When you're talking about animal rights campaigns, I go straight to think of those against eating animals. So, the one I have faced, the whole campaign is on shaming consumers, and I think they're pointing the finger in the wrong direction. Instead, they can come to a common cause with all these people; for example, I am talking about the working class, where they can eat at McDonald's for 3 dollars. Still, the cheapest vegetarian food they can get is the falafel sandwich for at least 6-7 dollars."

These activists think that as long as animal rights campaigns are not extremist, they should be supported. They regard shaming as extremist, ineffective, and impractical.

Bahram: "I feel about them the same way as I feel about human rights campaigns. Some of them are extremists, some of them are from my perspective, and some are more reasonable. I personally find many of them reasonable, and at the same time, many of them extremists who prefer to avoid those extremists. Like for me, blaming people for consuming meat is extremism. Like putting blame or shaming or things like that, anything that involves the dignity of the human being compromised, I think that's extremism. Instead, I believe that all these things should come with this education with positive encouragement and with increasing elevating

social awareness. For example, I never approve of when people just seek somebody and shame them for eating hamburgers or anything like things like that. Those kinds of activism, from my perspective, are extremism, and they harm the whole human rights or animal rights tendencies the same way as capitalism does."

I asked animal rights activists what they think of animal rights campaigns. As expected, most of them had positive views about animal rights campaigns. However, two of these activists had their critiques of PETA and its sexist language in some advertisements, and they found it unhealthy for the movement. We need to be very careful that we are not attacking or undermining people's identities, especially the identity of marginalized and oppressed groups.

Roya: "One of the critiques is not addressing or understanding the issue of entangling animal products consumed with identity. When these organizations bring up the issue of animal rights, people feel their identity is under attack. We should start with bringing everyone together first and then, you know, address the issue. We should be careful about the language we use, so we don't bring people who are not serious about animal rights into a defensive mood."

Beni: "The one that I cringe at or oppose the most, of course, number one, is PETA and their sexist campaigns and commodification of women as a part of their animal activism. I am very opposed to that because (he used Persian slang) we try to fix the eyebrow, and we blind the eye. I think yes, and they are often wrong in their approaches."

Asking animal rights activists about barriers that stop people to go vegan

I asked animal rights activists about barriers that stop people from going vegan. Their answers include speciesism, health concerns, being scared of being in the minority and being left alone in society, the protein propaganda, being afraid that veganism is not manly, wrong assumptions about humane meat, lack of information and proper education, society norms, misunderstanding about the vegan lifestyle, being afraid of limiting their choices and being selfish. One of these activists mentioned that some people are vegan in their hearts but are afraid of taking action because they

are concerned for their health. We can invite them to the cause by giving them accurate information. He believes that most people don't want to add animals to their circle of morality.

Beni: "Some people are vegan by heart.....but because of health issues or other stuff, they think veganism is not practical. But most people don't like the idea of making animals in our circle of morality. They think that I, as a vegan, undermine their good life."

Three of these activists talked about societal norms and how society has defined eating animals as normal and expected, and people have just followed that without thinking about it. It makes it hard for people to leave these societal norms because they don't want to be the minority. They are scared of being in the minority.

Farhad: "I think one might be about the norms in the society and how people around you accept you. I always say, imagine the norm of society was eating like tofu or oat old milk. Do you know how much you would have taken to convince someone to drink something that is like breast milk that is bad for your health and the environment? They say the texture is not there. It's just like a habit. If you drank oat milk for your entire life and then I gave you dairy, you would say the same thing about dairy."

As the reader can see, Farhad also argues that convenience is probably another key. For example, if it were more convenient for people to have plant-based food than animal-based food, few people would go out of their way to eat meat.

Farhad: "I feel like if it wasn't a matter of convenience, convenience probably is the key. Because if it was more convenient to eat vegan than it was to eat meat, I don't think someone, like very few people, would go out of their way to eat meat. Also, sometimes they say that individuals don't have any control over this, and it's the government who controls things, and even if I go vegan, nothing will change. They only say that because they know if they admit that they are part of the problem, then they have to change."

Another issue is how meat and masculinity have been connected and how some men see veganism as something that would challenge their masculinity.

Farhad: " I was surprised when I learned that a big percentage of men don't go vegan because they think it's not manly or it's like, you know, just make them less manly. They think it's manly to eat meat."

Three activists talked about selfishness and how people simply don't care about the consequences of their actions. Instead, they just want to get things done and enjoy their lives.

Niloofer: "I don't only think about what I'm going to eat for breakfast today,.... or I want to buy fur because I want to be fancy today or something like that.....You know, a lot of things that are happening are part of the "normal" selfishness that it's being taught to everyone. Especially these times, everyone only cares about their own family, their own happiness, and their own wealth, and they don't care about other people, other beings."

Interviewees also brought up the topic of the myth of protein and how big companies contributed to brainwashing people about animal protein

Roya: "The main barrier is cultural, and this myth of animal protein is a key factor for our health. I think, first, the correct information is somehow blocked. Even medical professionals have little knowledge about veganism, specifically the actual role of animal protein in our health. The majority of medical professionals follow the mystical aspect of this information, unfortunately. I see that there is some sort of intention in that. I believe locking up good resources and research in this area by the food industry, to be more specific, the meat industry or livestock industry, maybe is the main challenge here. So I think these are both cultural and historical aspects of this mythical motto about animal protein and its impact on our health."

Activists talked about how society trains people to behave this way and inhibits them from going vegan because society sees veganism as a weakness.

Roya: "What I am saying is that maybe the way I address veganism today, it's not just that food choice. It's a little bit deeper. It is like philosophy or an attitude toward life and toward others. This loving attitude toward others couldn't have any result other than veganism. Veganism is not about food. It is about the way you look into life itself and the way you look at the daily routine of attending to your social life. I am not saying that people who are indifferent to animals and consider animals as food suffer from a lack of empathy. No, that would be a very simplistic way of thinking. There are so many layers of complexity to human culture, human attitude toward society, and the environment. But at the same time, I think if I want to get a little bit deeper, I would say the way you choose your food is so much entangled with your identity. For example, if you eat steak or Kebab, society somehow considers you a strong hunter. Eating Animals is somehow incorporated with the idea of masculinity or the idea of being strong. If people are indifferent about animals or eating animals in society, it is actually the way society

pictured it for centuries that eating animals is a natural way of evolution. Evolution as a hunter and all these cultural issues are not easy to change instantly."

Two of these activists argued that having an animal in sight can help you understand and sympathize with animals. They think that our advocacy needs to be tailored based on our subjects.

Different people require different methods to join this cause.

Fatih: "The second thing I think is very influential is having an animal at your sight. Like I had a dog, and my sister had a dog. That is such a big influence in terms of people looking at their companion animals and the other animals, and then suddenly they just can't say that my dog's life is more important than other animals. That's like the ultimate influence, like that's just an awakening call. So I think we need to also, if you are advising or informing people about something, we should also make this subject something tangible for them. Something that they can relate to. For some people specifically, watching a documentary is not gonna do that, or engaging in the debate is not gonna do that. But having a pet and having another animal around could do the job. I think anyone who has an animal in the home is a lot more prone to become vegetarian or vegan compared to people who have zero or no contact with any animals."

Activists argued that people fear losing their options, choices, and social gatherings. They misunderstand the vegan lifestyle, and they see it as a limitation to their social life.

Niloofer: "Some people are lazy. They just think that it's going to limit their choices of food or their lifestyle, like going into a restaurant and socializing. I think we also have the issue of being selfish, of course. There is no question about that. The person who understands exactly the reason why they should go vegan and they don't go; I believe that's completely selfish. But some people just don't maybe understand the extent of the amount of suffering that animals go through.....Everyone needs to get to that moment of revelation. You cannot just force them to go vegan. You cannot. You may argue with them about all the facts, but they need to come to that point. They need to get to the point of believing that they are other living beings on this earth with equal rights to live. To live and enjoy their life."

Triggers that made these animal rights activists become vegan

I asked animal rights activists about the triggers that made them go vegetarian and vegan. Almost all activists started to care about animal ethics after watching documentaries and videos about how we treat animals in slaughterhouses and animal farms. Only one of these activists had her trigger at the age of nine when she witnessed fishing and barbecuing that fish for a family lunch.

Roya: "The earliest one was about the fish. It was so big and so full of life it was fighting for its life in front of my eyes, and it was killed and then grilled in front of us, and everyone was enjoying this, and I wasn't eager to eat that. Another time was, a short time after that actually, that my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, had some, you know, small sheep to be sacrificed, and they made food out of that., That was very upsetting, saddening, and frightening for a child to witness. Another major issue that triggered me made me feel like I needed to do something individually. I think I was 17 when I first read Sadegh Hedayat's book on the benefits of vegetarianism. I still admire him greatly. Reading his book at that age made me feel like I was not a weirdo. I actually come from a well-established idea that killing other animals is cruel and not civilized. I found Sadegh Hedayat to be a big ideal on my side and was a big comfort for me. Another trigger that helped me a lot through my journey was coming to the US and finding other vegans."

One of the interviewees shared a memory of being involved in campaigns that invite people not to buy redfish for the new year. He mentioned how he advocated for the redfish while consuming animals and animal products. Unfortunately, some activists still advocate for the ethical treatment of cats and dogs but close their eyes to other animals entirely.

Farhad: "I told you that I was working on encouraging people not to buy redfish for the new year, and then I had a vegetarian friend who was a graphic designer, so every year, I designed the poster that encouraged people basically not to buy redfish, but once I asked this vegetarian friend to help me, then she said I would help you, but it's kind of pointless because you're eating other animals and so as long as you're eating other animals you can't say you love animals. So I think that was the moment, and I think about three months after that, I started to stop buying meat, but I didn't see it in myself to not eat meat outside when I'm with friends because I loved it so much. So the first time I did that was June 3rd, 2013."

Most of these activists mentioned watching videos about animal farms and slaughterhouses as the primary trigger for them to go vegan. However, two of the participants considered the experience of living with a cat and dog as the primary trigger to realize that non-human animals have characters, feelings, and knowledge, and they deserve to be treated differently.

Niloofer: "I actually started volunteering in a humane society, and then I was seeing how animals, they love, and they want to be loved.....And then when I got a cat, for the first year, we actually weren't vegan. At that time, I was a vegetarian. I could understand that my cat

understood me, and she was trying to train me. Like she would come, I don't know, 3:00 AM in the morning and bite me a little bit to remind me about feeding. They feel something, they think, they have a brain, they have feelings."

One of the interviewees mentioned a close encounter with a raccoon who was hit by a car as the final moment for her to decide not to use any animal products anymore. Another interviewee also brought up a story of how she witnessed sacrificing a big cow. She looked at that cow's eyes before death. That was the final call for her that she doesn't want to consume anything that comes from animals.

Niloofer: "I Remember Me and my friend were walking, and I was at a point where I was using vegan stuff, but I was vegetarian outside... We were walking, and we saw a car hit a raccoon. It was just a little hit, but the raccoon was still alive, and it was in front of me, and I saw the whole thing. The car, that asshole, sorry, he didn't stop for it. So, I was shocked, so I stopped, my friend and a guy behind me, we all started to watch the animal. I saw that raccoon. I think her back was broken, but she was trying. You know, in war, when someone is shot, and they struggle to get somewhere safe, and I saw that struggle. It was a raccoon, you know, you see them everywhere, and you don't have a relationship with them. But at that moment, I saw him as a person.... It became to me an individual raccoon who was hit by a car and now struggling to breathe. Then, I was almost this close to giving him CPR. I wanted to do something. The guy behind me said he was gone. After that, I said I'm not going to touch anything with animal products. Nothing. We see them, as you know, we see hundreds of cows, and we don't still feel anything toward them, but once you see it, once you understand that that's not just a cow, it's a person, it's an individual."

Animal rights challenges for their animal ethics advocacy

Finally, I asked animal rights activists about their challenges in their advocacy. All of them mentioned making fun of vegans and verbal abuse. One of them talked about the difficulties of advocacy for animal ethics when doing it from health or environmental perspectives. Another argument was about big corporations funding some scientists to develop papers that justify dairy and animal products for health reasons.

Farhad: "So they talk to you about a paper that says milk is good for you, and then you have to say OK, let's look at the funding. Big corporations and the meat industry fund these papers to

maximize their profit without even thinking about human health for a moment. It is always a challenge to discuss the health aspects of veganism because of these funded papers and "scientific" findings.

When people make jokes about vegans, they don't realize how challenging this is for them. These activists already feel isolated from society, and people's jokes push them further.

Fatih: "For five years, I couldn't talk about this subject. I couldn't challenge people, especially a group of people. Because when we were in a group of people, I was the only one, the odd guy that wasn't? Vegan. They mocked me by saying he is eating grass, and he is eating sheep's food, and all other abusive jokes that we know. (laugh)."

Another challenge was dealing with this human-centeredness and speciesist attitude that humans have. It takes lots of effort to change something that society has introduced as a norm for centuries and humans have been practicing for their entire history.

Mahsa: "Yeah, you know? The excuses, things like this so-called freedom of choice. As human beings, they have freedom of choice. They never think that this is not freedom of choice. They are actually violating the rights of other beings. Still, another thing is the notion that humans should always come before animals and the perception that the beliefs and methods of animal advocates are extreme."

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study explored what motivated animal rights activists and human rights activists to advocate for different movements. I wanted to learn about the motivations that made them aware and sensitive toward some areas and the barriers that stopped them from participating in other forms of activism. I also wanted to learn about limitations of the current education system in terms of addressing animal ethics, and ways to improve those limitations. In total, I interviewed 15 Iranian activists who have been involved in animal rights, women's rights, LGBTQ+, and human rights activism. I found that both groups of interviewees had experiences of oppression under an authoritarian regime. From the Critical Animal Studies perspective, animal rights activists that I interviewed learned to overcome the speciesism and anthropocentrism that existed inside them and learned how to increase their moral circle to the non-human animal's realm. The animal rights activists understood that oppression against humans and non-human animals is intertwined and connected. The objectification of animals could have prepared the ground for the objectification of other humans and practices like sexism, racism, and colonialism (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2018, P.323). In contrast with animal rights activists, human rights activists are still stuck with the speciesist ideologies that consider humans superior to other animals and see other animals as mere resources for humans. I found that human rights activists have many misunderstandings about a vegan lifestyle that prevent them from taking another step to consider nonhuman animals part of their moral circle. I also found that the education system (in this case, the Iranian education system) to a great extent has failed to teach my participants about animal ethics. A Critical Animal Studies approach that incorporates an intersectional understanding of social justice and ethics of care for human and non-human animals should be reflected in the education system to raise future generations with a passion for trans-species social justice. In the previous chapter, I shared findings

related to my research questions. This chapter will analyze the similarities and differences I found through responses from human rights activists and animal rights activists. I hope to find answers to my three main research questions: 1) How can education encourage responsible planetary citizens who are open to changing their habits and lifestyles to protect the environment and respect the rights of nonhuman animals? 2) Why do many social justice activists stop their activism at the border of animal rights activism? 3) How can we create a bridge between animal rights activism and human rights activism?

1) Education and responsible planetary citizens who respect the rights of non-human animals.

In this section, I will analyze the responses I received from my participants about their early childhood memories of interaction with animals, the impacts of books and media on how they learned about animals, the positive and negative effects of family, society, and education system in how they feel about animal ethics.

A hidden inner speciesism

To begin with, I think there is hidden speciesism inside all of us. For thousands of years, humans have looked at non-human animals as resources rather than other citizens of this planet. We need a fundamental change in how society, family, and the education system define our relationship with animals for children. When I asked human rights activists about their experience with animals, all of them started to talk about dogs, cats, and pets. Unconsciously, these activists only think about dogs and cats when you ask them this question. I am aware that if we ask this question from people in a different part of the world with a different culture, we might get a different response, but that wouldn't change the fact that people tend to care about those animals who they

see as close to themselves. My human rights activist participants see cats and dogs as friends and other animals as resources. These findings match with what I shared in the literature review section. Many humans show more sympathy and concern for companion animals and those animals with behaviors close to human characteristics, while they close their eyes to those species who are considered food or pests (Russell, 2019, p. 36). I see this behavior as the result of hidden speciesism in the family, society, and the educational system. We tend to consider some species as our friends and some other species as resources as if the life and well-being of one species are more important due to the connection that it has with humans. Humans throughout history have always had a strange ambivalence toward nonhuman animals: a desire to exploit some animals mercilessly while respecting some other animals as a form of God's beneficence to humankind or companions (Ryder, 2000, p.223). Another reason that people care more about cats and dogs is that they look at these two species as human properties. They are not significant because of their own intrinsic values; they are important to us because they are our properties, and they make us happy. It is hard to blame families for how they raise children to be careless about animals because families just try to teach their children the best they know. Speciesism has deeply influenced every human culture, economy, and society. It has penetrated so deeply into human consciousness that, with no hesitation, we can say that it forms one of the fundamental existential structures of human life (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, p31). So this speciesism passes generation by generation just because parents don't know any way better. But we can blame the education system for being very human-centered and failing to address animal ethics.

One of the animal rights activists brought an example of this behavior. He had a memory from his childhood about how he loved those animals who belonged to him, and he hated those animals which harmed his belongings. For example, he had a rabbit he loved the most, and he hated cats

because he thought cats would harm his rabbit. As mentioned in the literature review section, past research also shows how humans only care about animals when considering them as their properties. For example, in a school project, students visited a rabbit weekly. When they found that "their" rabbit was killed, they found this to be an ethical problem, but at the same time, they were indifferent toward systematically slaughtering animals for food (Pedersen, 2004, p. 8). The main difference is that slaughtering animals for food is socially accepted because it has been normalized by the institutions that seek power and economic interests. This experience proves that there is unconscious speciesism inside each of us, pushing us toward loving one animal and being indifferent toward another. Through asking questions from human rights activists and animal rights activists, I wanted to know if there is a fundamental difference between how they were educated about animals. I can say that both groups received the same education. Except for the case of animal rights activists, they discovered this inner speciesism and fought it back at some point in their life. Something that my human rights activists participants are still struggling to do.

I asked both groups of activists about their childhood memories of non-human animals. While human rights activists were more focused on pets, cats, and dogs, animal rights activists, on the other hand, shared their experiences of pain and suffering of animals as their response to this question. They shared memories of sacrificing ceremonies or when the family took away their companion animals. Since I interviewed people from the same generation and background, I believe both groups probably had the same experiences. Expect that animal pain and suffering is more important for animal rights activists. I think animal rights activists learned how to include animals as part of their moral circle, which is why today they remember all the horrible things they witnessed as a child. Human rights activists don't think about those horrors because they haven't passed the speciesists line yet. What they saw in their childhood is based on society and family

values. On the other hand, animal rights activists started to scan their past and look at things they were indifferent about. For example, one of the activists blamed herself for why she didn't change her lifestyle from an early age when she witnessed sacrificing animals. Another activist spoke about how painful it was for her to witness the killing of animals. Still, regardless of that, she is happy about that experience because that opened her eyes and helped her change her lifestyle.

Impacts of books and media

Children start reading and looking at books, watching cartoons, and listening to stories before they go to school. I asked both groups of interviewees about the effects of books and media on what they learned about animals in their childhood. I also specifically asked them about the impact of anthropomorphism on children's experiences with animals. I wanted to know whether giving animals human characteristics helps children develop more empathy for animals, or whether it will alienate them from the realities of non-human animals. Four animal rights activists think that children's books, literature, and cartoons create a false image about animals for us and promote human-centered cliches. This matches with what singer Singer (2002) argues about misleading children. He argues that the truth about factory farming and the mistreatment of animals is intentionally spared from children when they learn to play with stuffed bears or lions rather than chickens and cows. This is a deliberate attempt to mislead children about the reality of animals' lives on farms (p. 215). Children are encouraged to love dogs and cats and cuddle teddy bears, but at the same time, they are forced to have animal flesh for their food. This will provide a contradictory message in their head about humans and the treatment of non-human animals (Andrianova, 2021, p. 14).

Three other animal rights activists believe that childhood books and literature positively impact how we define our relationships with animals. One animal rights activist also mentioned an important point that I have already covered in the literature review. Children's books and literature introduce animals to children as friends, but then family, school, and society force children to eat the same animals. This double standard creates contradiction and confusion for children. By creating an unrealistic view of farms and animals, children's books prevent them from understanding what happens in animal industries (Andrianova, 2021, p. 2). Moreover, children's books and programs expose children to conflicting messages. On the one hand, they start to develop emotional relations with those animal characters in books and cartoons. But on the other hand, parents expect them to eat the flesh of the same animal. An example is Burger King's promotional tie-ins with the film *Chicken Run* when they give children toys of animals who have been through the miserable situation that the cartoon's heroes protested (Cole & Stewart, 2014, p. 4). There was a disagreement about anthropomorphism among Animal rights activists. Three of these participants thought anthropomorphism in children's literature positively impacted children and helped them sympathize with non-human animals. However, two interviewees remember how certain animals were represented as mean or evil with some characteristics that only belong to the human realm. Giving human characteristics to animals could create some false stereotypes about them. This matches with what I also had in the literature review section. In children's books and films, anthropomorphized animals are used to carry the messages connected to moralizing or socializing processes to children. The focus of interest here is not the animal but how the animal can be used to convey a message to children (Pedersen, 2011, p.13). Two interviewees think that even if the images represented in those books were positive, those images didn't have any impact on them, and they didn't learn anything from them. To a great extent, I agree with this comment.

The way we learn about animals does not include anything about animal ethics. We use animals in children's books to teach children about humans. One more time, we are using animals for the benefit of humans. I asked the same question to human rights activists, and most of the interviewees from this group believed that children's books, especially the concept of anthropomorphism, had a positive impact on them as a child. I assume human rights activists think this way because they don't realize how animals have been neglected as part of our ethics circle.

Family structure and limitations

When I started this research, I was more focused on the impacts of society and the educational system in raising children with anthropocentrism and speciesism ideologies, and I neglected to include the role of the family in the above topics. During these interviews, many activists from both groups talked about their challenges with their families and how some of those challenges shaped them to be who they are today. Almost all animal rights activists indicated the challenges and obstacles they had with their families when they decided to change to a vegan lifestyle. I believe that before society shapes our minds and the educational system impacts us, the family shapes our identity and beliefs. Therefore, working on what families teach their children about animal ethics could be more rewarding because when the children enter school, they are already shaped. Although changing family beliefs about animals could be more rewarding, it is more challenging. At the end of the day, parents teach their children the best they have learned from their own parents. Many animal rights activists I interviewed shared their experiences of the challenges they had with their families when they started a vegetarian diet or vegan lifestyle. Children who try to become vegan often experience resistance and interrogation from their family members. This lack of support from family members causes hurtful feelings (McDonald, 2000, p.12). Typically, parents who themselves haven't learned anything about the health aspects of a

vegan lifestyle see this lifestyle as a challenge for the health and wellbeing of their children. They try different methods, from advising to forcing their children to eat animals and animal products because they are unaware of animal ethics and the health aspects of a vegan lifestyle. Animal rights activist interviewees shared stories of how their parents tried to manipulate them and add meat to their food so that they don't notice it or use any opportunity to blame their sickness and anything on not having meat. The parents themselves are victims of speciesist ideologies that society has taught them. Many animal rights activists and one of the human rights activists talked about the Al-Adha sacrificing ceremony and blamed their families for exposing them to watching the sacrifice. I will discuss this more in the next section when I talk about religion.

Environmental impacts of animal agriculture

Animal agriculture significantly contributes to climate change, deforestation, water pollution, and many other environmental issues (Kahn, 2008, p.1). I asked both groups of interviewees about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture. The human rights activist responses mainly focused on blaming the system and calling the individual actions ineffective enough. Two of them have adopted a vegetarian diet for ethical and environmental reasons. Four other participants from this group argued that they are doing their best, but they don't see the solution to environmental problems through the lenses of personal actions. As expected, all animal rights activists have a good understanding of environmental issues related to animal agriculture. Six out of seven animal rights activists mentioned using environmental reasons as part of their advocacy for veganism. One of the activists came up with very interesting reasons regarding why he doesn't use environmental reasons as part of his vegan advocacy. Farhad argued that big corporations fund scientists to write papers and justify animal agriculture from an environmental perspective. If we

want to use environmental reasons, we need to spend time and read all those papers and prepare answers about why they are not valid. Farhad also mentioned that when we use environmental reasons for vegan advocacy, we are, in fact, advocating for humans to protect the environment for humans. We are still thinking about ourselves, and this is a selfish thing because vegan advocacy should be about animals. Finally, when discussing veganism, bringing up environmental reasons is very offensive. Farhad brought an example of burning Jews during World War Two. He said imagine; instead of advocating freedom, human rights, and ethical treatment for those humans the Nazis burned, we focus on the environmental pollution of burning them. Another good point I learned from interviewing animal rights activists about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture was what Roya came up with: the activism of the 21st Century. This form of activism is the lifestyle of veganism, and that includes all the concerns for injustices toward human and non-human animals and also environmental concerns. A lifestyle of veganism already includes environmental concerns.

Education and an ecocentric and non-speciesist pedagogy

In this project, I wanted to learn more about the limitations of our current education system and ways to shift it from this human-centered, speciesist way to a pedagogy that includes animal ethics. The objectification of animals is a socially accepted norm in school, for instance, the experimentation on animals for educational purposes, or the presence of animal industries on school premises are socially accepted. This legitimates the oppressive human-animal domination structures and allows children and youth to uncritically accept animal objectification as normal, natural, and inevitable (Pedersen, 2004, p. 3). Animal rights activists shared their suggestions for what they think is missing from the education system. I received various proposals from animal

rights activists for our education system. The main argument was that schools should be a place to teach students about speciesism and the history and philosophy of our relationship with animals. This was also covered in the literature review section. Although the education discipline addresses class, gender, race, and inequality issues among humans, it largely ignores the problems relating to non-human animals (Pedersen, 2004, p.1). In addition, four of my animal rights activist interviewees suggested that we should create more connections between children and farm animals. One of the issues is that as humans, we don't interact with animals, especially farm animals, anymore. This lack of interaction with non-human animals would prevent students from developing a deep understanding of the human-animal relationships. When students are familiar with pigs, cows, and chickens, and these animals are not just pictures in books, it is much easier for them to understand animal ethics. Critical animal pedagogy invites students to investigate and understand the actual life of an animal in the food production system and compare that with the messages that we receive from animal industries (Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 419). In addition, schools need to teach children the idea of justice in a more fundamental way beyond a specific race, gender, or species. schools need to amend their traditional curricula toward a more humane educational approach. Educators need to integrate human-animal relations in programs of values education and challenge the anthropocentrically biased "comfort zones" in education and speciesist elements of hidden curricula (Pedersen, 2004, p. 4). We need to replace the anthropocentric and human centered approach in education with an interspecies education. In this method, all forms of life on earth are interconnected and interdependent with one another. Interspecies education encourages students to study the interrelationship of species with one another, and most importantly the impacts of human practices on other species. Moreover, students are expected to investigate and explore ways to prevent harm to other species and repair what we have already

done to them (Andrzejewski et al., 2009, p. 137). Finally, the same as students having math, science, and literature courses, they need to have a course specifically about non-human animals from a very early age. This course should start from grade one all the way to grade twelve, and it should be based on the history and also the philosophy of human and non-human animals relationship, and try to alter this human-centered toward an ecocentric and non-speciesist pedagogy.

2) Motivations of animal rights activists for advocating for animal ethics, and limitations of human rights activists to join this cause

In this section, I summarise what I learned about animal rights activists' motivations to advocate for non-human animals and the barriers that keep human rights activists from including non-human animals as part of their advocacy.

Triggers that made them sensitive toward social justice issues

To begin, I will look at the following triggers that made these activists sensitive to social justice issues. These include: dictatorships, etc.. All the human rights activists and animal rights activist interviewees identified oppression in Iran and living under an Islamic dictatorship that interferes with every aspect of their lives as one of the main reasons to be involved in social justice activism. One of the main challenges discussed during the interviews was the abuse of women's rights in Iran, mandatory Hejab, and discrimination against women. Religious oppression and Hejab were the main triggers for the female activists to be sensitive toward social justice issues. Moreover, observing marginalized communities and poverty was another trigger for some of these activists to be sensitive toward justice for all.

Religious oppression

All 15 interviewees identified themselves as non-religious. There was a strong sense of anti-religion in both groups, especially the animal rights activists. One of the animal rights activists calls religion a foundation of injustices toward human and non-human animals. She mentioned that in most major religions, there is this sense of humans as the center of the board and the master of the world. This is a match with what I was discussing in the literature review section. Unlike some eastern religions or North American indigenous and spiritual teachings which recognize oneness throughout creation, Abrahamic religions teach that humans are different from other animals and made in God's image. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, humans have stewardship and duties to God (Horsthemke, 2018, p.4). These religions are a big source of promoting domination of non-human animals¹. For example, in the Bible, we read that God has given humans dominion over nature and non-human animals. This is usually interpreted as God having authorized domination and exploitation of non-human animals (Nocella et al., 2014, p.22). The religious ceremony of al Adha was a dilemma for animal rights activists. They shared harrowing memories of witnessing innocent sheep getting beheaded by the name of God. In most cases, children had the chance to play with the sheep before the ceremony. One of the interviewees, Azadeh, shared a sad story of how her grandparents killed the sheep she had been playing with all day.

Triggers that made some of these animal rights activists vegan

I asked animal rights activists about the triggers that made them go vegetarian and vegan. If we learn about their motivations, we may use those to develop plans and routes for bringing more people to the case. One of the interviewees started a vegetarian diet at age of nine when she witnessed fishing. The rest of the interviewees began to be vegan after learning about

slaughterhouses and animal agriculture. Five out of seven interviewees watched documentaries and movies about animals in slaughterhouses and factory farms. Two of these activists talked about how the experience of living with a cat and dog helped them realize that non-human animals have characters, feelings, and knowledge, and they deserve to be treated differently. One of the interviewees mentioned that he was always in those campaigns to stop people from buying redfish for the new year tables, while he never thought that at the same time he was contributing to the torture and killing of other non-human animals. One of the interviewees mentioned a close encounter with a raccoon who was hit by a car as the final moment for her to decide not to use any animal products anymore. Another interviewee also brought up a story of how she witnessed sacrificing a big cow. She looked at that cow's eyes before death. That was the final call for her that she doesn't want to consume anything that comes from animals.

Barriers that stall human rights activists from becoming vegan

One of the main barriers for human rights activists to change their lifestyle and go vegan was the fact that they don't believe individual action is effective. Almost all interviewees from the human rights group were convinced that individual actions don't change anything, and we need system change. One of the activists argued that focusing on individual action is a new-liberal way of addressing problems. They argue that we need to shift to a collective level, to policy making, instead of focusing too much on individual actions. It is on policymakers to reduce subsidies for animal agriculture and invest in alternative options. Unfortunately, they mainly use this as an excuse to justify their inaction toward justice for non-human animals.

Misunderstandings about veganism

One of the biggest questions vegans have is why many people hear our reasons but continue to use animal products. I think those involved in human rights activism are already more sensitive toward justice for other oppressed groups. However, I believe some misunderstandings about veganism prevent them from going vegan and include animal ethics as part of their moral circle. One of the main misunderstandings is that veganism is expensive. It is true that if one person wants to rely on heavily processed vegan options or buy food outside all the time, the prices of these so-called vegan options are slightly higher than non-vegan options. But, first, we need to know that due to the heavy subsidizing of animal products, the price of meat, chicken, dairy, and egg is not the actual price but the subsidized price. The taxpayer-funded subsidies are one of the main factors that keep the price of animal products lower than plant-based options. By removing taxpayer dollars from animal agriculture, the price of meat will rise to its actual cost, which will help with the production and consumption of plant-based options (Sewell,2019, p.315). Secondly, going vegan doesn't mean we have to rely on processed vegan food in the market all the time. There is no harm in buying some of these products once in a while, but one should not rely on these products. A vegan diet based on healthy foods that can be cooked at home is nutritious, cheap, and quick. Finally, One thing that makes people think veganism is expensive is that they believe a vegan lifestyle is equal to buying organic products. Although buying organic could be good practice for staying healthy, it has nothing to do with the philosophy of veganism.

Another misconception that human rights activists have is about the ethical consumption of animals. They think buying meat and animal products raised on farms or local factories is ethical. First, when in a geographic location, we have all other resources to get food and nutrients from plants, why do we have to kill non-human animals? Even if animals on small farms had a good

life, which in most cases is not true, at the end of the day, they would be sent to the same slaughterhouses, and there would be a knife to their throat. Finally, it is impossible to make animal products available for the entire world population through traditional farming. The world's population is expected to grow to 9.8 billion people by 2050, which is almost a 30% increase from the current population of 7 billion. As a result of the population growth, our food system's environmental impacts could increase by 50–90%, Exceeding the earth's carrying capacity to regenerate and provide for us and other species (Springmann et al., 2018, p.520). Some of these human rights activists participants considered reducing consumption of animal products as another form of "ethical" consumption. The idea that reducing animal consumption is an ethical option sounds absurd. If we believe that killing and using animals is unethical, it doesn't matter if we kill one animal or hundreds of animals.

Another major misunderstanding is that our body needs animal products, and we are not designed to be vegan. Unfortunately, most people's knowledge about a vegan lifestyle, the B12 myth, and animal products is not updated. If a person still thinks that cow's milk is a healthy drink, they are very confused with all the propaganda that the dairy industry and animal agriculture industries control. Big livestock corporations want us to believe not consuming animals is necessary for our health. Some of these participants were convinced that there is no option of ethical consumption of food no matter what we do, so we can't do anything about it. Although it is true that maybe we can never claim that our lifestyle is completely based on ethical choices, that doesn't mean that we close our eyes to something that we can actually do to reduce the pain and suffering in the world.

Another misconception is that humans are more important. Instead of focusing on both human and non-human animals, we need to focus on reducing the pain and suffering of humans. I

call this a misconception because these activists don't realize that oppression against humans has roots in oppression against animals. Humans started to discriminate against other humans based on race or gender only when they learned how to take advantage of non-human animals. We cannot fight against racism, sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia and close our eyes to speciesism which is the root of those injustices. The colonization in America has its roots in the animalization of conquered, enslaved, and indentured indigenous communities. The colonizers used this dehumanization to justify their abuse, exploitation, and genocide. (Gosine, 2021, p.70).

Another misunderstanding is that if everyone goes vegan, we need to produce more food, and we will need to use more land, which will have devastating environmental impacts. This is why we need to inform people about the environmental aspects of vegan advocacy. The truth is if all people go vegan, we need much less land, we need way less food to produce, and we can even solve the world hunger issue. Livestock represents the largest of all anthropogenic land uses. It occupies around 70 percent of all agricultural land and 30 percent of the planet's ice-free terrestrial surface. Cattle ranching is the primary reason for deforestation in the Amazon. In tropical Latin America, pasture grazing threatens some of the most vulnerable and valuable ecosystems (Steinfeld et al., 2006, p.272).

And finally, some people consider veganism an ethical trend for high-income people in higher neighborhoods. This idea of veganism for high-income people is far from the spirit of veganism. That "ethical," "organic," and "fair-trade" thing in higher neighborhoods is more focused on healthy food for humans. Veganism is a liberationist movement seeking to liberate humans and non-human animals from oppression. In my opinion, the "ethical" trend in high neighborhoods is more like greenwashing capitalism.

Asking animal rights activists about barriers that stop people to go vegan

When I asked animal rights activists about barriers that prevent people from going vegan, they gave me a variety of different answers from speciesism, health concerns, fear of being in the minority and being left alone in the society, the protein propaganda, the idea that veganism is not manly, wrong assumptions about humane meat, lack of information and proper education, society human supremacist norms, misunderstanding about the vegan lifestyle, being afraid of limiting their choices and finally selfishness of humans. One of these activists, Beni, mentioned that some people are vegan in their hearts but are afraid of taking action because they are concerned for their health. Thanks to big corporation propaganda and heavy advertisements about dairy, meat, protein, and B12, many people think that a vegan lifestyle will prevent them from getting all the nutrients their bodies need. By investing in the myth of protein, big companies brainwash people and distract them from the truth of animal agriculture. Many people don't believe we can add animals to our circle of morality. Some people have this mindset that animals are here for humans. Therefore, they see veganism as an unnecessary limitation, a sign of reducing their choices, and having food with a new taste that they haven't experienced before. In Iran, that could have roots in how some famous figures saw vegetarianism as a form of austerity and abstinence. Three of these activists talked about societal norms and how society has defined eating animals as normal and expected, and people have just followed that without thinking about it. It makes it hard for people to leave these societal norms because they don't want to be the minority. People are scared of losing their social gatherings, losing their friends, and being left alone. Another argument was about convenience. It is way more accessible for people to find animal-based food than plant-based options. Since animals are out of the moral circle for most people, they don't see the necessity for going to the trouble to find plant-based options. For example, if it were more convenient for people

to have plant-based food than animal-based food, few people would go out of their way to eat meat. Three activists talked about selfishness and how people simply don't care about the consequences of their actions. Instead, they just want to get things done and enjoy their lives. Another issue is how meat and masculinity have been connected and how some men see veganism as something that would challenge their masculinity. Society trains people to behave this way and introduces hunting and meat-eating as something manly and compassion and kindness toward one another as something feminine and a sign of weakness. One of the main ways of promoting speciesism is to imply that cruelty is equal to manliness (Ryder, 2000, p.236). The way people choose their food is entangled with their identity. If people are indifferent about animals, they consider it as a natural way of evolution. I asked these activists what we could do about all these obstacles. The primary response I received was about focusing on education and changing individuals. Two of these activists argued that having an animal in sight can help you understand and sympathize with animals. This was also mentioned in the literature review section when I discussed children's relationship with animals. When children have direct experience with living animals, they develop a higher ecological and moral attitude and lower dominant and exploitative behaviour toward them (Andrianova, 2021, p. 6). Animal rights activists also think that our advocacy needs to be tailored based on our subjects. Different people require different methods to join this cause. But overall, all the responses were mainly focused on individual actions. To summarise, human rights activists neglect the importance of individual actions, and animal rights activists, to some extent, overlook the importance of political action and system change.

3) How can we create an intersectional approach to social justice? How can we create a bridge between animal rights activists and human rights activists?

One of my main motivations for doing this research was to investigate how we could create an alliance between animal rights activists and human rights activists. To better understand this alliance's essentials, I asked human rights activists about human rights campaigns and transitioning to a vegan lifestyle. Moreover, I asked animal rights activists about the necessity of an intersectional approach to social justice, their concern for human rights issues, and their advocacy for non-human animals. In this section, I will also summarize my understanding of the following themes: experiencing oppression, sympathizing with other oppressed groups, human rights activists' misunderstandings of veganism, human rights activists' opinion about animal rights campaigns, animal rights activists' reasons for going vegan and the challenges they face in their activism.

An intersectional approach to social justice issues

All animal rights activists I interviewed, one way or another, have been involved in at least one human rights campaign. In addition, six out of seven believed in an intersectional approach to animal rights activism that requires consideration for human and non-human animals. They believed that different forms of oppression are intertwined and interlinked. The Total liberation, which was mentioned in the literature review, challenges ideologies that authorize oppression of humans based on their race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, as well as any oppressions against other species and nature (Pellow & Brehm. 2015, p.192). One of the animal rights activists, Farhad, believed that veganism is about animals and we don't need to be too concerned about

human issues when we are advocating for animals. On the other hand, another animal rights activist, Beni, argued that since we are accused of having our priorities misplaced, it is a good thing for animal rights activists to be aware and concerned about human rights issues. One animal rights activist defined justice as a socially constructed concept that only an intersectional approach can define. Among human rights groups, all of them are in favor of an intersectional approach to social justice. The only problem is that they don't consider animal ethics part of this holistic social justice. Two human rights activists referred to a quote from a famous American women's rights activist, Fannie Lou Hammer, that nobody's free until everybody's free. They argued that our identities consist of different layers, which means we can't avoid an intersectional approach to the issues. When different layers of oppression add to each other, only an intersectional way of looking at things can help us better understand the whole concept. Human rights activists have this unconscious speciesism that prevents them from seeing animal ethics as part of this holistic version of social justice.

Experiencing oppression and sympathizing with other oppressed groups

All activists in both groups of interviewees have experienced oppression one way or another. Human rights activists mentioned women's rights abuse, LGBTQ+ rights abuse, and human rights abuse as forms of oppression they experience. The animal rights activist groups had a more comprehensive range of incidents, including domestic violence, women's rights abuse, religious oppression, the experience of racism, family oppression, and mandatory military service. Even though all human rights activists believed that experiencing oppression helped them sympathize with other oppressed groups, it seems like they don't consider non-human animals as part of these other oppressed groups. On the other hand, animal rights activists were aware that human abuse

starts with dehumanizing and reducing humans to animals. This was also mentioned in the literature review section. Socialist and anticolonial philosopher Franz Fanon argues that the colonialist oppressors devalued people and reduced them to animals to justify their oppression and enslavement (Colling et al., 2014, p.56). These animal rights activists remembered their own experience of oppression and made a connection with oppressing non-human animals. For example, Ben, who experienced mandatory military service, brought out an example about the philosophy of boredom. He remembered how he spent hours standing in a corner patrolling an area during his military service and how he thought about animals in small cages during that time. When I was in prison for human rights activities in Iran, I experienced Solitary confinement. I always say those who have been to prison and experienced those tiny cells would never keep a bird in a cage or a fish in a fish tank.

Opinions about animal rights campaigns

We need to know what alienates these two groups to create a bridge between animal rights and human rights activists. To understand what distances human rights activists from the vegan movement, I asked their opinion regarding animal rights groups. One of the things that was repeated in all of their answers was the concept of shaming. They all criticized and disapproved of shaming campaigns and argued that informative campaigns without shaming are more successful. This was also discussed in the literature review, when I talked about the Eliasian theory. When animal rights activists use moral shocks like showing disturbing images to people to provoke their moral sensitivity, they must be careful not to repel them. This form of advocacy must have explicit cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions; otherwise, it will backfire and render the tactic counterproductive (Jasper, 1997, p.180). Only one of the interviewees from this group, Iman,

argued that shaming could be effective sometimes, but we have to be careful because this could be a double-edged sword. On the other hand, all human rights activist participants mentioned that they would support animal rights campaigns as long as these groups are not extremists. They consider shaming and pointing the finger at individual behavior as extremist and ineffective. On the contrary, the focus should be on education. Five of the animal rights interviewees had no critiques about animal rights campaigns. However, the other interviewees from this group condemned the sexist and racist language used in some PETA advertisements. Four out of seven animal rights activists I interviewed had more concerns regarding being inclusive and having a holistic approach for vegan activism that includes justice for both humans and non-human animals. We need to be very careful that we are not attacking or undermining people's identities, especially the identity of marginalized and oppressed groups.

Animal rights challenges for their animal ethics advocacy

I also asked animal rights activists about their challenges in their advocacy. One of the main challenges is constantly dealing with human-centeredness in society. For a person who is aware of animal ethics issues, seeing this level of carelessness toward non-human animals in society, among their coworkers, friends, and family, is like constant torture. Moreover, all interviewees complained about verbal abuse. This verbal abuse could be in the form of hearing some jokes about a topic that is perhaps the most important topic of life for a vegan. Sometimes this verbal abuse is in the form of making fun of vegans or saying violent things about animals to them. One of the activists, Farhad, talked about the challenges and difficulties of advocating for animal ethics from health or environmental perspectives. For example, big corporations fund some scientists to develop papers that justify dairy and animal products for health reasons, making it more

challenging for animal rights activists to explain that not all scientific papers necessarily give us the whole image and tell us the truth. It takes lots of effort to change something that society has introduced as a norm for centuries and humans have been practicing for their entire history. It will take lots of effort and patience to change something like animal consumption deeply rooted in society, family, and the education system.

My questions for the future research

In this qualitative research, I explored how families, society, and the education system neglect to include justice for nonhuman animals as part of what they teach future generations. I have argued throughout this work that the education discipline needs to rethink and reinvent how it addresses animal ethics. I propose that we need a pedagogy that de-anthropocentrizes our education system and supports alliance politics and a bridge between human and nonhuman social justice. In particular, I demonstrated that we need to promote a total liberation pedagogy that works at the intersection and opposition to all forms of oppression for human and nonhuman animals. I need to acknowledge the limitations of my research: 1) A sample of 15 interviewees does not give me enough data to come up with a general answer to any of my questions. In the future, I would like to have a larger group for this research 2) If I wanted to do this research again, I would use more than one qualitative method. I was thinking about my social media platforms for some surveys for future research. 3) Even though online interviews gave me the advantage of access to people in different geographical locations in North America, still the main challenge was losing some facial expressions, gestures, and body language during the interviews. For future research, I would love to study and analyze school curriculums to find the hidden speciesism and anthropocentrism in textbooks. Moreover, I would love to work on the idea of a course designated

explicitly for animals running from grade 1 to grade 12. In the same way, our children need to learn math and science designed for humans; they need to know about other citizens of this planet, nonhuman animals. Finally, I like to spend more time on the part that I called misunderstandings about veganism. I believe if we want to create a bridge with other social justice movements, first and foremost, we need to clarify these misunderstandings.

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