Chapter 9

SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON MEAT CONSUMPTION: INVESTIGATING DIMENSIONS AND TYPES OF CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

The high level of meat consumption in Western countries has major environmental impacts, is related to health concerns and subject to ethical debates. This paper addresses the objective to explore how social influences determine people's meat consumption. Three focus groups were conducted to investigate the role the different dimensions of social influence play for individuals. Participants varied in: level of meat consumption, age, and gender. Nineteen people participated in the focus groups. The discussions were used as a basis to group types of individuals with respect to two dimensions: Whether or not they eat meat and how they react when their eating behaviour conflicts with the behaviour or opinion of others. Four resulting types could be defined and investigated in regard to how the dimensions of social influence are perceived and experienced: the uninvolved, the affected, the reserved and the missionary. Based on this typology the paper examines what recommendations can be derived to tailor intervention strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Problem Context of Meat Production and Consumption

While eating meat is not a new phenomenon for humankind, the amount of meat consumed has increased dramatically over the past half-century (Worldwatch Institute 2004). This is especially true in countries with a high per-capita income (UNEP 2010). However, consuming meat is often related to harmful consequences for individuals, animals and the environment. For example, to increase output and lower costs animals are mostly fed corn, soy and grains (Idel 2011). The amount of calories contained in the meat is less than the amount contained in the feed to begin with (Worldwatch Institute 2004). This means that meat-based dishes require higher amounts of crop yield to nourish humans than plant-based dishes. As a consequence feed-cropping increases global agriculture activities and thereby all environmental impacts resulting from it, such as land erosion or degradation by the emission of fertilizer and pesticides (Steinfeld et al. 2006). Meat consumption can also be problematic for people's health. For example, in conventional intensive livestock farming antibiotics are given to animals to prevent diseases. Subsequently these antibiotics are not only found in meat products but also in the groundwater (Gilchrist et al. 2007). The frequent intake of antibiotics by animals and human beings carries the risk of antibiotic resistance.

The problems connected to meat consumption lead many scientists to suggest a behavioural change of consumers in Western countries (e.g., FAO 2009; Goodland and Anhang 2009). Informing people about the aforementioned problems and the need to change behaviour is an important step to achieving this target. However, this measure may not be sufficient to trigger a large-scale behavioural change as past research gives evidence that information campaigns alone are not very effective (Abrahamse et al. 2005).

1.2. Social Influence As a Behavioural Determinant of Meat Consumption

To answer the question of which interventions might reduce people's meat consumption, it is necessary to investigate what factors determine meat consumption in the first place. A significant share of the variation in people's meat consumption can be accounted for by differences these people have in psychological constructs (Nestle et al. 1998), which are characteristics or personal dispositions such as attitudes, personal norms, perceived behavioural control, etc. (Dietz et al. 1995; Turner and Oakes 1986). One psychological construct seems to play a crucial role in the context: Social Influences. Interviewed vegetarians and vegans, for example, reported a perceived lack of social acceptance for their diet, identified support of others as being crucial to the maintenance of a meatless diet, emphasised the importance of role models to the initiation of a meatless diet, and a necessity to realign relationships with other people (e.g., Grube 2009; Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 1999; Larsson et al. 2003).

Interestingly, such strong evidence for the role of social influence is only found in studies using qualitative methods, such as interviews or group discussions. Researchers using quantitative methods observed either an insignificant or weak social influence on meat consumption (e.g., Harland, Staats, and Wilke 1999; McCarthy et al. 2003; Povey, Wellens,

and Conner 2001; Verhoef 2005; Zur and Klöckner 2014). In these studies data were collected by quantitative questionnaires and social influences were operationalised with the construct subjective norms, which are defined as "the perception of social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour under consideration" (Ajzen 1988). Interestingly, studies that expanded the construct 'subjective norms' with other dimensions such as compliance or social acceptance achieved a stronger effect of social influences predicting meat consumption (e.g., Sapp and Harrod 1989; Zey and McIntosh 1992). Against this background, the question arises of whether subjective norms are suitable to function as a proxy for social influences. Instead, there might be several dimensions of social influence predicting meat consumption. This explanation has been considered before in other domains, as subjective norms were also found to have a weak impact in studies on other behaviours, such as recycling (Armitage and Conner 2001; White et al. 2009).

1.3. Investigating Social Influence on Meat Consumption in This Study

As a first step, the literature is screened to detect different dimensions of social influence in the context of meat consumption. To investigate how individuals experience these dimensions focus groups are conducted, in which meat eaters and meat rejecters discuss social influences on meat consumption. Based on the focus group results, a typology of consumers is generated. Since interventions can aim at changing a meat eater's or maintaining a meat rejecter's behaviour, the built typology differentiates between meat eaters (those who did eat meat and/or fish in the past four weeks) and meat rejecters (those who did not eat meat and/or fish in the past four weeks). However, knowing people's eating behaviour is not yet sufficient to anticipate how the proposal of behavioural change (or maintenance) should be posed to be most effective. Regarding social influences this proposal would appear in the form of a perceived norm that is opposing to the opinion or behaviour the individual currently has or performs. The unresolved question is when a confrontation with conflicting norms leads to a behavioural change. Thus, besides the level of meat consumption, participants are grouped according to their likely reaction when a change of behaviour is proposed (confrontational or defensive). Finally, how each resulting type experiences or perceives the detected dimensions of social influence is analysed and conclusions are derived for intervention strategies.

2. CONCEPTUALISING SOCIAL INFLUENCES

The authors understand social influence as change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviours that results from the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other individuals or a group (modified on the basis of Rashotte 2004, and Allport 1985). Using this broad definition as a starting point this study aims at creating a more differentiated picture of social influences on meat consumption and how this knowledge can be best used to to design intervention strategies that trigger a reduction of meat consumption. The dimensions of social influence are clustered in three groups: Norms (what one believes others do or approve of),

socially-inflicted ambitions (what one wants to achieve from following or not following norms), and socially-inflicted reactions (in which way one reacts to a normative situation).

2.1. Norms

In the literature, a wide spectrum of social norms has been introduced. Table 1 gives a structured overview also presenting definitions and references for applications in the context of meat consumption. The norms can be structured along two dimensions: (a) where is the reference point (from intra-personal to global) and (b) are the norms injunctive or descriptive?

When taking all norms together an order of 'respective others' becomes salient. While the reference point of personal norms is the individual self (Schwartz and Howard 1981), the reference point of global norms is located at a societal level (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008). These two norms occupy opposite ends of a scale and subjective and group norms mark graduations along that scale. Injunctive and descriptive norms manifest the way in which an individual perceives norms: They distinguish between what one believes respective others do or do not do (descriptive norms) and approve or disapprove of (injunctive norms) (Ajzen 1991; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990). For example, an individual can perceive group norms in two ways: what members of the group (dis-)approve of and what they (do not) do.

Table 1. Dimensions of Social Influence Grouped as Norms

Norms:		Understanding of constructs:	Further reading for the context of meat consumption:
Scale of norms	Personal norms	Behavioural self-expectation (Schwartz and Howard 1981) as internalised subjective norms (Thøgersen 2006)	Harland et al. 1999; Beardsworth and Keil 1991a; Grube 2009; Menzies and Sheeshka 2012; Worsley and Skrzypiec 1998; Stern et al. 1999
	Subjective norms	What one believes others, who are important to them, approve of or not (Ajzen 1991).	Grube 2009, Menzies and Sheeshka 2012; Merriman 2010
	Group norms	What one believes members of a specific social group think or do (Terry and Hogg 1996)	Christiansen, Qureshi, and Schaible 2013; Grube 2009; Jabs et al. 1999
	Global norms	What one believes what unspecified others think or do (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008).	Nestle et al. 1998, Grube 2009
Injunctive norms		What one believes others (dis-)approve of (Ajzen 1991; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990)	Christiansen et al. 2013
Descriptive norms		What one believes others do or do not do Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990	Burger et al. 2010; Florack et al. 2013

McDonald, Fielding, and Louis (2012) argue that an individual might be confronted with different conflicting norms at the same time. Subsequently social norms can hardly be averaged into one single variable. Thus the effect of an intervention strategy may vary depending on what level of norm was targeted: Triggering an individual's perception that reducing meat is a globally approved behaviour could result in a weaker behavioural change than suggesting that family and friends will approve of a reduced meat consumption.

2.2. Socially-Inflicted Ambitions

Taking another perspective, social influence can be analysed from the point of what people want to achieve by following norms. Dimensions belonging to this cluster are referred to as socially-inflicted ambitions. An overview is given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Dimensions of Social Influence Grouped as
Socially-Inflicted Ambitions**

Socially-inflicted ambitions:	Understanding of constructs:	Further reading for the context of meat consumption:
Social acceptance	Perception that others believe what one does is admirable and/or deserves respect.	Zey and McIntosh 1992; Sapp and Harrod 1989
Social sanction	"Expressing disproval or contempt, gossip, peer pressure, and teasing" (Nelissen and Mulder 2013)	Grube 2009; Nelissen and Mulder 2013; Merriman 2010; Potts and Parry 2010
Consistency	Maintaining self-attributions, behaviours, commitments, beliefs, etc. that do not collide with one's past self-attributions, etc. (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004)	Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 1999
Group membership	An individual identifies themselves with a specific group of people (Terry and Hogg 1996)	Jabs, Devine, and Sobal 1998; Larsson, et al. 2003; Kals, Müller, and Becker (2010)

Table 3. Dimensions of Social Influence Grouped as Socially-Inflicted Reactions

Socially-inflicted reactions:	Understanding of constructs:	Further reading for the context of meat consumption:
Compliance	Perceiving and acting in accordance to an explicit request to act in a certain way (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004).	Zey and McIntosh 1992; Lea and Worsley 2003; Sapp and Harrod 1989
Conformity	Matching one's opinions or behaviours with those of others (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004).	Jabs et al. 1998; Snejider and Te Molder 2009
Rebellion	Conspicuous criticism of and differentiation from others' norms.	Worsley and Skrzypiec 1997; Santos and Booth 1996; Glitsch 1999
Obedience	Feeling of compulsion to act in accordance with someone else's will (Wren 1999).	Beardsworth and Keil 1991b; Grube 2009
Reactance	Negative reaction to efforts by others that are perceived to reduce one's choices and freedoms" (Gough and Conner 2006)	Merriman 2010
Social comparison	Individuals compare their abilities and opinions with those of others to evaluate them (Festinger 1954).	Bisogni et al. 2002; Minson and Monin 2012; Bradbard et al. 1997

Klöckner (2013) argues that an individual complies to subjective norms to gain social acceptance or avoid social sanctions. Thus, social acceptance and (avoiding) social sanction are something an individual wants to achieve. This is also valid for the constructs group

membership (Terry and Hogg 1996) and consistency (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Individuals seek memberships in groups that are important to them and strive to be perceived as consistent in their opinions and their behaviour.

For intervention strategies, it can be of high relevance to know what socially-inflicted ambitions trigger a reduction of meat consumption, to support individuals' motivation to follow these ambitions. Just as important is it to know what socially-inflicted ambitions block a reduction of meat consumption, to weaken their influence.

2.3. Socially-Inflicted Reactions

Social influences can also be analysed from a behavioural perspective. Table 3 presents an overview of behavioural reactions to normative situations.

One rebels because one disagrees with a perceived norm, one conducts social comparison by evaluating perceived norms, one shows reactance when a perceived norm threatens one's freedom, one obeys in order to be in line with a compulsion to act in accordance with a norm, and one conforms in order to avoid violation of norms. As these dimensions describe behaviours that are performed as a reaction to a perceived need, the third group is referred to as 'socially-inflicted reactions.'

When designing an intervention strategy it is useful to anticipate the targeted individuals' reactions. For example, knowing that reactance is a common behaviour in the context of meat consumption may lead to the conclusion that interventions need to communicate their goal of behavioural change in a very subtle way.

2.4. Correlations between Groups

The identified groups of dimensions are correlated to one another. Figure 1 shows an example that illustrates possible connections. Below, this example is explained in more detail.

A person called 'Anna' has been a vegetarian. Due to several experiences Anna has had, she now believes that vegetarianism is not accepted on a societal level (global norm). Because Anna does not want to stand out (avoiding social sanction) she backslides from being a vegetarian to being a meat eater again (conforming). However, she feels that her dietary shift is disapproved of in her wider peer group (group norm), that mostly consists of other vegetarians. As a consequence Anna's friends do not invite her to their weekly vegan dinner anymore (social sanction). Because the dinner is the only event where the friends get together, Anna feels excluded from the group now (loss of group membership). To Anna it seems as if her family also disapproves of her being a meat-eater again because they believe that meat eating is unhealthy (group norm). The family teases her by calling her weak for backsliding to the meat-based diet (social sanction). However, Anna does not feel excluded from the family in any way (intact group membership). Anna's best friends liked to have meat-based BBQs with Anna (subjective norm), but when Anna turned vegetarian, they stopped having BBQs. Thus, her friend expresses satisfaction when Anna tells her she would eat meat again (social acceptance) and says that 'the true Anna is back' (consistency). Still, Anna sometimes feels bad (feelings of guilt), as she still thinks that she actually should not eat meat because this contributes to the suffering of animals (personal norm).
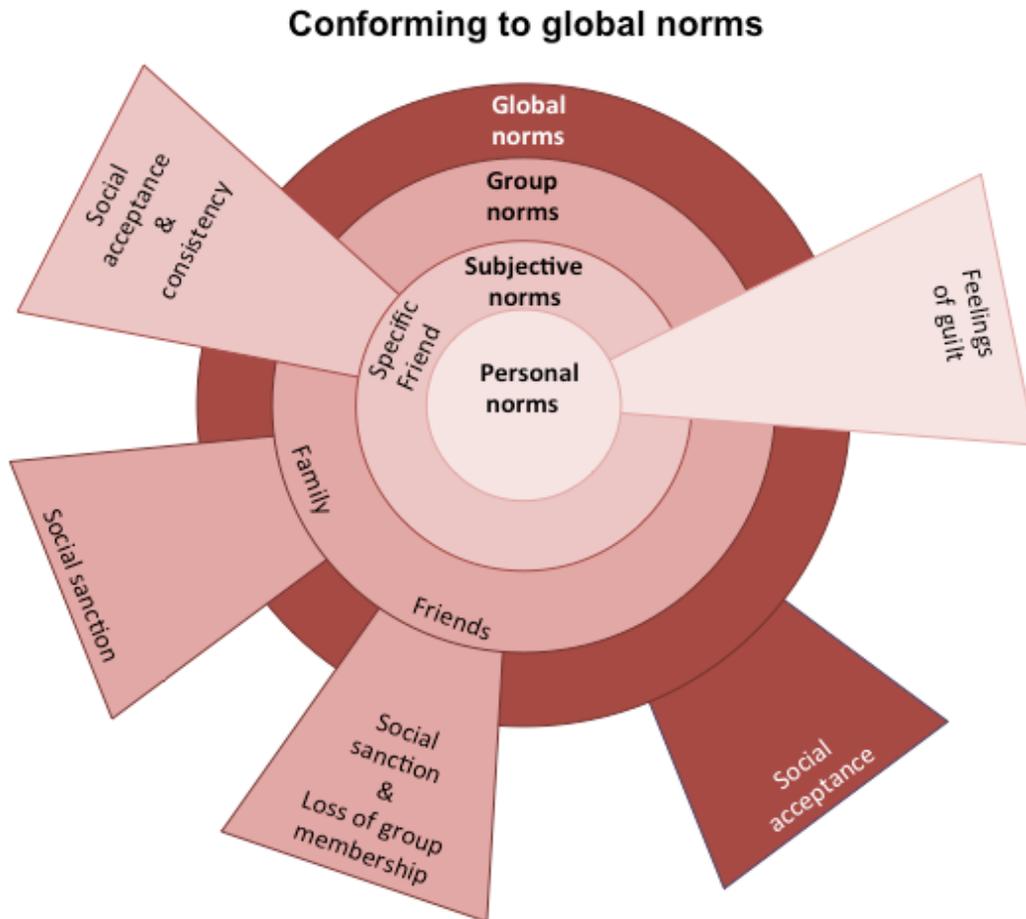
Conforming to global norms

Figure 1. Social consequences of conforming to global norms – 'Anna.'

3. METHOD

So far, dimensions of social influence on meat consumption have been detected, and their correlations analysed on a theoretical basis. In a second step, focus groups were conducted to investigate empirically what role the identified dimensions might play for individuals' reduction of meat consumption. This method enables the researchers to analyse experiences, descriptions and opinions that participants report on. However more importantly, focus groups allow almost natural, every-day conversations (Lamnek 2005), thus social interactions between participants can reveal authentic information on social influences on meat consumption in real life.

3.1. Sample and Procedure

Participants were chosen according to their gender, age, and meat consumption patterns to achieve diversity in the focus groups. To engage participants that fit the set of criteria a

screening questionnaire was distributed. Instead of allowing participants to define their own level of meat consumption they were asked what they ate in the past four weeks to reduce individual interpretation. Four categories were defined in accordance with Povey, Wellens, and Conner (2001): meat eaters (who eat meat and fish), meat avoiders (who do not eat meat but eat fish), vegetarians (who eat neither meat nor fish) and vegans (who do not eat any animal products). People were approached at places where food products are bought or consumed: an organic market, discount supermarkets, a full product range market and a bistro that offers vegan dinner. The latter was included as vegans only represent about 0.3% in Western populations (VEBU 2014), and it would be very time-consuming to recruit enough vegans in front of supermarkets only.

Ninety-two people completed the screening questionnaire, of which nineteen participated in the focus groups and were given 10 Euros as remuneration. The participants were assigned to the focus groups in a pattern so that the attendants' characteristics were diverse in each of the three groups. With thirteen participants in the 18 to 35 age group, this age range was overrepresented. Four were between 36 and 50 years; one between 51 and 65, and one was older than 65. Eleven participants were female; seven male and one chose 'not specified' to indicate gender. Five participants were ascribed as vegans, four as vegetarians, three as meat avoiders and seven as meat eaters.

A co-working space in the centre of Lüneburg was chosen as a location because it was easily reachable by bike, bus and car and not related to a political or confessional institution. At the beginning of each focus group, the moderator reported on a fictional setting, in which a vegetarian is facing a socially uncomfortable situation ('Maria does not wish to draw attention to her vegetarian diet. However, now her colleagues want to visit a restaurant for the company's Christmas party, where no vegetarian dishes are available).' Participants were then asked to anticipate the feelings of this vegetarian. This impulse revealed opposing positions and stimulated a discussion. To support the moderator keeping the discussions focussed a topic guide was implemented that grouped questions along reference points such as certain events ('When you became vegetarian ...' or 'When you are in the cantine ...).' Each focus group took around 90 minutes, was audio recorded and transcribed. All procedures were approved by the research ethics board of the Leuphana University Lüneburg.

3.2. Analysis

A type-building qualitative content analysis was chosen in accordance to Kuckartz (2010) to extract the 'typical' characteristics, and then group participants based on them. To increase inter-rater reliability, two persons separately conducted the analysis process. In cases where the two achieved different outcomes these aspects were discussed until consensus was attained.

Participants are clustered in accordance to a) whether they eat or refrain from eating meat and b) whether they react in a confrontational (openly demonstrating one's opposing position) or a defensive (trying to avoid or ease an impending conflict) fashion to the proposition of a behaviour change. Often participants showed both kinds of reactions. Thus, a rule was needed that defined what ratio of defensive and confrontational reactions determined whether a participant belonged to the defensive or the confrontational type. As defensive reactions (total across all participants: 51) were observed more often than confrontational (total across all

participants: 23), a simple majority rule would have resulted in only having very few confrontational participants. Therefore the ratio was determined in a way that led to the ascription of at least three participants for each type: When a quarter or more of a participant's reactions detected in the focus groups were defined as confrontational, the person was assigned to the confrontational group. Otherwise, they were assigned to the defensive group.

A guideline was implemented to screen the material for socially-inflicted reactions systematically and to rate them as confrontational or defensive. As an example, Table 4 demonstrates how the guideline was set up for 'conformity.'

Then, after having ascribed the participants to four types in accordance to their level of meat consumption and their reaction to conflicting norms, it was investigated how each type experiences norms and socially-inflicted ambitions and what role socially-inflicted reactions play.

**Table 4. Guideline to Categorise Individuals with
the Indicator 'Conformity'**

Conformity	confrontational	Individuals do not conform, express their dissatisfaction with the pressure the conflicting norm inflicts or try to incapacitate the sources of the conflicting norm. They try to make the respective others conform with them instead.
	defensive	Individuals conform to the conflicting norm, negate that the norms are conflicting, negate that the norms have something to do with them or try to ease others' perception of one's non-conformity.

3.3. Results – Typology of Consumers

Five participants were ascribed as meat eaters and confrontational, five as meat eaters and defensive, three as meat rejecters and confrontational and six as meat rejecters and defensive. Figure 2 summarises the concise characteristics upon which the name of each type was derived.

The *uninvolved* most often do not relate social pressure to their own behaviour when being confronted with conflicting norms. In case they do they use strategies to fend off resulting conflicts, such as by conforming to meat-rejection:

> If I eat meat, I do it mostly at my parents place. Here (...) it is likely that meat-eating is undesirable. [Translated by authors from German quote: "[W]enn ich Fleisch esse, dann eben vor allem bei meinen Eltern (...). Hier (...) ist [es] schon naheliegend, dass (...) [Fleisch-Essen] nicht gerne gesehen wird."]

Participants reported on having been introduced to meatless dishes by others. But eating a vegetarian or vegan dish in these events is primarily motivated by anticipating benefits for their health or enjoying the taste instead of giving in to social pressure. If they do not conform they tend to ease their violation of norms, for example by emphasising the sharing of certain values, despite the conflicting behaviour, with meat rejecters:

Animals should have had a good life really. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Die [Tiere] sollen wirklich ein gutes Leben gehabt haben."]

The uninvolved either do not think that eating meat could be a cause for feeling guilt or do not use their ethical considerations as a behavioural guideline, thus personal norms do not seem to be important in this context. Their attitude seems to be rarely challenged by perceived subjective norms that are in conflict with their behaviour. Participants do not report on any discussions with befriended meat rejecters. On a group and global level the uninvolved perceive vegetarianism as a common phenomenon, vegans, however, as exotics.
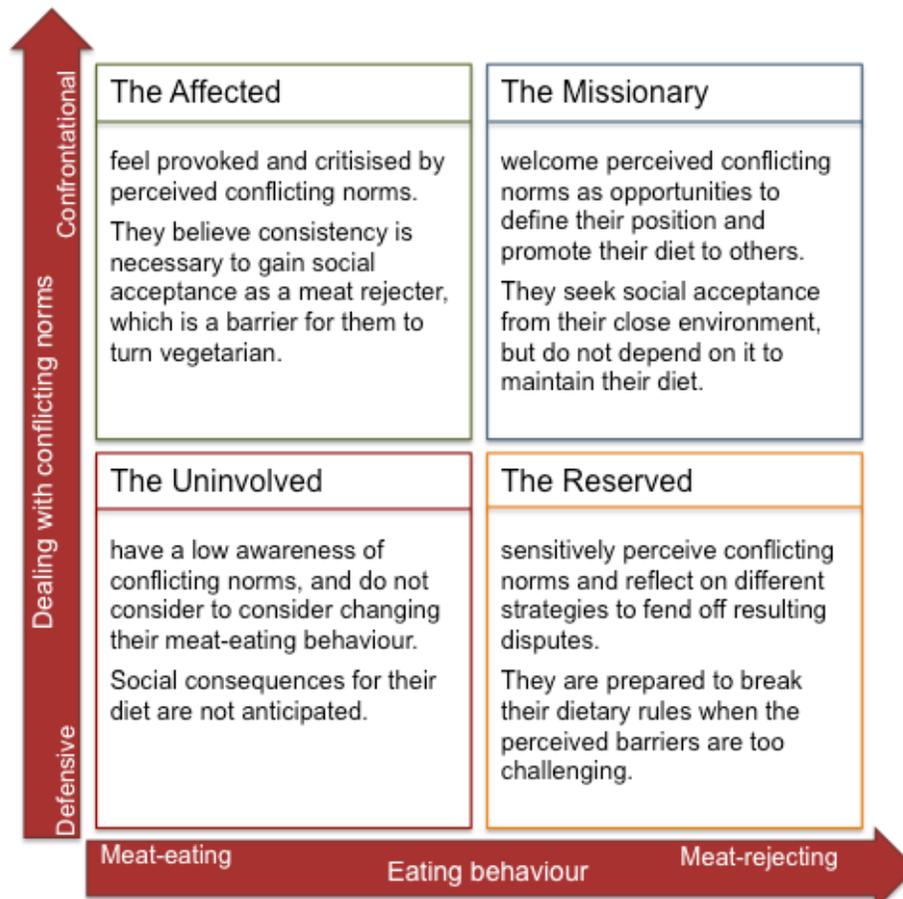

Figure 2. Typology of how meat eaters and meat rejecters react to conflicting norms.

Ignoring or not perceiving conflicting norms the uninvolved do not consider meat-eating behaviour to be of relevance for socially-inflicted ambitions. Due to their indifference or low anticipation of social sanctioning they do not mind admitting a lack of knowledge about the vegetarian lifestyle and motivations for turning vegetarian.

The *affected* react confrontationally and refer to their right to choose a diet without being judged, as long as they in turn do not invade others' freedom:

Everyone should decide for themselves what he or she wants to eat. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Es ist doch jedem überlassen zu essen, was er essen will."]

When feeling pushed to change their behaviour the affected may show reactance and demonstratively maintain or even increase meat consumption:

Sometimes my partner wanted to impose on me that I of course do not eat meat. And on no account I want to get squeezed in a strait-jacket. Most often I then ordered meat more than ever. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Manchmal wollte er [der Partner] mir auch auferlegen, dass ich natürlich kein Fleisch (...) esse. Und auf keinen Fall (...) [will ich] diese Zwangsjacke auferlegt kriegen. (...) Dann habe ich meistens erst recht Fleisch bestellt."]

The affected report attempts to reduce meat consumption, however, avoid talking about their motivations for this. They do not admit feelings of guilt and do not reveal if their meat-eating behaviour is in line with their personal norms. In terms of subjective norms, the affected are more often confronted with the topic than the uninvolved. All participants assigned to the type reported on discussions they had with vegetarian partners or friends. Thereby the majority reported to be weary of this. The affected are aware that norms differ between social groups they are involved in (family, friends, and colleagues) and also between generations or cultures, which reflects their perception of global norms.

Consistency, as a socially-inflicted ambition, seems to play an important role for the affected. To deny the legitimacy of perceived proposals to change behaviour they try to reveal inconsistent behaviour of the source of the conflicting norm and accuse them of lying in case they break their rules:

Eating meat as a vegetarian is also a kind of lying, if one wants to see it this way. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Das [als VegetarierIn Fleisch essen] ist ja auch ne (...) ne Form von Lügen, wenn man das so auffassen will."]

Despite these demands for consistency, they insist that people can decide what they want to eat without having to fear judgmental reactions. These two attitudes of the affected may seem contradictory, but only at first sight. The affected claim that it is very difficult to reject meat consistently in order to excuse their refusal to follow a vegetarian diet. A vegetarian who claims to be consistent proves that it is possible and thereby takes away the affecteds' excuse unless the affected admit to being weaker.

Besides consistency, two more socially-inflicted ambitions concern the affected as they strongly complain about social sanctioning and denied social acceptance:

Almost every day I feel uncomfortable in the canteen with my collegues. When feeling stressed from work I choose what I think most tasty. Two times, sometimes three times, per week, something with meat. And some people who I am there with are relaxed, but others give me looks, subliminal comments. And this, I have to say, annoys me. But I also know the opposite situation when being among meat eaters, but ordering something without meat. Then I feel like being the outsider. [Translated by authors from German quote: Ich fühle mich fast jeden Tag in der Mensa unwohl mit meinen Arbeitskolleginnen und -kollegen. (...). [Im] Arbeitsstress esse ich das was ich gerade am leckersten finde. Und das ist dann bestimmt zwei Mal pro Woche, manchmal bestimmt auch ein drittes Mal, was mit Fleisch. Und einige der Leute, mit denen ich dann da bin sind ganz entspannt (...), von anderen gibt es aber so Blicke

oder (...) unterschwellige Kommentare. Und sowas geht mir, muss ich sagen, wirklich auf den Geist. (...) Und ich kenne aber auch die umgekehrte Situation im Kreise von Fleischessern etwas ohne Fleisch zu bestellen. Und dann [fühle ich mich wie eine] Außenseiterin."]

There is no explicit evidence that the affected believe their membership to any group is at stake because of their eating behaviour.

The *reserved* defensively fend off disputes arising from perceived conflicting norms. The most important strategy is to hide their violation of meat eaters' norms, for example by avoiding social settings where their meat rejecting is likely to be noticed.

Some people I have known for years said: 'What, you don't eat meat?' 'Yes, since five years.' 'I haven't noticed.' I never talked about it and I never said I need an extra dish or want to eat vegetarian. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Manche Leute, die ich jahrelang kenne [sagten]: 'Wie, du isst kein Fleisch?' 'Ja, seit fünf Jahren nicht.' 'Ist mir noch gar nicht aufgefallen.' Ich hatte es nie thematisiert und ich habe auch nie gesagt ich brauche jetzt einen Extrateller oder ich möchte vegetarisch [essen]."]

Personal norms play an important role for the reserved when choosing their food intake:

I eat vegan, because in my interpretation of the world it is the right thing to do. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Ich ernähre mich so [vegan], weil es aus meiner Interpretation der Welt das Richtige ist."]

Of all participants, those ascribed to the reserved reported the most on perceived subjective and group norms. In particular those who reject not only meat, but all animal products complained about contradicting injunctive and descriptive norms in the media and thus on a global level:

It is, in fact, a difference how it is talked about meat rejecting and what is actually shown.. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Also es ist tatsächlich n Unterschied wie darüber [Fleischverzicht] gesprochen wird und was tatsächlich dargestellt wird."]

No other group in the typology experiences social sanctions as often as the reserved, whereas the absence of social acceptance and being treated as an exotic are the most common perceived social sanctions. It can be assumed that dietary habits play an important role for members of the reserved group. Participants of this type reported having many vegetarians in their peer group and also that their meat reduction was triggered by entering a new peer group with many vegetarians. In terms of consistency, the reserved occasionally break their dietary rules with diverse ambitions. On the one hand, they are aware that inconsistency can be a strategy to release social pressure that they cannot fend off otherwise:

And he [the partner] thinks it is very important, when it comes to nourishment, that I sometimes eat cheese or an egg. And he says this three days and then I eat an egg to have my peace. To make him feel better. [Translated by authors from German quote: "Und er [der Partner] findet es ernährungstechnisch sehr wichtig, dass ich manchmal Käse oder ein Ei esse. Und dann sagt der mir das drei Tage lang und dann esse ich ein Ei, um Ruhe zu haben. Damit der sich besser fühlt."]

On the other hand, they fear offending sensibilities among their meat rejecting friends by breaking their dietary rules.

The *missionary* understand conflicts as opportunities to define their position and persuade meat eaters. As they believe that a lack of knowledge is a major barrier for people to turn vegetarian or vegan, the missionary is eager to spread knowledge on problems related to meat consumption.

Personal norms play a key role for the missionary, which is reflected in their strong will, whether others notice or not, not to break their dietary rules. Subjective, group, and global norms are all perceived by the missionary. However, they report less on perceived disapproval of others than the reserved do. A possible explanation is that due to their missionary function the missionary do not wish to explicate the disadvantages of their dietary habits that could possibly outweigh anticipated advantages in front of those they want to convince.

The missionary expect to get social acceptance for being in line with their own personal norms instead of being in line with the norms of others:

> When my environment is interested in what I do and why I do it and when this environment then accepts me as the person I am (...): I think this helps. [Translated by authors from German quote: "[W]enn sich mein Umfeld dafür interessiert was ich tue und warum ich es tue (...) und wenn dieses Umfeld dann mich akzeptiert, als Mensch wie ich bin (...): Ich glaube das hilft."]

Strict consistency as a socially-inflicted ambition plays a key role for the missionary. This is also shown in the phenomenon that they feel socially sanctioned when not being taken seriously in their choice. Group membership, however, is neither believed to be threatened or manifested by their eating behaviour.

4. DESIGNING INTERVENTIONS

Sixteen dimensions that fit the definition of social influence were detected, defined and distinguished from one another for the context of meat consumption. Thereby it was argued that subjective norms can contradict with other constructs, such as global norms. Also it is possible that subjective norms do not play an important role for a person's meat consumption, however other dimensions, such as social sanctions, may do. This supports the hypothesis that it may not be sufficient to look only at subjective norms when actually wanting to investigate social influences. The empirical part of the study gives further evidence for this. However, only to a certain extend, because with 19 people the number of participants is small and all three focus groups were conducted in Lüneburg, where many students live. This may produce a bias to the results from this study.

In the focus groups it was observed that the four types not only differed in how they experience subjective norms, but also other dimensions of social influence. Thus, a big share of diversity among individuals remains disregarded when only focussing on how they perceive subjective norms.

The results of this study do not only suggest improvements for the theoretical, but also for the practical perspective. The participants of the focus groups were assigned to four types

in accordance to two aspects: meat-eating behaviour (meat eating or not meat-eating) and reactions to the proposal of behavioural change (defensive or confrontational). The analysis revealed that beyond these two characteristics participants of the same type also resembled each other in how they experience other dimensions of social influence that were not used for type-building. As the built types share many similarities within them and many differences between them, it may have a positive effect to tailor intervention strategies to each type. The concept of tailoring intervention strategies to specific groups, instead of generating one strategy irrespective of differences within the target group, is subject to on-going investigation in intervention research (e.g., Abrahamse et al. 2007). There is evidence that tailoring interventions has the potential to be more effective, than a one-dimensional solution (e.g., Bamberg 2013). For this reason, the implications for intervention strategies are discussed for each group type in the following paragraphs.

To reduce the *uninvolved* group's meat consumption, an intervention needs to pull individuals out of their passive role. This can be achieved by introducing different motivations to reduce meat – socially-inflicted but also others, such as environmental concerns. The demonstration that a reduction of meat consumption is backed up by environmental, ethical and health-related reasons and at the same time rewarded with social acceptance might trigger an individual's wish to change diets. Here it is important not to directly suggest a strict meat-less diet as a goal for two reasons. First, it was found that taste aspects are an important factor for the uninvolveds' diets. Thus, a rapid change in dietary choices could be too large of a challenge, because it might take time to learn about new dishes that are as satisfying as the familiar ones. Second, a lesson learnt from the affected is that people, who believe social acceptance can only be gained when showing strict consistency in one's dietary behaviour, perceive exactly this demand as a barrier to change one's diet. Therefore, an intervention strategy should promote a reduction in meat consumption rather than a strict rejection.

As the *affected* are rather aware of problems related to meat consumption and of conflicting norms, it may not be efficient to provide them with information or expose them to norms promoting a meatless diet. On the contrary, this could even lead to reactance. The affected believe that a meatless diet only 'deserves' social acceptance, when it is performed consistently. Easing this attitude, by promoting that every reduction of meat consumption should be socially rewarded, may lead the affected to perceive a dietary shift as less difficult, because they do not have to reject meat completely to gain social acceptance. This approach also serves another purpose. Meat rejecters in the uninvolveds' group reported on the strong role of role models to learn about plant-based meals that still meet their requirements regarding taste- and health-aspects. The affected, however, do not seem to be interested in exchanging experiences on food choices with vegetarians as they often feel morally downgraded by them. When promoting that even small steps of meat reduction deserve social acceptance the affected might feel less downgraded and find it easier to accept meat rejecters as role models.

As the *reserved* sometimes break their dietary rules, it could be suggested to confront them with conflicting norms that promote a more strict meatless diet. However, the findings in this study advise against such a measure. Perceived social pressure and sanctions are a strain to the reserved, who do not wish their eating behaviour to be subject to conflicts. To keep them from relapsing to a meat-based diet, intervention strategies should aim to make the reserved feel more comfortable with their present diet. For example, when demonstrating that

vegetarians are a growing group and exude solidarity with meat rejecters, the reserved get supported by a virtual group, which might ease their perceived unwanted special status.

The *missionary* can be described as rather stable in their meatless diet and may not have to be supported to maintain it. This type could still be addressed, namely as fellow campaigners. Informing the missionary on how they best trigger meat reduction behaviour in their environment may help them to promote a meatless diet more efficiently. For example, a campaign that highlights the positive effects of social support on others' maintenance of their meatless diet might increase the frequency of offering social support.

CONCLUSION

Social influences are multifaceted and play a significant role in the reduction of meat consumption. Individuals differ in how these social influences are experienced. Further research needs to investigate the effects of such intervention strategies and the advantages of combining them with strategies targeting other psychological determinants, such as problem awareness. It needs to be assessed how the four types can best be addressed, a crucial aspect as it has been argued that intervention strategies tailored for one specific type might not only be ineffective for others but could, in the worst case, even lead to an increased meat consumption due to reactance.

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