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Beyond the Labels: Exploring Social Capital and Ethical
Consumerism at the Intersection of LGBTQI+ Identity,
Veganism and Cannabis Use

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how social capital may bring together ethical consumerism and mental health for individuals who have shared intersectionalities around their LGBTQI+ identity, veganism and cannabis consumption/use. There is limited sociological literature on this intersection, so I used a convergent parallel mixed-methods principle (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) that included quantitative surveys (N=45), qualitative open-ended answers to survey questions, and secondary data analysis.

Quantitative results, contrary to initial expectations within this specific sample, indicated a higher mean for bridging social capital ($M=4.16, SD=1.147$) compared to bonding social capital ($M=3.29, SD=1.424$). Qualitative data reveal this as a strategic form of adaptation to the internal divisions of their community, and a conditional space for acceptance-based on identity-within a human-based space, which suggests that bridging ties are some kind of necessary mechanism for resiliency and not just simply a chosen form of civic engagement. In terms of ethical consumerism animal rights was highest ($M=4.62, SD=0.960$) but surprisingly lower for LGBTQI+ rights as a consumer concern ($M=2.91, SD=1.276$). This "sociological puzzle" is viewed qualitatively as an inherent inclusivity within the quality-vegan ethos and or a focus on deeper forms of liberatory interconnected principles. In addition, anxiety scores were moderate ($M=10.29, SD=6.31$), but there was no statistically significant relationship between cannabis use frequency and anxiety. Qualitative data showed "therapeutic ambivalence" with cannabis, as it provided value as a coping mechanism and a stigma source. There was also identification of "identity compartmentalization" as a common understanding, challenging the assumption that intersectional identity works seamlessly. Lastly, there was the identification of a certain level of "emotional labor" that goes with managing compounded marginalization and activism.

In principle, this study refines Social Capital Theory by reframing bridging capital within marginalized settings, advances Intersectionality Theory by contextualizing lived experiences beyond additive models of oppression, nuances Minority Stress Theory showing that protective factors can also induce emotional work, and expands Ethical Consumerism Theory by demonstrating that ethical commitments can be grounded within a cohesive political praxis instead of just identity-based consumption. In practice, this study augurs for establishing truly inclusive, intersectional community spaces, trauma-informed mental health services, and policy changes to address systemic stigma and discrimination. Finally, while this study is

exploratory and purposive and lacks generalizability, these data present a base for future research to better understand the ways in which multiply marginalized peoples resilience and ethical imagination are developed.

Preface

I would like to thank my family, who supported me during the writing, showed constant support, and, last but not least, all participants in the research and those who are constantly using their voices to fight for justice.

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Introduction and Aim of Study (Chapter 1)

1.1 Background and Context

Processes of social change and struggles for increased justice frequently stem from the agency of marginalized communities, who subvert hegemonic norms and the reproduction of the status quo. These norms are often predicated on the construction of 'otherness' and modes of social exclusion. (Young, 1990) However, in direct contrast, alternative networks frequently unfold through shared beliefs, values, and lived experiences. Veganism and queerness, as the subjects of this research, are both, typically in mainstream discourses, overlooked or misrepresented (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014), and cannabis use is still legally criminalized, medically regulated, or socially stigmatized around the world. (Room & Reuter, 2019) Although distinct, veganism, queerness and cannabis collectively share overlapping lived experience of social stigma and exclusion, as well as conscious choice to reject societal norms, and a commitment to alternative frameworks of well-being and social practice. Consequently, this thesis will examine the specific interplay between veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use to understand how individuals within these intersecting identities form and sustain social capital, and how this capital in turn influences ethical consumption and mental health outcomes. This research will specifically employ Bowleg's (2012) intersectional analysis framework to examine and comprehend social capital in the sphere of queer-identified vegans and cannabis users.

1.2 Personal and Academic Motivation

My firsthand experiences with these communities over the past seven years have offered unique insights into the power of collective action, the strength of resistance against marginalization, and the community that develops surrounding collective beliefs. I've actively participated in vegan activist organizations in the Czech Republic, as well as in Germany, Spain, the United States of America, and currently in Thailand. Such integral experiences catalyzed curiosity about how such social support is produced and functions, the unique intersectional contexts behind them, and indicated a crucial gap in existing literature, particularly regarding the formation of social capital across these specific, overlapping non-normative identities. Although this personal involvement may serve as one reason to do this research, it has also provided a unique advantage: a level of trust and access that may be difficult for an 'outside'

researcher to gain, and a greater understanding of the lived experiences of challenged groups who are often stigmatized. (Pillow, 2003; Rose, 1997)

1.3 Research Approach and Theoretical Frameworks Overview

Utilizing Bowleg's (2012) intersectional lens, applied to queer-identified vegans and those who consume cannabis, this dissertation examines social capital in a way that depicts the complex and varied experiences of people at these intersections. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, this research aims to understand how these subpopulations develop and utilize, or conversely face challenges in accessing, community and social support. The quantitative nature of this study is provided through the survey data of current trends and patterns, while the qualitative nature of the study is provided through an in-depth understanding of the nuances of the lived experiences. Furthermore, secondary data analysis will complement these findings, offering enriched understanding of how the intersection of these identities provides a platform for community, wellness, and activism from an interdisciplinary situated perspective.

This research is situated within multiple theoretical lenses, intertwined to present a multilayered analysis which takes into account the structuring constraints and the agency of marginalised groups. Theories of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) create a basis for the analysis of bonding, bridging, and linking capital for these marginalised groups. This theoretical basis allows for an exploration of how social capital can create tangible ways of reproducing social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1986), while simultaneously serving as a basis for collective action for transformation. (Coleman 1988; Putnam, 2000) Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016) demonstrates how concurrent identities can coalesce to form different experiences of marginalisation and resistance; while, ethical consumerism considers how non-mainstream consumption behaviours (e.g., veganism, cannabis use) can create opportunities for collective and political engagement. (White & Simpson, 2013) Finally, the Minority stress models also add the dimension of mental health to the analysis, which indicates how social capital can act as a protective factor with relation to stress, or promote well-being for stigmatized groups. (Meyer, 2003)

1.3.1 Terminology Note: Queer, LGBTQI+, and Non-Normative Identities

This dissertation clarifies the specific terms "*queer*," "*LGBTQI+*," and "*non-normative identities*", as they are utilized within this research project.

While derogatory in the past, the term '*queer*' has been embraced by many activists and academics to describe identities and practices that actively escape or move beyond normative identities of gender and sexuality. It suggests fluidity, and non-conformity, and implies a critique of both the sameness and effectiveness of fixed identity labels. (Jagose, 1996; Halberstam, 2005; Puar, 2007) In this thesis, '*queer*' is used mostly in relation to theoretical discussions of challenging norms and deconstructing binaries and is acknowledged for its ability to encompass a wider diversity of non-normative expressions that lies beyond particular identity categories.

The acronym *LGBTQI+* represents lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and other variations of sexual and gender identity. When referring to institutional categorizations, datasets, or policy formulations, the term "*LGBTQI+*" is maintained. This demonstrates formal inclusion while also signaling the inherent limitations of a single abbreviation to capture the complexities and interdependencies of individuals' lives positioned in and across these diverse communities. (Bowleg, 2012)

The term "*non-normative identities*" describes identities or practices that fall outside of the governing social and cultural norms, such as vegans or those who regularly use cannabis. These identities (and their associated practices) are frequently constructed as socially 'deviant' or otherwise stigmatized. They share similarities with queer identities as how they challenge an established social order and forms of social acceptability that exist in dominant discourse. Reid (2020) discusses non-normativity as the social boundaries those with socially marginalized identities challenge, and how stigma is produced and resisted through social practices. Likewise, Skliamis, Benschop, and Korf (2022) also ask how identities in the margins navigate boundaries around social acceptability and marginality. By privileging these categories, this study intends to examine how common experiences of non-normativity, irrespective of the content of a given identity, shape social capital and collective resiliency.

1.4 Study Aims and Societal Relevance

This research connects various identities and social capital, focusing on the unique opportunities and challenges that intersecting identities present, and aims to contribute insights for developing transformative inclusive communities. Although this research engages in the social sciences, the material, source data, and methodological approach are informed by and grounded in the lived experiences and practices of the communities under current study. This grounding ensures the research questions and interpretations remain relevant and responsive to the realities of these groups, without adopting a purely autoethnographic stance. This connection directly corresponds with my future aspirations in human and animal advocacy, and development or collaboration with NGOs in the mentioned fields. This dissertation focuses on the social aspects of this community, to provide valuable insight that can be used across larger initiatives of building inclusive and supportive communities, thus creating a more equitable world for everyone.

Veganism, LGBTQI+ rights, and cannabis use have gone through substantial cultural change in more recent years. Recognizing this evolving social landscape is important to identify the political and ethical significance of varying, intersecting identities. Cultural changes are recognized here with the movements towards LGBTQI+ rights, and the postmodern examples of the increased legalizing cannabis use in a number of countries, like Germany and Thailand; specifically, points towards the contemporary profile of this intersection. (European Commission, 2021; United Nations office on Drugs and Crime, 2022)

Considering this convergence from an intersectional approach highlights individual experiences and helps to frame a comprehensive picture for how interconnected identities shape resilience and social cohesion at the community level. Identity here is not static but fluid, shaped in interaction with stigma, social exclusion, and structural inequality. Resilience thus appears not as an innate trait, but as a variable, contextually embedded capacity, manifested in participation, shared responsibility, and mutual support through which marginalized groups challenge established power frameworks and actively shape their place in social space. (Ungar, 2011) Analyzing the social capital of these communities in this context reveals how vulnerable actors articulate resilience through the creation of networks and alliances oriented toward mutual support. This process is notably salient given that the current efforts to reduce the effects of social fragmentation and a build inclusive, mentally healthy collectives stand in direct

opposition to Putnam's (2000) claims regarding the decline of social capital and civic participation and the movement toward an atomized world of isolation and weak social ties.

The insights that emerged from this research can be used for future research, in addition to improving the policies for inclusivity and support of marginalized communities which are seeking social justice.

1.5 Research Questions and Dissertation Structure

The research questions of the dissertation are as follows:

1. How do individuals at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use experience and utilize different forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) within their social networks?
2. How does social capital within this community contribute to both individual resilience and well-being and collective action related to social justice issues (e.g., veganism, LGBTQI+ rights, cannabis legalization)?
3. What are the specific challenges (e.g., stigma, discrimination, social isolation) and opportunities (e.g., shared identity, activism, mutual support) related to social capital that are uniquely experienced by individuals at this intersection?
4. Through what practices, spaces, and strategies do individuals at this intersection develop and cultivate social capital, particularly in navigating their multiple identities?

This dissertation is organized into three main divisions: theoretical, methodological, and empirical, with each one composed of distinctive sections and subchapters. The theoretical division introduces the research topic, provides its theoretical background, and includes the comprehensive literature review. The methodological division details data collection methods, sample selection, research environment, analytical procedures and ethical considerations. The empirical division presents and analyzes both the primary data and the secondary data, with subsequent chapters of analysis that will discuss specific findings, leading to a concluding chapter that provides an overall summary of the whole dissertation key ideas, outlines main research findings and offers suggestions for further research.

Literature Review (Chapter 2)

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The dissertation is situated at the intersection of several distinct yet interconnected areas of research. This chapter reviews the literature regarding the convergent intersections of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity and cannabis use, and their connections to social capital, ethical consumerism, and mental health.

This review aims to not only summarize the relevant empirical research but also to evaluate and examine the findings to illuminate specific under-researched areas. Ultimately, this chapter will illustrate the academic framework from which the current study emerges, and how it offers a more complex analysis and understanding of the intersections of lived experiences for participants navigating their (often socially marginalized) intersectional identities.

This chapter will outline the foundational theories in which this thesis is grounded: Social Capital Theory, Intersectionality, Ethical Consumerism and Mental Health.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Social Capital Theory

The theory of Social Capital gives us an understandable theoretical basis to explain how the role of networks, norms and social interactions can have a positive impact on individual and collective well-being. It highlights the essential role of social ties and the resources they provide through relationships that create connections to strengthen social resilience and collective capacity of organizations. (Putnam, 2000) Though there are many other major theorists, such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988), who provide various perspectives on social capital, this study adheres mainly to Robert Putnam's (2000) theory, in particular his classification of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Putnam's conceptualisation has significant relevance for this study as it facilitates a detailed analysis of the different relationships and the role they play among and between individual communities. In marginalized communities social capital can be a key element in fostering a sense of solidarity and support among those who might be excluded due to their identities (directly addressing Research Question 1).

2.2.1.1 Bourdieu's Perspective on Social Capital

Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital is fundamentally predicated on an individual's position in a social field and is designed primarily to reproduce social inequality. Social capital is beneficial for actors in an advantaged position (individual, family or dominant social group) who can access connections, facilitating the accumulation of other forms of capital (economic or cultural) and retaining their position of privilege. (Portes, 1998) In Bourdieu's words, social capital refers to "the set of actual or potential resources, linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition." (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) Despite its collective dimensions, social capital still refers to an individual's social networks (social ties or social capital), and what they possess of information, which can be potentially converted, as needed and strategically, into actualized forms. Bourdieu's perspective in relation to marginalized communities highlights that social capital may be limited by pre-existing power relations, notwithstanding, the lack of social capital can intensify disadvantage for people lacking economic or cultural capital. (Bourdieu, 1986)

2.2.1.2 Coleman's Rational Choice View

James Coleman (1990) offers a complementary but more specialized perspective by conceptualizing social capital as a "system of individual actions". From this rational choice perspective, individuals will always be driven to cooperate to further their interests, and it is from the continued interaction that social capital arises. Coleman defined social capital functionally, as an aspect of the social structure that makes it easier for actors to do things to (or for) one another on that structure. He identifies major structural components including trust, norms, information networks, and authority relations as crucial for social capital formation. Paxton (1999) extends this by providing evidence for the significance of these dimensions, particularly trust and institutional relationships, in the empirical measurement of social capital at both the individual and collective scales.

Importantly, Coleman (1990) insisted that social capital does not belong to its actors, but to the relationship between them; it is not a stock of an asset but a resource that the actors have to renew and sustain in these relationships themselves. He locates the rational actor at the heart of his analysis, working within the logics of exchange and reciprocity creating obligations of trust. However he also acknowledges that these obligations could ultimately become 'failed... obligations' (Coleman, 1988, p. 116-117) through their incommensurability. The level of trust

associated with the social network, or the degree of one's present responsibilities, are thus of importance. Notable among these are Coleman's contributions that connected social capital to the understanding of collective action, showing how even the most seemingly disadvantaged might collaborate when individual self-interest would appear to preclude it. (Coleman, 1990) As people deliberately form networks that further expand their shared interests, this sheds light on the logical decisions that motivate collective action and the creation of social capital in disadvantaged environments.

2.2.1.3 Putnam's Extension to Civic Society

Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000), in turn, extended the term, applying it beyond individual achievement, such as in Coleman's study of education, to the public realm and the performance of democracy. Formulated by Putnam as part of his effort to understand Italian civic structures, his definition holds: "Social capital... stands for features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficacy of society by facilitating coordinated actions." (Putnam 1993, p. 167) Putnam has typically dealt with macro-actors, such as communities or nation-states, in which the basic social capital unit is the web of civic engagement. He stresses the importance of active civil society in the democratic consolidation process, arguing that social capital accumulates through a path-dependent process that is most durable when promoted by a long-standing tradition of civic culture. (Putnam 1993, 1995; 2000; Myszal 1996) Trust is crucial for Putnam, because it is a fundamental part of the flow of social capital. He argues for the importance of social networks and that social capital is sustained and reproduced only by "individuals embedded within [network ties]." (Putnam 2000, p. 19) In addition, Putnam highlights the decline in civic engagement (e.g., in America) as a cause for a decline in community and, subsequently, a decline in interpersonal trust. (Putnam 2000)

2.2.1.4 Convergences and Divergences

However, though differing from one another on many points, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam converge in locating social capital within the structure of social relations and defining it to be the least material among the various types of capital. (Portes, 1998) Bourdieu and Coleman share an interest in the workings of educational success and its reproduction of social inequalities. (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) Their studies' treatment of social

interaction differs—that of Coleman contributes to rational choice; that of Bourdieu, to cultural materialism (Field, 2003, p. 28) However, they both show that social capital is composed of personal relations, personal exchanges, as well as a shared set of values attached to these relations.

Putnam widens Coleman's concept and applies it to broader social entities while stressing its beneficial consequences for societal cooperation and cohesion, presenting social capital as an underpinning of solidarity at both community and societal levels, rather than, as did Bourdieu, as a factor that leads to the reproduction of inequality. In socially excluded communities, social capital also helps to explain the mechanisms through which processes of marginalisation can be converted into collective solidarity and mutual support, or conversely, obstructed (Putnam, 2000; Portes, 1998; Field, 2003) (explicitly addressing Research Question 1).

In particular, Bourdieu's theory of capital reproduction, Coleman's emphasis was on rational collective action, and Putnam's typology of three types of social capital facilitate a comprehensive exploration of how people who are vegan, identify as LGBTQI+, and use cannabis singularly or in combination produce, use, and reproduce social capital in order to respond to lived challenges and build solidarity and take collective action. This triangulated approach to theories allows us to respond to Research Question 1 directly.

2.2.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality, originally introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), provides an important analytical framework to examine interactions of multiple social identities and how they combine to produce unique and compounding forms of oppression and marginalization. This view further acknowledges that people's lived experiences are shaped or made possible by the interaction of a person's important intersecting identities including race, gender, sexual orientation, and social class. (Collins & Bilge, 2016) Collins and Bilge (2020) maintain that intersectionality is not just a theory, but a mode of analysis that seeks to center and analyze intersecting power relations. They also acknowledge that central dimensions of human identity (e.g., race, class, gender, and sexuality) are interconnected and mutually constitutive, illustrating the complexity and contradictions of individuals' intersectional realities.

The concept of a stigmatized identity is critical to this perspective. In a well known conceptualization, Goffman (1963) proposed that those labeled as "other" (for example, a

vegan or queer person) are stigmatized through social discounting: that is, they are assigned a social "depreciation", or stigma. Veganism can be conceptualized not simply as a dietary practice but as a unique social identity with social meanings attached to it, just like other stigmatized communities. (Wright, 2021; Gecas & Burke, 1995) Similarly, any person ascribed to the 'other' category of sexuality and gender experiences social devaluation. (Goffman, 1963)

This is further supported by Mercier's (2024) application of the Concealable Stigmatized Identity (CSI) framework to vegan people of color, which emphasizes how maintaining stigmatized identities, such as queer and cannabis-user identities, in the face of pressures from mainstream society requires comparable coping strategies.

With an intersectional approach, this research attempts to address the underexplored challenges and differences affecting queer vegans, who also use cannabis. It will also contribute to elucidating how different forms of resilience and support emerge at the intersection of more than one identity, conforming with Research Questions 3 and 4.

2.2.3 Ethical consumerism

Within veganism, ethical consumerism is a fascinating area of research because it centers on individuals' attitudes and beliefs that directly influence their purchasing habits. By considering sustainability, animal rights, and social justice factors, ethical consumerism contributes to broader societal trends. (Joy, 2010) Applying this framework to the vegan identity within the examined intersectional population sheds light on the bonds that unite the group and the role of social capital in facilitating collective action, aligning with Research Question 2.

Ethical and responsible consumption is often viewed as a contemporary trend, although its historical roots indicate a longer history of value-based shopping. According to Hilton (2003), in the 1990s ethical consumerism has been seen to emerge as a significant force shaping everyday life, with early concern about the environment and subsequent concern being extended to the rights of animals and humans, being situated within a longer history of material culture in which goods have been "politicized" and "moralized". Building on this, Berlan (2008) further maintains that the ethical consumer behaviour can be seen in historical contexts, such as abolitionist movements that advocated for boycott of goods produced through slave labor.

In a modern context, the ethical consumer is someone who takes into account both moral and economic values when choosing which products to buy. Carrington (2010) emphasises consumers' personal accountability for environmental and social well-being, while Devinney et al. (2006) state that ethical consumers are now more determined to be the direct cause of positive change through their purchases. Harrison et al. (2005) extend the conception of ethical consumption as organized consumer activism, incorporating collective action, concern about consequences, and moral self-restraint beyond the transaction that consumer activists engage in.

This research will also extend understanding about how consumer choices for queer vegans using cannabis might serve as a way of demonstrating identity and political stance, reaffirming collective values and developing solidarity among shared communities, directly leading to Research Question 2.

2.2.4 Minority stress theory and Mental Health

Finally, the intersection of mentioned identities often affects mental health and well-being, an area of growing interest and significance in social research. Individuals holding these intersecting sociocultural identities (like vegans, cannabis users, and queer identified people) do not simply experience additive levels of stigma but rather multiplicative marginalization. This experience is understood as structural stressors that accumulate, generating a unique psychosocial burden, and as a result increased anxiety, stress, and withdrawal. (Pachankis et al., 2017)

We can interpret these experiences through Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory as a foundation, where marginalized or stigmatized individuals experience two levels of stressors: distal stressors (external) like discrimination, and proximal stressors (internal), such as internalized stigma, vigilance, and concealment of identity. The chronic exposure to this level of social stress affects the mental health of individuals who occupy non-dominant social positions and notably, these stress-provoking factors do not occur with an additive approach, but rather are cumulative, and are made worse each time a new minoritized identity exists in one individual. (Meyer, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, 2014)

In consideration of the analysis outlined here, the stigmatization faced by cannabis users, queer people, and vegans must be understood as distinct yet interacting factors. Cannabis users are

subject to the legal gray area of the product, and the stigma of moral condemnation and social stereotypes. This exposes cannabis users to feelings of shame, alienation and hyper-vigilance. (Room et al., 2010) Queer people, in addition to their unique challenges, frequently encounter heteronormative culture and institutionalization as race and gender identities combine, suggesting queer identities consistently face multiple avenues of microaggressions, avoidance, and distress. (Meyer, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, 2014) To illustrate the substantial mental health cost, LGBTQI+ teenagers are more than twice as likely as their straight peers to report experiencing ongoing emotions of sorrow or hopelessness. (CDC, 2021) Vegan people also face a unique set of stressors, often felt as a primary lifestyle, value or structural ethical position. Veganism is associated with social exclusion, marginalization, ridicule, and invalidation of identity. These stressors are implicated in relationship difficulty and subsequent emotional drain. (Piazza et al., 2015)

In this context, social capital serves as an important mediating variable that can mitigate the harmful consequences of minority stress. As social capital refers to resources located in the networks of trust, reciprocity, and mutual support, it has been found to have mental health protective factors, especially for those experiencing structural disadvantage. (McKenzie et al., 2002) Two aspects of the construct of social capital are relevant to this research: first, its role as a means of creating resilient identity-based communities for individuals marginalized, and, second, its potential for collective empowerment against dominant social discourses.

To address Research Question 2, this dissertation examines how social capital in the form of bonding (solidarity within a group), bridging (connections between groups) and linking (relationships between individual and formal or institutional components) might be related with psychological resilience and collective well-being within a heterogeneous community. This interdisciplinary intersection of queer sexual identity, ethical veganism, and cannabis use, offers a perspective that celebrates autonomy, versatility and togetherness rather than replicating the pathology at its core.

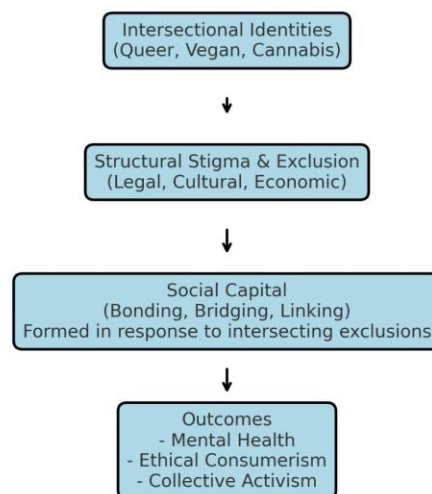
This framework combines Minority Stress Theory with social capital models in an effort to capture the dual nature of structural marginalization and the social action of cohesion and support. The intention is that by this way we might consider the intersecting subject not merely as the recipient of social exclusion, but as participants in re-constituting relations through socialities and resistances.

2.2.5 Intersectional Conceptual Model

The following Intersectional Conceptual Model merges the theoretical perspectives presented previously - Social Capital Theory, Intersectionality, Ethical Consumerism, and Minority Stress Theory into a single model. This model represents how queer vegans who use cannabis engage in experiences of multiple forms of marginalization (legal, cultural, economic) and how these experiences engender distinct forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) within their respective communities, which inform specific social outcomes such as mental health, collective activism, and ethical consumption behaviours.

Figure A-0 Intersectional Conceptual Model of Social Capital and Outcomes

Intersectional Model of Social Capital Formation in Queer Vegan Cannabis-Using Communities



This model illustrates the dynamics of the selected theoretical lenses, but also describes the empirical analysis that follows. It captures the ways identities are positioned in social contexts of exclusion and the alternative networks created as a process of coping and a space of resistance.

2.3 Empirical Landscape: Research on Intersecting Identities

This part of the literature review integrates theoretical explanations as discussed above with existing empirical studies on veganism, LGBTQI + identity and cannabis use. It also further discusses the ways in which these identities manifest in everyday life, focusing on implications

for understanding social capital accumulation, ethical consumer practices, experiences of marginality, and resilience and/or resistance. This more comprehensive use of empirical studies is essential for understanding how the existing literature provides insight into the complex dynamics at the heart of the dissertation.

2.3.1 Veganism and Ethical Consumerism in practice

Empirical research on veganism has moved beyond its dietary components and is becoming increasingly placed within ethical consumption and social justice activism. Additionally, veganism is more often seen as an expansive commitment to environmental and social justice, rather than a restrictive type of diet or a strict commitment to animal rights. (Beck & Ladwig, 2021) Veganism is more often viewed as ethical consumption where individuals work through their consuming choices in relation to ethical and political ideas. To Beck and Ladwig (2021) this consumerist activism is important to understand as not merely a lifestyle, but as intrinsically connected to broader environmental and social justice movements.

In addition, the latest research has also shown that social media is an influential factor for ethical consumption and purchase intention for ethical products, especially for cosmetics, in vegan markets. (Santos et al., 2023) This shows the importance of the relationship-building and retaining aspect of social capital, as well as the trust and credibility influences that have an impact on purchase intention. Santos et al. (2023) also established that the processes of trust and consumption were more political and cultural regarding how influencers inform customer perception of brand value, directly indicating how the social capital gained by influencers translates into customer behavior.

Other more recent studies indicate that motivators for vegan consumption are not limited to individual health or environmental issues, but are pervasive across a number of decision-making and ego-identity development domains. (Greenebaum, 2012) This finding also supports the emerging evidence suggesting that veganism is a political and identity performance style that might be favoured by some (vegan activists) who are engaged in other forms of social justice work (such as those who operate in LGBTQI+ spaces). (Greenebaum, 2012; Wrenn, 2017; Harper, 2010) By demonstrating how ethical consumption within the vegan community promotes social capital through shared values and collective action, these

studies collectively present a foundation for comprehending similar dynamics at the intersections of identity.

2.3.2 LGBTQI+ Identity and Social Capital in practice

The importance of social capital in the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals and communities is a recurrent theme in the research literature. To the degree that institutional support has been limited, non-existent, or adversarial, LGBTQI+ individuals have established self-organized networks, for safety, mutual support, and affirmation. (Weston, 1991; Weeks, 2007) These emerging grassroots structures allowed informal systems of economic exchange, reciprocal support, and secure spaces for socialization and leisure, providing care and affirmation that were not found within the traditional system. Putnam's (2000) idea of bonding social capital helps to explain how queer communities have, and continue to develop, forms of mutual support in counteraction to exclusionary systems.

In the digital age, online environments can act as significant pathways for the accumulation of queer social capital. Craig et al. (2021) found that LGBTQI+ youth often feel more safe and affirmed in online spaces (particularly when faced with social stigmas or feelings of isolation) compared to offline spaces. Online communities are primary spaces for friendships, access to mental health information and sense of belonging. These spaces provide not only bonding capital in terms of emotional scaffolding but also bridging capital by widening the accessibility of resources available to LGBTQI+ individuals.

Meanwhile, Fox and Ralston (2016) investigated the role of social media in identities of LGBTQI+ people, finding that social media such as Instagram and Tumblr could be sites of identity exploration and validation; they also importantly described social media as allowing for specific visibility for genders and sexualities not typically represented in hegemonic society that engages users publicly and affirms them through community engagement and user-generated content. Likewise, these findings are in line with Coleman's (1988) assertion that social capital shaped normative bases for development, and trust-based relationship connections of accurately shared information, experience, and trust.

In addition, entrepreneurial activities by LGBTQI+ individuals also demonstrate how social capital facilitates economically empowering, and resilience-building, community action. Research from Jennings and Brush (2013) has shown the strong reliance that queer

entrepreneurs have on professional LGBTQI+ networks, which have provided not only critical psychosocial support, but also clients, industry-specific insights, and critical material and financial assets. These networks counted as bonding social capital, which created trust and solidarity among members of the community, while also acting as linking social capital in connecting entrepreneurs to larger markets and organizational relationships. (Lin, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) These various forms of social capital enable LGBTQI+ business owners to be positioned better to engage with heteronormative economic systems, thus confronting exclusionary market structures and creating room for alternative economic activity that is based on identity and supported by their peers.

In summary, these diverse studies collectively demonstrate how LGBTQI+ communities are generative and mobilizing on many forms of social, bonding and bridging capital to combat systemic injustices of marginalization, reaffirm their collective identity and enhance their overall well-being, with regard to their LGBTQI+ social spaces and more broadly in the context of other social and economic systems in society.

2.3.3 Cannabis Use and social capital amidst marginalization

Cannabis use is still stigmatized in many societies, despite being a widely social activity engaging communal consumption, public events, and experiential sharing. While the social, moral, and legal stigma around cannabis use continues, using it constitutes a fundamentally social act. (Moore & MacLean, 2017) Due to this stigma, cannabis consumers are often pushed into unofficial, illegal, and covert networks to find products and resources, exposing them to even more social and legal hazards. (Béland & Giraud, 2019) These informal networks can also serve as a form of bonding social capital, providing access to support, trust, and a sense of belonging in the social alienation of cannabis consumption.

This dynamic is hypothesized to reflect the lived experience of many queer vegans when accessing cannabis networks. While they also find value for emotional and tangible support in cannabis networks, queer vegans often exist in a multitude of overlapping marginalizations. These structural inequities are exacerbated by often racialized cannabis law enforcement. For example, in the United States, Black individuals are 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than white individuals, yet cannabis use is similar across identity groups. (ACLU, 2020) This racialized social criminalization exacerbates marginalization, limiting social inclusion and restricting opportunities to build bridging social capital that would allow

marginalized users to access societal resources and participate in socially and economically inclusive paths.

Evidence suggests that consuming cannabis together in a safe, supportive environment creates bonding social capital, as users create trust, solidarity, and emotional support for each other. (Frost, Meyer, & Schwartz, 2020) A cannabis social network could also create bridging social capital, connecting marginalized users to health information and harm reduction sources that help reduce stigma, and possibly legal risk. (Hathaway, et al., 2011)

In addition, structural obstacles in the legal cannabis industry perpetuate racial and economic inequities. Racialized and other marginalized communities experience significant barriers to full participation and economic gain from legalized cannabis markets due to systemic discrimination, limited access to capital, and lack of resources and exclusion. (Martins et al., 2021) This means that developing linking social capital (connections between individuals and institutions, and formal systems providing social upward mobility and access to resources) is often limited. (Harris & Martin, 2021)

2.4 Research Gaps and Summary

The literature currently provides insights per these areas distinctly but does not investigate how these communities negotiate their triple intersectionality, namely vegan, LGBTQI+, and cannabis user communities, and how their identities relate to social capital and ethical consumerism. Although the currently published literature does provide some insightful analysis of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use as distinct phenomena and include some binary point intersections, there is considerably less knowledge of specific ways in which these triadic identities coexist and are negotiated. The lived experience of dealing with these overlapping social, sexual, and medical identities often presents different challenges and opportunities than viewing them as distinct entities. This literature deficiency at this concrete triadic intersection is the primary gap and purposeful originality of this dissertation.

2.5 Study's Contribution

In addition to addressing the recognized gaps in the existing literature, this dissertation further supports its contribution as an original contribution by attempting to systematically disentangle the subtle complexities at the nexus of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use by

exploring social capital, ethical consumption and mental well-being. The research built on a multidisciplinary approach with intersectionality, ethical consumerism, social capital theory, and minority stress as concepts informing a novel conceptual framework. This conceptual framework seeks to understand how individuals from the marginalized communities discussed here access and mobilize social capital, engage in ethical consumption, and cultivate resilience and well-being in the face of their unique barriers. The findings of this research will help contribute to both the research of, and the practice of, inclusive community development.

Data and methodology (Chapter 3)

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

In this chapter, I explain the evolution of the research questions produced in this thesis. I explain the mixed-methods converged and parallel design, data collection methods, the sample of participants, the analysis methods used for the main survey and secondary data, the ethical principles I adhered to in the research process, and the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research questions

This research aims to provide answers to following research questions:

1. How do individuals at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use experience and utilize different forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) within their social networks?
2. How does social capital within this community contribute to both individual resilience and well-being and collective action related to social justice issues (e.g., veganism, LGBTQI+ rights, cannabis legalization)?
3. What are the specific challenges (e.g., stigma, discrimination, social isolation) and opportunities (e.g., shared identity, activism, mutual support) related to social capital that are uniquely experienced by individuals at this intersection?
4. Through what practices, spaces, and strategies do individuals at this intersection develop and cultivate social capital, particularly in navigating their multiple identities?

3.3 Research Design

The study is guided by convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Within each type of method there are advantages, strengths, and limitations; however, combining two different types of data (qualitative and quantitative) has the potential to make the most of both, resulting in a more fine-grained, nuanced, and holistic understanding of the complex relationships between veganism, LGBTQI+ identities, and cannabis use.

A mixed-methods design is well-suited for the present study since the quantitative data can illuminate patterns and correlations among a sample, in conjunction with depth of qualitative information, can lead to comprehension of the lived experiences and personal meanings behind such patterns. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) The quantitative component of the study enabled a descriptive account of the situation concerning prevalence and associations of social capital, ethical consumerism, and indicators of mental health.

From a qualitative standpoint, there were narratives and context through the open-ended questions, illustrating the 'how' and 'why' of individuals' experiences. The use of secondary data analysis added additional contextual understanding, locating the study findings in the context of larger social trends, and established knowledge as well as providing a degree of validity and comprehensiveness through triangulation. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, and sample size (N=45) the quantitative analysis will be mostly limited to descriptive statistics, with inferential statistics used sparingly and very cautiously based on the data distributions and sample characteristics.

Given its exploratory nature and small, purposively sampled population, the study yields findings that shed light on under-researched identities but do not make generalizable claims. Indeed, the results provide the basis for further research in larger, more varied samples.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire was designed for quantitative data collection from vegan LGBTQI+ individuals regarding: social support and stigma, social capital, ethical consumerism, and mental health effects. The survey included close-ended questions with multiple response options and some open-ended questions for qualitative details and perspectives.

As an additional method, alongside the survey, secondary data analysis was conducted from secondary sources as a complementary approach for enhancing depth of knowledge related to major themes inherent in the study. The available secondary data provided a contextual background to enable comparison of the primary survey results with already known information on social capital in LGBTQI+ groups, ethical veganism and cannabis use.

3.4.1 Primary Data: Online Survey

For this research, the primary data was collected using a computerized self-administered questionnaire (CSAQ) that was designed for this purpose. This online format allowed respondents to use computers to complete questions without the interviewer's physical presence. This type of questionnaire offers several advantages, such as absence of an interviewer, which can reduce social desirability bias, as well as the benefit of reaching geographically dispersed populations. (Presser & Stinson, 1998)

The survey was not released onto social media until a final version was developed. For a pilot study, a small group of individuals meeting the eligibility criteria were recruited. Participants provided feedback on the clarity of the questions and sufficiency of the responses. At the conclusion of the pilot study, feedback was received from approximately 5 participants, and only minor modifications were made to the wording of questions and added response options. The pilot testing was significant for the trustworthiness and reliability of the survey tool, as it established the clarity of questions and appropriateness of content for the population of interest.

The questionnaire consisted of questions that focused on demographics, social capital, experiences of stigma or social support in relation to cannabis use, veganism and LGBTQI+ identity, ethical consumerism behaviors as well as mental health and well being metrics. Participants received full disclosure of the objectives, procedures, risks and benefits of the research. Electronic informed consent was obtained before starting the survey. Participation was fully voluntary; therefore participants could withdraw at any point without consequence. The informed consent process and decisions about data management were documented to ensure research integrity and adherence to ethical considerations.

3.4.2 Secondary data analysis

Complementing the primary survey data, secondary data were obtained and subsequently analyzed to provide broader context and allow comparison of wider trends with key findings. This secondary data originated from research and datasets available in the public domain regarding LGBTQI+ communities and social capital (i.e., national surveys on community engagement, reports on LGBTQI+ community organizations); veganism and ethical consumption (e.g., reports about consumer trends in ethical products, sociological studies examining moral psychology in relation to lifestyle choices); trends in cannabis use (e.g. reports from government regarding potential legalization and the impact of such policies, epidemiological studies into changing consumption practices). These sources provide important context for examining which themes of social capital, exclusion and consumer ethics are relevant to this wider population when compared against the lived experiences defined among individuals at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity and cannabis use.

3.5 Sampling Strategy and recruitment

The research employed a purposive sampling strategy, which, according to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) allows for the selection of subjects based on specific criteria and their ability to generate rich and useful data for the research. Participants were required to identify as vegan (the exclusion of exploitation and cruelty toward animals to the best of their ability), and as LGBTQI+ (feeling part of the community, including allies). The inclusion of heterosexual participants (17.8%, n=8) who explicitly advocate for LGBTQI+ causes was justifiable to explore the different dynamics of social capital and community participation, including the possible experience of stigma in an indirect manner through association or allyship.

3.5.1

Purposive

Sampling

The sample consisted of participants who met the following inclusion criteria: individuals identifying as vegan (i.e. seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose (The Vegan Society, n.d.), and as LGBTQI+ (anyone who feels like a member of the LGBTQI+ community,

including, but not limited to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning or simply people who actively support LGBTQI+ causes).

Although this dissertation primarily examines social capital, stigma, and experiences of marginalization for people identifying as LGBTQI+ and at the intersection of these identities, the inclusion of heterosexual participants (17.8%, n=8) who "actively support LGBTQI+ causes," should be methodologically justified. I included these heterosexual respondents because their active engagement and support of LGBTQI+ communities, specifically in queer and vegan and cannabis-using spaces, could give insight into distinct dynamics of social capital creation and community engagement, or even possible indirect experiences of stigma (for example, through association or allyship). Their experiences will not portray or demonstrate marginalization based on their sexual orientation, but their engagement in these distinctive intersectional communities provides opportunity to examine how solidarity, bridging capital, and collective action are produced across and with different roles, and how even allies navigate the norms and struggles of these non-normative spaces.

The qualitative analysis will explore how these heterosexual participants' experiences of social capital and engagement within this triadic intersection intersects with or diverges from LGBTQI+ people's experience, while remaining anchored to an interrogation of the valence of marginalization and identity production that is central to the research. Additionally, participants' experiences with cannabis use were explored to understand the nuances of this identity marker alongside their vegan and LGBTQI+ identities.

3.5.2 Recruitment Process

Recruiting participants was primarily done online, via social networks and groups that focus on the target groups of this research, as well as offline during events such as the Vegan Block Party in Fort Lauderdale, USA, and by distributing information in vegan queer-friendly restaurants. As an activist across these communities, and due to extensive first-hand knowledge and a wider range of connections from extensive travel, I was able to utilize both snowball sampling and circulation of the survey to maximize recruitment of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences.

Specifically, administrators of online vegan and LGBTQI+ communities, forums, and social media groups across different geographies and cultures were contacted on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for recruitment assistance. This approach enabled collection of relevant information directly from users most interested in or affected by the topic under investigation. The use of social networks offers the possibility of quick dissemination of questionnaires and the collection of diverse opinions and experiences. (Golder & Macy, 2014) Although my insider status and the use of online recruitment methods facilitated access to this niche population, potential biases (e.g., social desirability) were mitigated through the emphasis on anonymity and voluntary participation during the recruitment process. (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007)

3.5.3 Research Environment

The research was conducted within an online environment, with the questionnaires being administered through Google Forms, the platforms allowed participants to respond to the research at a time of their choice throughout the study duration, and from any social space with an internet connection. The online space for conducting the study increased accessibility to a geographically dispersed and potentially vulnerable community.

3.6 Ethical considerations and limitations

Ethics are an important consideration throughout any research project to protect the rights and well-being of participants, including in this study. (Bryman, 2016) The ethical standards of the study were maintained by adherence to informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality throughout the data collection process. (Creswell, 2014) The anonymity of participants was facilitated with confidentiality protocols by obscuring the identity of each informant. The data from the surveys were securely stored and used only for this research. (Patton, 2015) Additionally, the consent process and data management decisions were documented to ensure compliance with research integrity and ethical guidelines.

3.6.1 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

My engagement in the field as a researcher may introduce some bias that might affect the data collected. (Bryman 2016) However, exercising reflexivity in research may be very beneficial to "insider" researchers by enabling them to stand back and consider their involvement in the field and how their personal biases and beliefs might impact the research process. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) Cultivating such a level of self-awareness can ultimately lead to a research strategy that is both accurate and receptive to emerging insights.

3.6.2 Study Limitations

In reference to the research environment, it is necessary to acknowledge that the use of an online platform for participant recruitment means that the presented sample may not be fully representative of the target population. Individuals with limited access to remote technologies or who do not have the technical skills to access them may have been explicitly or implicitly excluded, a limitation inherent in online recruitment methods, particularly when working with vulnerable populations. (Scheerder et al., 2017)

Another limitation, as noted by Bethlehem (2010), is that participant self-selection is unlikely to yield a sample that truly represents the entire population. Those who opt into participating on their own might be having different and various characteristics or backgrounds that could affect study outcomes.

Maxwell (2013) noted that the results of this research may lack broad relevance due to the limitations of the sample and research methods utilized. Essentially, there are clear limitations given the rather modest sample size of N=45 participants. While these findings align in terms of the exploratory nature of this research and generate informative data on a niche, under-researched population and subject area, the small sample size certainly impacts the generalizability and the robustness of quantitative inferential claims. Nevertheless, future research could examine these findings in bigger and more diverse samples that could replicate and extend these findings, and the current study can serve as groundwork to subsequent research.

3.7 Data Analysis Plan

This section details the different analysis methods for both quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires and qualitative data derived from open-ended questions and secondary sources.

3.7.1 Quantitative data analysis

In terms of the quantitative data, the data analysis was completed using SPSS statistical software. The first part of the analysis involved data entry and cleaning. This included transferring survey responses into SPSS and, after data entry, examining the responses for errors and missing values. (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) Following the variable coding and transformation, analysis was performed. Different types of statistics were employed, including descriptive statistics (for demographic variables such as age, gender identity, cultural background, as well as key variables related to veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and social capital). (Field, 2013) For the calculation of means and standard deviations, Likert-scale items were treated as interval variables. Inferential statistics were used cautiously, and decisions were made based on the characteristics of the data's distribution and what appropriate procedures could be executed within the sample size (N=45). The inferential statistics explored possible relationships within the data, rather than aiming to describe a generalizable population pattern.

3.7.2 Qualitative data analysis

The data from the open-ended questions in the survey was thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phases. Thematic analysis is a transparent method of data analysis, as they identify six distinct steps that researchers would follow: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for overarching themes; (4) reviewing and refining these themes; (5) defining and naming the themes; and (6) producing the analytical report. This method helped to develop recurrent patterns, experiences, or meanings concerning how participants perceive social capital (bonding, bridging, linking), the specific challenges and opportunities inherent to their intersecting identities, and specific practices, spaces, and strategies employed by participants for community building and mutual support.

3.7.3 Secondary data analysis

Secondary data were analyzed via thematic content analysis. This process involved a systematic review and coding of applicable publicly accessible reports, academic literature, policy papers, and online data on social capital in LGBTQI+ communities, ethical consumption discourses, cannabis regulation, and stigma. When placing the primary content in context for comparison, the goal was to identify larger social patterns, ongoing discourses, and knowledge bases that inform or contextualize the micro level experiences observed in the primary data. Such a comparison demonstrated both the specific nature of the intersectional population considered and its relationship to other social processes.

3.7.4 Triangulation of data

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings from the study, triangulation of data was performed. This process systematically compares and contrasts findings that emerged from all three sources of data: quantitative survey data, qualitative open-ended question data, and secondary data analysis. Triangulation sought to identify points at which the data sources converge, differ, and complement across these data sets, thereby forming a deeper and more complex comprehension of the interwoven nature of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, cannabis consumption, social capital, ethical consumption practices, and mental health. The multi-faceted approach employed enhances the robustness and credibility of the findings.

Contents and results (Chapter 4)

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This part contains the empirical results of this mixed-methods study, which examined the intertwined questions of social capital, ethical consumption, cannabis use, and mental health among queer vegans. As described in the methodology in Chapter 3, the analysis used mixed-methods of quantitative data from closed-ended survey questions, qualitative data from open-ended survey questions, and background information from secondary data to investigate the experiences of the participants.

The chapter begins with a description of the demographic profile of the participants in the study, followed by a characterization of the quantitative findings, including descriptive

statistics and any hypothesis tests of the study's key variables. The quantitative findings are then followed by qualitative findings, which describe both the overall, unifying themes and all the rich detail provided by the lived experiences of the participants. This is succeeded by an analysis of relevant secondary data that contextualizes and provides triangulation for the primary survey findings. An explicit section will then integrate the qualitative and quantitative findings, presenting evidence of how lived experience would reveal statistical patterns and wider phenomena. The chapter then concludes with an outline of the main findings, which ground the subsequent discussion in Chapter 5.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

In this section, the quantitative results of the study, obtained from closed-ended questions in the survey, are presented. For the calculation of means and standard deviations, Likert-scale items were treated as interval variables. The quantitative section analysis begins with a demographic profile of study participants, followed by descriptive and inferential statistics on indicators of social capital, consumer behavior patterns related to ethical consumerism, cannabis usage and access, and mental health indicators.

4.2.1 Demographic Overview of Respondents

Overall, N=45 participants took part. The sample demonstrated diversity across identity and background, offering a nuanced perspective on the queer vegan population. Most respondents (51.1%, n =23) were aged 25–34, reflecting a predominance of young to middle-aged adults, consistent with research that younger generations are more likely to adopt intersectional identity as activists (e.g., radical veganism, queer politics). (Harper, 2010; Ko & Ko, 2017) The majority of respondents indicated their gender as female (62.2%, n = 28), which is in line with previous literature that argues women are more likely to adopt a vegan diet for ethical, but also health-related, reasons. (Rothgerber, 2013; Ruby, 2012) Most respondents identified as having diverse sexual orientations, with the most frequently occurring categories being bisexual (24.4%, n = 11) or pansexual (20.0%, n = 9). A notable 17.8% (n = 8) identified as heterosexual allies. The sample exhibited a clear predominance of White individuals (73.3%, n=33) , which substantiates critiques that vegan and LGBTQI+ spaces can be dominated by white, middle-class identities. (Harper, 2010; Ko & Ko, 2017) Most participants lived in urban settings (64.4%) , matching findings that queer and vegan communities cluster in urban

contexts with supportive networks and alternative food systems. (Zeller, 2021; Johnston et al., 2011)

Most respondents were located in Europe (64.4%) and participants had different levels of experience as vegans, the largest category of vegans indicated that they had been vegan for 4 - 6 years (26.7%, n=12) and a significant portion of participants has been vegan over 10 years (22.2%, n=10), indicating a long-term commitment to veganism. Overall, the demographics represented in the sample demonstrate the heterogeneous and complex nature of the queer vegan community being studied.

For detailed demographic distributions, see Appendix A, Figures A-1 through A-7.

4.2.2 Social Capital Indicators

This section provides quantitative findings related to bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Data analysis was undertaken using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version. 28). Hypothesis 1 stated that individuals at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use would have higher levels of bonding capital. The null hypothesis (H_0) indicated that there was no difference between bonding, bridging, and linking levels of social capital. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposed that bonding social capital would be higher than bridging and linking.

Descriptive statistics (Table 4.1) indicated substantial variability in social capital. Participants reported the highest mean for bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.147$), indicating they valued connections across social divides more than bonding connections. Linking social capital had a mean of 3.58 ($SD = 1.158$), while bonding social capital had the lowest mean ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$). This goes against the assumption that marginalized people are relying solely on close and homogenous support networks. The acknowledgment of bridging capital or bridging type connects with the idea that there was a decision to bridge to those networks that appeared to be looking to the "outside world," possibly motivated by networks that were more politically convened, or for those that were more distanced or online. A surprisingly low mean for bonding social capital ($M=3.29$) for externally stigmatized communities may reflect a re-calibrating of solidarity in a larger fluidity of collective identities, with members intentionally forming diverse alliances (bridging capital) and seeking formal/informal systems (linking capital) for collective action.

A Repeated Measures ANOVA showed a significant main effect for type of social capital, $F(2, 43) = 10.942$, $p < 0.001$. The effect (Partial $\eta^2 = 0.199$) has a moderate to large effect size. The null hypothesis was rejected. However, H_1 was only partially supported, as bridging social capital had a greater magnitude than bonding. This is counter to the hypothesis that individuals at this intersection would develop homogenous groups. This finding shows, instead, that they value socially diverse, outward facing social connections (often contextualized in referred to as activist spaces).

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Social Capital Types

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Bonding_social_capital	3.29	1.424	45
Bridging_social_capital	4.16	1.147	45
Linking_social_capital	3.58	1.158	45

Table 4.2: Repeated Measures ANOVA for Social Capital Types

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
SocialCapital	Sphericity Assumed	17.526	2	8.763	10.942	.000	.199	
	Greenhouse-Geisser	17.526	1.809	9.688	10.942	.000	.199	
	Huynh-Feldt	17.526	1.882	9.312	10.942	.000	.199	
	Lower-bound	17.526	1.000	17.526	10.942	.002	.199	
Error(SocialCapital)	Sphericity Assumed	70.474	88	.801				
	Greenhouse-Geisser	70.474	79.595	.885				
	Huynh-Feldt	70.474	82.809	.851				
	Lower-bound	70.474	44.000	1.602				

Participants indicated overall they were very comfortable ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.15$) when discussing their multiple identities with friends; this indicates strong emotional support and psychological safety in their relationships. Participants were also moderately agreeable to

connect outside of their inner circle, with more than half (55.56%) discussing their identities with people outside of their inner circle. Participants' moderate rating of access to resources via queer or vegan communities indicated limited resources in our current study ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.20$).

Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 4.8) demonstrated a number of significant positive correlations between measures of social capital. Measures of bonding capital were moderately to strongly correlated and, along with measures connecting as a purpose of going beyond one's immediate circle. This could suggest that shared values and having a comfort level within an in-group, then doing it more broadly to network. "Bridging Social Capital Events" also had a positive correlation with "Bridging Social Capital Connect" and "Linking Social Capital Resources", showing that participating in events contributes to making broader connections from an event, as well as access to a wider set of resources.

For detailed descriptive statistics on specific social capital measures, see Appendix A, Tables A-3 through A-7.

4.2.3 Ethical Consumerism Patterns

This section presents the patterns of ethical consumerism for the participants, including levels of importance of concerns presented, and the importance of LGBTQI+-friendly vegan brands. Animal rights was the highest rated concern ($M = 4.62$, $SD = .960$), consistent with the literature on motivations for being vegan, with environmental sustainability ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .960$) and fair labor ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.093$) rated next highest- consistent with trends in ethical consumerism. (Greenebaum, 2012; Bekoff, 2007) The importance given to small business ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.294$) and LGBTQI+ rights ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) was rated lower than environmental sustainability, but moderate categories in terms of importance. The lower importance of LGBTQI+ rights is an interesting sociological finding for this queer sample, stating that it was less of a 'consumer concern' or assumed within the vegan/queer community.

Table 4.9: Descriptive Statistics for Ethical Concerns

Variable	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical Concerns: Environmental Sustainability	45	1	5	3.82	0.960

Ethical Concerns: LGBTQI+ Rights	45	1	5	2.91	1.276
Ethical Concerns: Animal Rights	45	1	5	4.62	0.960
Ethical Concerns: Fair Labor	45	1	5	3.82	1.093
Ethical Concerns: Small Businesses	45	1	5	3.09	1.294

LGBTQI+ friendly vegan brands had the highest percentage of those rating it "Moderately Important" (35.6%, n = 16). There was a considerable (31.12%) of those rating that advertising as "Slightly Important," or "Not Important" (Table 4.19). This again highlights consumer diversity. The crosstabulation highlighted that bisexuals (36.4%) and lesbians (42.9%) frequently rated inclusion marketing as "Moderately Important" or higher, whilst heterosexuals demonstrated substantially lower interest (37.5% "Not Important"). A Chi-Square test (Table 4.11) showed no statistically significant association between sexual orientation and importance of LGBTQI+-friendly vegan brands ($\chi^2(40) = 43.848$, $p = 0.312$). This non-significant finding implies shared subcultural values may outweigh individual sexual orientation in predicting this preference.

Crosstabulation further asserted environmental sustainability issues by area type (Table 4.12). Urban (55.2% '4', 27.6% '5') and small-town (57.1% '4') participants rated environmental sustainability higher and more consistently which supports previous research in sociology that urban-living respondents tended to express environmental values. (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011) With animal rights concerns by area type there was a similar pattern (Table 4.13), with urban (89.7% '5') and small-town (85.7% '5') participants also registering high animal rights concern rates and rural and suburban participants displaying more variation.

For detailed data on ethical concerns and brand importance, see Appendix A, Tables A-9 through A-20.

4.2.4 Cannabis Use and Access

The most salient observation was the variation in prior cannabis use: the largest group never used cannabis (37.8%, n=17). Among the users, daily use was the most common (24.4%,

n=11). Cannabis use within queer populations is complex and is often incorporated into queer identity performance, as a coping mechanism, for stimulation, or for creativity. (Dyar et al., 2022; Scaccia et al., 2024) Queer cannabis use indicates that there is an intersection of normalization (both normative and non-normative), as well as subcultural separation, along with stigma since there are non-users and daily users. Daily cannabis users had a higher likelihood of reporting the greatest levels of nervousness ("Nearly every day"), with 54.5% indicating daily nervousness. However, Pearson correlation ($r(26) = .036$, $p = .854$) and an independent sample t-test ($t(26) = -0.185$, $p = 0.854$) found no significant relationship between cannabis use frequency and GAD-7 anxiety scores. This questions cannabis as a simplistic self-care strategy for anxiety.

Almost half of respondents (42.22%) said they do not use cannabis. Of the users, 35.55% selected ethical products and 15.56% were unsure. The main considerations for users consuming cannabis included "Quality" (42.22%) and "Price" (33.33%) of cannabis products but social network recommendations also played a part. A significant majority (62.22%) reside where cannabis is not legally accessible. Discussions about cannabis use with friends were varied, with "Sometimes" being the most frequent response. While most users (82.22% combined) had never felt excluded by cannabis use from vegan or LGBTQI+ communities, a small but significant minority (13.33% combined for rarely and frequently) reported exclusion.

A Chi-Square test showed no statistically significant relationship between cannabis legal accessibility and use frequency ($p = 0.611$). There was, however, a very statistically significant association between feeling excluded by cannabis use and use frequency ($p < 0.001$); this is intuitively expected since non-users logically do not report exclusion, and, while more frequent users would not be excluded everyday, there would be examples they could provide.

For detailed cannabis use and access data, see Appendix A, Figure A-9 and Tables A-21 through A-31.

4.2.5 Mental Health and Community Support

The GAD-7 scores suggested moderate anxiety levels ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 6.31$). Most prevalent symptoms were nervousness/anxiety ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.147$), worrying too much ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.116$), and being unable to stop worrying ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.177$). Daily cannabis users descriptively showed higher nervousness (54.5% highest level). However, inferential statistics

(Pearson correlation and independent samples t-test) found no relationship between cannabis use frequency and total GAD-7 scores, indicating cannabis use is not a good predictor of anxiety severity. This research supports the conceptual models of Meyer (2003), Hatzenbuehler (2014), Pachankis (2017), and Collins & Bilge (2016), in establishing that various marginalized overlapping identities can cause meaningful differentials in psychological distress. Community-led resources and collective identification are highlighted as more meaningful impetuses for mental health.

The connection between veganism and LGBTQI+ identity was massively dispersed, with the majority (60% of respondents) reporting "Rarely" or "Never" feeling a connection to the vegan identity. This finding suggests that the LGBTQI+ identity and the vegan identity may function as separate but valid components of a person's self-concept. Community connectedness for coping with stress/anxiety was also dispersed, with one-third of respondents reporting the community offered moderate help, while nearly a third (31.11%) reported "Not at all", suggesting their shared experience with community as a mental health resource, ebbed and flowed. The Pearson correlations indicated that the GAD-7 total anxiety scores generally exhibited a weak linear relationship with almost every measure of social capital and ethical concern. ANOVA tests showed no statistically significant differences in mean GAD-7 total scores across gender identity ($p = 0.840$), sexual orientation ($p = 0.432$), or cannabis use frequency ($p = 0.167$). This suggests these factors alone do not significantly predict anxiety levels in this sample. Lastly, a Chi-Square test showed no statistically significant association between veganism-LGBTQI+ connection and intersectional identity's role in activism ($p = 0.197$), though the table was sparse.

For detailed mental health data, see Appendix A, Tables A-32 through A-39.

4.2.6 Summary of Quantitative Trends

The quantitative results provide an overview of some of the dynamics of social capital, ethical consumerism, cannabis use, and mental health for people who identify at the intersection of vegan, LGBTQI+, and cannabis-using identities. Although the exploratory nature of this study and small sample size ($N = 45$) limit the generalizability of empirical conclusions, the information presented here provides valuable preliminary information and directly supports the research questions being considered.

4.2.6.1 Social Capital

With respect to social capital, one particularly striking finding was the unexpected hierarchy in preference in the forms of social capital. Though the initial assumption that participants in marginalized communities relied primarily upon close networks of homogenous support, participants in this study reported the highest mean for bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.147$), indicating that they perceived more value in connections that bridge social divides. Bonding social capital, which represents solidarity within a homogenous group, identified the lowest mean ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$). This challenges the expectation that communities that experience external stigma operate solely through in-group solidarity. It suggests more of a strategic re-calibration of collective identity, with individuals taking on different (and often more favourable) bridging and linking networks and boundaries. This has important implications for Research Question 1, which addresses how people at this intersection draw on different forms of social capital, suggesting in earlier explorations that participants took an active, outward-looking approach to network building that could be reflective of political involvement or pursuing more remote networks that are supportive. These dynamics will be further examined by the qualitative findings. Furthermore, a supporting finding was participants reported a high level of comfort ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.15$) when discussing their multiple identities with friends, which offers an important contrast to the lower overall mean for bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$). While deep, singular in-group bonds, as broadly measured by bonding capital, may not embody a structurally supportive enclave at a collective level, individual friendships appear to offer significant emotional support and psychological security.

4.2.6.2 Ethical Consumerism

With respect to ethical consumerism, the data supported anticipated priorities and also revealed fascinating nuances. Animal rights ($M = 4.62$, $SD = .960$) was, not surprisingly, the highest rated ethical concern for participants, and directly related to the underlying motivations for veganism. Environmental sustainability ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .960$) and fair labor ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.093$) came next, in a way suggesting similar patterns of concern in overall ethical consumption. Most notably, a particularly interesting sociological finding for the queer sample was explored, in that LGBTQI+ rights ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) was rated as the least important consumer concern, coupled with a moderately reported importance of LGBTQI+ friendly vegan brands (35.6% moderately important). This result is especially counterintuitive for a

population actively identifying as LGBTQI+, presenting a sociological puzzle: why would a community whose very identity is rooted in a fight for rights and recognition prioritize other ethical concerns in their consumption habits? As will be elaborated in the qualitative findings, this may infer that for many in this sample, LGBTQI+ inclusivity was already viewed as an underlying, inherently assumed value of the larger combined vegan/queer circle of existence, rather than as a distinct point of consumer decision-making. Alternatively, this may imply that consumers who identify as both vegan and queer may be more likely guided by their immediate ethical commitments to animal welfare and the environment or not as invested in overt "inclusion marketing." These patterns directly inform Research Question 2 of the study, illustrating how ethical consumption behaviours manifest as individuals engage their triply intersecting identity of queer, vegan, and ethical consumption.

4.2.6.3 Cannabis Use

The quantitative findings regarding cannabis utilization and access presented a photo of complexity and diversity. A considerable proportion of the sample (37.8%) reported never having used cannabis, while among users, the most frequently reported use was daily (24.4%). This describes a heterogeneous frame of engagement with cannabis within this population. While "Price" (33.33%) and "Quality" (42.22%) mattered most to users, users' social networks recommendations were also influential in their cannabis product choices. This indicates some of the informal and social pathways of information and trust-building that operate within these communities, even for behavior that might be viewed as stigmatized. Even though daily users of cannabis descriptively reported a greater degree of nervousness, no statistically significant relationship was found between use frequency and GAD-7 anxiety scores ($r(26) = .036$, $p = .854$). This key finding, further explored by qualitative data, reconsiders simple assumptions of cannabis as an easy and consistent self-care strategy for anxiety, and pushes understanding the role of cannabis moves towards a more sophisticated analysis and will be further explored with qualitative findings. A particular finding that responded to Research Question 3 was that while on the whole most users (82.22%) did not feel excluded by their cannabis use from vegan or LGBTQI+ communities, a small but notable minority (13.33%) did perceive some exclusion which emphasizes that belonging as a member of a community is not necessarily provided, and even that there are internal divides within communities regarding cannabis use. The strong formally statistically significant connection between feeling excluded by a use of cannabis and

use frequency supports this finding as well, in that even broadly accepting community markers of a specific identity can still contribute to a sense of marginalization.

4.2.6.4 Mental Health

Finally, mental health indicators from GAD-7 scores showed a moderate level of anxiety ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 6.31$) spread across the sample, the most common symptoms of anxiety being nervousness and excessive worrying. Similar to the cannabis use findings, the ANOVA tests indicated no statistically significant differences in GAD-7 scores within the factor levels of gender identity, sexual orientation, or frequency of cannabis use. Thus, these individual factors do not seem to be primary predictors of anxiety severity in this intersectional context and we need to think about more complicated, cumulative sources of stress, as anxiety models based on minority stress would expect. Lastly, an important quantitative finding for understanding identity coherence, and the role of social capital in individual well-being, was the extremely dispersed association of veganism with LGBTQI+ identity (i.e., 60% of respondents reported that they "Rarely" or "Never" felt a connection). This indicates that for many individuals in our sample group, these identities were functioning as separate, but equally valid, aspects of self-concept, rather than as an integrated bundle. This "compartmentalization" may affect the way individuals identify and relate to community support for mental health; again, indicating that the expectation for individuals in a multiply-identified group to experience seamless identity formation may not always hold true even in this community. These findings provide an important quantitative basis for thinking about individual well-being and resilience answering to Research Question 2.

4.2.6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the quantitative data offer an intriguing launchpad and indicated that, within the sample, bridging social capital tends to be more prominent than bonding, ethical consumerism is largely driven by animal rights and less so by LGBTQI+ rights as relates to consumer purchasing choice, cannabis use is variable and definitively not a single point predictor of anxiety, and overall anxiety is moderate but not defined solely by individual identity markers. The findings pertaining to the role of social networks regarding cannabis decision-making, the complex experience of exclusion, and the diversified relationship between vegan and LGBTQI+ identities illustrate more broadly the complexity that intersectional lived experiences reflect. These tendencies clearly illustrate the complexity of identity, community,

and well-being for this highly specific population and lays the groundwork for the richer contextualisation that will follow through the qualitative and triangulated data.

4.3 Qualitative Insights: Open-Ended Responses

4.3.1 Analytical Approach

Qualitative data derived from open-response questions in the survey were analyzed using thematic analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2022) Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within qualitative data. Thus, it enables a comprehensive, rich description of qualitative data while simultaneously providing a clear picture of the data's underlying patterns. Thematic analysis is well-suited for describing and understanding the complexities of the social phenomena that participants attempted to describe and explain in this study.

The Braun and Clarke method involves six phases, which were followed in order:

1. **Familiarizing oneself with the data:** Engaging with the open-ended qualitative data was the first phase of the data analysis process. My goal was to engage in the worlds and experiences of participants, and examine their experiences from their perspectives. I read and re-read the entire data set from the open-ended response question in the survey several times. I immersed myself in the data in order to develop initial concepts or themes based on the data.
2. **Generating initial codes:** After familiarizing myself with the qualitative data, I systematically coded the entire dataset. I accomplished this by identifying relevant features within the data and assigning them concise codes. I created codes deductively (for example, using concepts from theories captured in the theoretical framework, such as types of social capital, stigma, and resilience) and inductively, developing codes directly from participants' words and experiences.
3. **Searching for overarching themes:** Once I had completed the first cycle of coding, I organized codes into possible themes, noticing similarities between concepts and patterns of meaning in the data. Although I would not describe the process as entirely linear, I continually returned to mapping and re-mapping clusters of codes, refining them as I continued to work with the data. Here, I also began to consider ways in which some codes could indicate theoretical axes of relationships and/or interact with higher-order categories of social processes.

4. **Reviewing and refining these themes:** Once the initial themes were identified, I examined them against the entire dataset to confirm they accurately reflected the data, as well as to gauge their internal consistency and external distinction. Themes were refined by splitting, merging, or discarding those insufficiently supported by the data. At this stage, it was confirmed that the themes were distinct and coherent.
5. **Defining and naming the themes:** At this penultimate stage, I precisely defined each theme, making its core meaning and scope clear. I then assigned a descriptive label to them, crafted to represent their nature and core essence. This stage also required writing a comprehensive narrative about each theme, outlining what it represented and its relevance to the research inquiry.
6. **Producing the analytical report:** The final phase involved writing the qualitative report. Each defined theme was presented, justified with interesting and illustrative verbatim quotes from participants' open-ended responses. As themes were interpreted and explained, they were connected back to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. The final report captured new knowledge gained from the project while reinforcing pre-existing and developing knowledge in the field.

A structured approach to thematic analysis provided a transparent and defensible means for understanding participants' perceptions of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking); the gaps and opportunities shaped by their intersectional identities; and the tools, spaces, and tactics they used for creating community and sharing resources and support.

4.3.2 Theme 1: Negotiating Intersectional Belonging, Social Capital, and Ethical Consumption

Addressing Research Questions 1 and 3

The quantitative results indicate that bonding social capital ($M = 4.16$) and bridging social capital ($M = 3.29$) varied significantly, revealing a complex social process where the participants were more likely to build cross-community diversity than only close-knit belonging with singular communities. This theme accounts for participants' experiences of belonging, community, and ethical consumption at the intersections of their queer, vegan, and cannabis users' identities. Although there are theoretically possibilities for solidarity from similar marginalizations, the stories of the participants suggest a complex relationship between acceptance, fragmentation, conditional belonging, and ethical discourses that influenced both their social capital and ethical consumption.

4.3.2.1 The Pursuit of Belonging: Ideals Versus Realities

Several participants explicitly noted a fundamental desire for belonging that transcended their multiple identities. Some participants noted an unwavering acceptance throughout their communities, stating:

*"All communities are accepting for me,"
"Same for all, I love raving, EDM."*

These are apparent moments of integrative inclusion, where their identity intersections converged into a social context where they felt acceptance. Many participants, on the other hand, nuanced this ideal acceptance, describing inconsistencies within their belonging circles. Some participants indicated no distinction in acceptance, simply stating

"No,"

which implied an absence of meaningful variance. However, others described more particular preferences and exclusions. One participant explained,

"I feel more accepted in vegan spaces than LGBTQ+, because LGBTQ+ can be fragmented and can discriminate for other things like appearance or language,"

while another stated,

"I would say I felt more accepted in LGBTQ+ spaces because they are generally more open-minded than vegan spaces."

These ambivalent and divergent perspectives provide context for the higher levels of bridging capital reported; participants may have deliberately sought and cultivated diverse networks, beyond their homogeneous in-groups, in order to navigate partial or conditional belonging.

4.3.2.2 Navigating Internal Divides and Conditional Acceptance

The communities experienced internal schisms and conditional acceptance between community members. The vegan community emerged as a site of identity and ethics, but led members to focus on compliance and internal policing, ultimately leading to insecurity:

*"For some vegans you are not 'vegan enough' because you don't do zero waste, absolutely non-toxic everything etc."
"I often feel insecure in vegan community because it makes me feel like every 'misstep' is a fatal flaw and I am observed and judged."*

In contrast to the previous findings, LGBTQI+ and cannabis-using communities were often perceived as more permissive:

“LGBTQ+ and smokers are more accepting than vegan community, I'd say vegans are way more complex when it comes to specific topics...”

Yet LGBTQI+ spaces also presented barriers such as fragmentation, biphobia, misogyny, and gatekeeping. A bisexual participant shared feeling

“invalidated by people assuming I'm straight or not truly part of the community,”

while others stated relational status lessened queer visibility:

“In a heterosexual relationship, my LGBTQ+ identity is overlooked.”

The intersection of identities further complicated inclusion, with one participant recalling:

“I've met transphobic vegans, strong-opinioned meat eaters in LGBTQ+ spaces, and exclusion as nonbinary in LGBTQ+ spaces.”

There were varying responses regarding the cannabis community. Some felt supported, stating:

“Cannabis. Easier to be accepted in the group.”

Nevertheless, others perceived the organization as less accommodating of queer or vegan identities, indicating:

“I'd say the cannabis community is very widespread and diverse but not always welcoming of vegans or queer people.”

These internal divides limited bonding social capital, requiring participants to form bridging ties.

4.3.2.3 Intersectional Synergy and the Quest for Authenticity

Despite challenges, participants found intersectional synergy where overlapping identities fostered belonging

“Most accepted in the queer cannabis community.”
“By and for disabled queer folks, because they're the most intersectional.”

These reflections show a strong desire for integrative communities embracing multiple identities. Participants regularly connected queer and vegan identities to core beliefs like empathy, respect, and social justice:

“Being queer and being vegan has the same principle—to respect and be respected.”
“I think being a queer person helps to understand suffering of a minority and develops empathy helpful for becoming vegetarian or vegan.”

Political framing also emerged:

“Queer liberation is synonymous with the rights of those behind bars in relation to cannabis, and otherwise.”
“All these movements—vegan, queer, cannabis—promote acceptance, compassion, and ethical consumption at their core.”

This conscious integration supports bridging capital through broad, value-aligned social networks, evidenced by aspirations for diverse social justice events like:

“vegan festivals with queer rights elements, edibles, etc.”

4.3.2.4 Influence of Queer Identity on Ethical Consumption

Participant's understanding of what relationship exists between queer identity and ethical consumption was varied. Some participants understood no relationship:

“It doesn't.”
“No correlation.”
“Nothing to do with each other.”

To these individuals ethical consumption exists as an independently existing practice removed from queer identity.

Other participants understood a more complicated relationship, often empathetic, in which the lived experience of marginalization for queer people created an empathetic lens that extended into ethical consumption. For example, one participant stated:

“Being marginalized may inform my need to advocate for others, including animals.”

Another participant noted:

“Easier for me to have empathy towards animals.”

This awareness integrated into systemic critiques:

“Queer identity has taught me to recognize patterns of oppression, which translates to ethical consumption choices.”
“I understand that the status quo is set up to oppress and exploit the vulnerable, so I act consciously.”

At the most common junction point, participants articulated understanding of social liberation in which queer identity, ethical consumption and participation in activism were encompassed:

“All injustice is interconnected, and so is liberation. Queer identity means liberation for animals, being anti-capitalist, and supporting minority-owned businesses.”

Reference to the commonalities of empathy and resistance:

“Queer identity aligns with a fight against oppression, whether for humans or animals.”
“Both identities come from empathy and compassion.”

Queer identity also allowed for resistance to normative consumption practices:

“Queer identity has taught me to challenge societal norms, including those around consumption.”

Ethical consumption was seen as solidarity economics with queer communities:

“As a queer person, it’s important to me that my money supports businesses that align with my values and community.”

Some participants were unclear or neutral about the connections, demonstrating diversity of experiences:

“I don’t see any correlation.”
“I’m not sure if it has much influence.”

4.3.2.5 Barriers to Engagement and Disillusionment

Various obstacles limited social capital and ethical engagement. For some individuals, geographic isolation limited connection:

“I don’t take part in ‘communities’ because I come from a small town.”

Others expressed disengagement, or disappointment:

“I don’t really spend much time in those communities.”
“These communities welcome new people who don’t know much, but because they build it and have their own egos, it goes to hell so no.”

These quotes illustrate the fragile, contested nature of social capital and ethical engagement in multiple marginalized spaces. Internal ruptures, injurious norms, and experiential disappointment inhibit intimate social ties, and thwart community-building efforts.

4.3.2.6 Summary and Theoretical Integration

Theme 1 shows how participants actively negotiate belonging, social capital, and ethical consumption across their intersectional queer, vegan, and cannabis identities. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals higher bridging capital resulting from a low level of bonding capital within identity-based communities, which was complicated by conditional acceptance, internal policing, and fragmentation. The range of ethical consumption attitudes illustrates the spectrum between separate identities and a fully consolidated, intersectional worldview.

The pivotal findings are as follows:

- ❖ **Inconsistent Acceptance:** Participants experienced a core sense of belonging across multiple identities, though acceptance was often inconsistent.
- ❖ **Limited Bonding Social Capital:** Internal community fractures and conditional acceptance constrained their ability to build strong bonding social capital.
- ❖ **Aspirations for Intersectional Cohesion:** Participants sought intersectional coherence and connection within settings that embraced their multiple marginalized identities.
- ❖ **Diverse Ethical Linkage:** The perceived link between queer identity and ethical consumption varied, ranging from no connection to an all-encompassing liberatory ethos.
- ❖ **Barriers to Engagement:** Obstacles such as geographic distance and affective disillusionment constrained participants' social capital.

These dynamics support intersectionality theory (Collins & Bilge, 2016) and minority stress theories (Meyer, 2003) by asserting how systemic and interpersonal exclusion build asymmetric social networks. The results also demonstrate an ambiguous reading of marginalized identities, in which identities can both mobilize empathy-based ethical solidarity and sociality, or perpetuate fragmentation that reduces collectivity. This aspect explicitly addresses Research Question 1 by explaining how social capital is created and used at the intersections of identity, and Research Question 3 by elucidating the specific challenges and opportunities encountered in these communities.

4.3.3 Theme 2: Cannabis, Care, and Contestation

Addressing Research Questions 2 and 3

Cannabis emerged as both a means for self-care and a site of contestation, a therapeutic agent and an object of transgression. It was used for managing anxiety, trauma, and neurodivergence, and for creative/spiritual practices. Despite benefits, participants shared ambivalence, boundary-setting, and critique, showing that care, control, identity, and stigma are interrelated and negotiated individually. This theme relates to Research Question 2 by exploring cannabis use as part of individual resilience and well-being.

4.3.3.1 Cannabis as Medicine: Coping, Survival, and Regulation

Many participants highlighted cannabis as an embodied care practice:

*“It helps me survive”
“It’s a great thing for relaxation, sleeping, anxiety”*

Many reported cannabis addressing anxiety, insomnia, PTSD, and sensory overload. Others used it as a coping mechanism when traditional therapy or prescriptions were unavailable. This aligns with research presenting cannabis as a low-barrier mental health intervention for marginalized populations (Boyd & Kerr, 2016; Hathaway et al., 2011) in the context of minority stress. (Meyer, 2003)

4.3.3.2 Pleasure and Creativity: Emotional, Spiritual, and Cultural Dimensions

Cannabis was not just viewed as a clinical management option but also as a way to engage with emotion, imagination, and a sense of expanded consciousness. Responses like "*Creativity*" and "*Spirituality*" highlight its symbolic and affective potential. Participants also described their cannabis practice as assisting them in self-exploration and creative expression, paralleling literature that elaborates on substance use as an often interculturally negotiated, identity-producing, and practice-oriented behavior. (Duff, 2008) In that sense, cannabis was framed as a way of connecting, if not to others, then certainly to self.

4.3.3.3 Stigma, Skepticism, and Therapeutic Ambivalence

Although the forward-facing participants framed their experiences positively, some participants were quite skeptical, or concerned, about cannabis. Some limited their use to specific occasions:

“It’s only a treat”

and a few questioned whether cannabis should be categorized as a medicine at all:

“It is a drug, not medicine.”
“Hard to say—skeptical about self-medication vs. government narratives.”

These voices represent therapeutic ambivalence—as evident in much critical drug research (Fraser et al., 2014), which further highlights the influence of social stigma and/or internalized skepticism on both cannabis practices and identity. Others indicated that cannabis alone was not sufficient, advocating for professional mental health care:

“People using cannabis for self-medication should address root causes through therapy or psychiatry.”

4.3.3.4 Boundary-Setting, Abstention, and CBD vs THC

Some participants noted that they defaulted to setting limits on their use, including employing non-psychoactive types like CBD in place of THC, or abstaining altogether. One participant commented:

“I do not use it because it does not help me personally, but I support those who benefit from it.”

Others indicated family trauma, negative experiences, or physiological sensitivity:

“Avoid it due to negative family experiences and personal sensitivity.”

These responses towards cannabis illustrate not only individual health decisions but also ethical and emotional boundaries shaped by people's lived experiences. They complicate the dominant narrative framing cannabis as entirely beneficial or liberatory and show that respectful disengagement can be a kind of caretaking.

4.3.3.5 Summary and Theoretical Integration

Theme 2 illustrates that cannabis occupies a contested space in queer vegan lives: as medicine, ritual, identity, and risk. It supports Research Question 2 by showing how cannabis serves to mitigate or manage stress, trauma, and mental health as forms of personal resilience. It also responds to Research Question 3 by illustrating ambivalence, stigma, and exclusion related to cannabis use in overlapping queer and vegan networks.

The outcomes include:

- ❖ Cannabis as a treatment for mental health challenges, including stress and trauma.
- ❖ Beyond recreational use, cannabis is often conceptualized in terms of creativity, emotional exploration, and altered states of consciousness.
- ❖ Stigma, skepticism, and therapeutic ambivalence, encompassing concerns about social stigma, self-medication, self-esteem, and social belonging.
- ❖ Abstinence and boundary-setting, including the usage of CBD and THC, as morally and emotionally self-determined practices.
- ❖ Cannabis as a contentious topic that exposes underlying divisions in social groups and complicates narratives of inclusion and belonging.

These results contribute to support Minority Stress Theory by framing cannabis use as a coping mechanism to structural, chronic stressors and Intersectionality Theory (Collins & Bilge, 2016) by exposing how stigma attached to cannabis manifests across compounded identities. Also, the ethical contemplation around cannabis use (e.g., choosing organic, local, or rejecting capitalist products) extends existing theories of ethical consumption, showing that self-care and community-care are not always separate issues.

To mitigate the implications of exclusion and misalignment, participants often noted a conscious movement toward more open or intersectional spaces. One participant stated:

“I feel like I focus on opportunities where having these identities is conventional or even the ‘norm.’”

This highlights "selective affinity" - a search for spaces where one's identities did not need to be warranted or justified. Cannabis provided an access vehicle, especially for those articulating a queer identity. One participant stated:

“I feel most accepted in the queer cannabis community.”

Although these instances are infrequent and reassuring, they provide some indication of what full inclusion might look like - in locations where people feel not just tolerated, but authentically acknowledged. Yet, the absence of these spaces also embodies the limitations of current community configurations.

4.3.4 Theme 3: Intersectional Identity and Ethical Coherence

Addressing Research Questions 1 & 2

This theme delves into how participants with intersecting identities as queer, vegan, and cannabis users, shape and coordinate their ethical commitments, social relations, and political activity. Participants exhibited an emergent ethical coherence that connected their identities to the values of kindness, respect, and resistance. However, this coherence is not always the same; experiences ranged from a high level of intersectional alignment to compartmentalization, or even tension, indicating that identity can be understood simultaneously as both a site of alignment and conflict, implicating participants' activism and community involvement.

4.3.4.1 Ethical Coherence: A Shared Framework of Empathy and Respect

Many of the participants articulated their identities as interconnected by core ethical commitments, particularly empathy for oppressed beings and respect for difference. As one participant stated:

“Being queer and being vegan has the same principle—to respect and be respected.”

Another participant described how queerness develops sensitivity and empathy towards suffering, which extended to veganism:

“I think being a queer person helps to understand suffering of a minority and develops empathy that is helpful for becoming vegetarian or vegan.”

This ethical coherence also extends to cannabis use, conceived as part of a larger existential self-care and liberatory project:

“Cannabis helps me cope, and fighting for its legalization is part of fighting for justice for all oppressed groups.”

Many participants described a holistic worldview:

“All these identities are about kindness, justice, and challenging systems that harm others.”

These statements provide instances of an interconnected ethical orientation, aligning with the intersectional thrust of how identities and oppression interplay.

4.3.4.2 Emerging Intersectionality: Awareness and Fluid Identity Boundaries

Several participants offered their reflections on how they found or developed connections and understandings about their various aspects of identity over time:

“I never really thought about how my queer identity and veganism connect until someone pointed it out.”
“It’s like putting together pieces of a puzzle—queer, vegan, cannabis user—they all fit into a bigger picture of who I am.”

Others explained how cannabis use provided a new perspective for understanding both identity and activism:

“Using cannabis made me more open to radical ideas about justice, which connected to my queer and vegan beliefs.”

The reflections suggest identity was not viewed as fixed or inherently intersectional at the outset. Rather, at times, intersectional awareness appeared to be a consequence of people recognizing deeper values-based connections via experiences or pathways. This echoes literature that conceptualizes identities as fluid, contingent, and relational (Collins and Bilge, 2016), and empirical studies where substance use practice (e.g., cannabis use) is theorized as an identity-mediating (or shaping) activity. (e.g., Duff, 2008; Fraser et al., 2014) In this way, cannabis was not simply a coping mechanism; it was also a vehicle for political and ethical recognition and awareness—prompting deeper inter-relatedness between multiple marginalized identities.

4.3.4.3 Identity Compartmentalization and Neutral Perceptions

However, not all respondents reported experiencing intersectional alignment. For some, identities existed in parallel, without explicit relationship or conflict. These respondents described their various identities (i.e., queer, vegan, and cannabis-using) as disconnected pieces of their lives:

“I don’t really think of my veganism and queerness as related—they’re just parts of me.”
“Cannabis is just something I use occasionally; it’s not connected to my other identities.” *“I’m queer and vegan, but they don’t influence each other much in my daily life.”*

Some indicated they had not considered these relationships until prompted by this research:

“Honestly, I never gave it much thought before. I just live these parts separately.”

This expression of intersectionality highlights the range of experiences. In some situations, intersectionality is lived in a conscious, political way; in others, identities are compartmentalized, suggesting different degrees of identity salience and coherence depending on one's biography, social context, and awareness.

4.3.4.4 Challenges of Intersectionality: Misunderstanding, Exclusion, and Conflict

A few respondents articulated the emotional labor of embodying multiple marginalized identities:

“All makes my mom mad,”

encapsulating family disapproval related to their identities.

“It’s exhausting to explain being queer, vegan, and a cannabis user to people who don’t understand any of it.”

A few said they felt ostracized in community spaces:

“Sometimes I feel like I’m too queer for vegan spaces, too vegan for queer spaces, and too ‘out there’ for cannabis groups.”
“I don’t feel fully accepted anywhere because no one really gets the full picture of who I am.”

This reflects social fragmentation and the struggles of navigating inclusion from an intersectional standpoint for multiple community identities.

4.3.4.5 Activism as Identity: Political Engagement and Ethical Practice

Many participants indicated that activism was integral to their identities:

“Activism isn’t just what I do—it’s who I am. My queerness, veganism, and cannabis advocacy are all parts of that.”
“Fighting for cannabis justice, queer liberation, and animal rights feels like a single movement.”
“I support minority-owned businesses, queer collectives, and cannabis reform groups—it all ties together for me.”

A couple emphasized ethical consumption as a political act:

“Buying vegan products and supporting queer-owned brands are daily acts of resistance for me.”
“Cannabis activism is part of a larger struggle against oppressive systems that also harm animals and queer folks.”

Altogether, social capital is underscored as valuable:

“My queer partner introduced me to veganism, and through that I found cannabis activist groups. It’s all connected through relationships.”

These narratives show how intersectional identity lays groundwork for ongoing political engagement and collective empowerment.

4.3.4.6 Summary and Theoretical Integration

Theme 3 demonstrates complex ways queer, vegan, and cannabis identities shape ethical orientations, social connections, and political participation. It indicates:

- ❖ A shared ethical coherence across identities, rooted in empathy, respect, and liberation.
- ❖ Fluid and evolving intersectional awareness among some.
- ❖ Identity compartmentalization or neutral coexistence for others.
- ❖ Challenges related to misunderstanding, exclusion, and lack of inclusive spaces.
- ❖ Identity as a fundamental driver of activism and ethical consumerism.

These findings support intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016) for capturing complex lived experiences and social capital theory (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986) for relational networks' role in political engagement. By linking identity to well-being and collective action, this theme directly ties to Research Questions 1 and 2, describing how an intersectional identity shapes social capital and ethical resistance.

4.3.5 Theme 4: Community and Mental Health

Addressing Research Questions 2, 3, and 4

This theme investigates the community's role in the emotional and mental well-being of participants at the crossroads of queer identity, veganism, and cannabis use. Community belonging offered validation, solidarity, and emotional survival. Yet, this connection was complicated by mental demands of activism, value clashes, and social fatigue. Snapshot stories demonstrate social capital as a dualistic embodied experience, both protective and taxing, highlighting the necessity for self-aware, balanced participation. This theme connects with Research Question 2 (social capital's associations with well-being/resilience), Research Question 3 (belonging/exclusion), and Research Question 4 (emotional/psychological dimensions of ethical identity).

4.3.5.1 Belonging and Emotional Support through Shared Values

Participants noted the emotional sustenance of shared values, worldviews, and lived experiences, consistently a source of hope, validation, and resilience:

“Finding like-minded humans who care about the earth and each other helps me maintain hope and stamina.”

“It’s always nice to see like-minded people who support each other and fight for good causes and justice.”

These references are indicators of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000), where shared norms and common comprehension of experiences allow for emotional safety and resilience. Participants emphasized that this connectedness provided them with validation, acceptance, and, importantly, the ability to express themselves without fear of judgment:

“I feel supported and validated, even if not fully.”
“Less judgment, feeling accepted, and being on the same page with others.”
“I feel like I can be myself, more expressive, and more authentic.”

Participants frequently framed these spaces as sources of hope and existential grounding, contrasting them with the hostility or misunderstanding from broader society:

“I feel less lonely, less worried, and more hopeful for the future.”
“Community is healing. It helps me feel valued and part of something bigger than myself.”

These reflections illustrate communities' emotional infrastructure for members, especially those with multiple marginalizations, supporting Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory on buffering effects.

4.3.5.2 Shared Understanding as Psychological Refuge

Participants noted the emotional sustenance of shared values, worldviews, and lived experiences, consistently a source of hope, validation, and resilience:

“Finding like-minded humans who care about the earth and each other helps me maintain hope and stamina.”
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*“I feel less lonely, less worried, and more hopeful for the future.”
“Community is healing. It helps me feel valued and part of something bigger than myself.”*

4.3.5.3 Emotional Strain and the Cost of Awareness

Some reflected that engaging with the community was invigorating, while others reflected on the emotional cost of being immersed in social action or communal narratives that involved continuous exposure to injustice and systemic inequity.

*“It’s reassuring to belong, but the constant flow of negative news about discrimination and inequality takes a toll on mental health.”
“It’s nice to know you belong somewhere, but being well-informed about issues can sometimes worsen your mental health.”*

This tension includes the meaningfulness and emotional obligation that accompany actions stemming from ethical responsibility, something akin to what Sara Ahmed (2010) describes as the "affective cost of consciousness", where awareness becomes overwhelming. Activism, though integral, also felt exhaustive:

*“It worsens my mental health because it makes me work too much.”
“Constant news about discrimination and inequality in the world makes it worse.”*

These findings highlight social capital's contradictory nature: networks foster consciousness but can lead to emotional burnout. (Christensen & Cornwell, 2015)

4.3.5.4 Conflict and Value Misalignment Within Community Spaces

Some participants indicated that value dissonance in communities, particularly with respect to ethical commitment or political inconsistencies, could result in painful feelings or disillusionment. These tensions really get at the tenuousness of trust and belonging, since emotional safety often rests on ideological coherence. One can feel disappointed when the expectation of ethical alignment is alluded to but there are internal contradictions or exclusions within the space. One participant expressed this explicitly:

*“It’s frustrating to be surrounded by meat-eaters or people who don’t see others as equals.”
“Sometimes I feel like I’m the only one who actually lives these values.”*

4.3.5.5 Minimal Participation, Symbolic Community, and Mental Health

Not all participants, however, claimed engagement in community events or activism; they still derived emotional comfort from symbolic identification with these imagined communities. As respondents noted:

“I don’t participate that often, but it’s nice to know there are people with similar views.”
“Even just following queer vegan activists online makes me feel less isolated.”

These reflections exemplified the symbolic potential of imagined community. (Anderson, 1983) According to Anderson (1983), imagined communities are powerful because they generate affective ties regardless of physical distance or direct participation. For participants, this "low-intensity belonging" carried significant emotional weight by providing solidarity and assurance in times and spaces where in-person community was physically and emotionally inaccessible.

4.3.5.6 Inclusive Spaces and Mental Health Thriving

Respondents continually highlighted that inclusive, welcoming contexts, contexts that embraced the fullness of their intersectional identities, were necessary for supporting their well-being and development:

“It’s the inclusive, welcoming spaces that really allow me to thrive mentally.”
“When I don’t have to fragment myself, I feel more whole—and happier.”

These spaces were not simply 'safe,' but generative, fostering joy, creativity, and emotional resilience. They were also spaces where respondents could experience mental health not just as the absence of discontentment, but as a sense of belonging and flourishing.

4.3.5.7 Summary and Theoretical Integration

Theme 4 emphasizes how community engagement serves as both an emotional protector and a source of emotional stress for queer vegans consuming cannabis. Findings included:

- ❖ Sensations of belonging and shared values eliciting emotional support and optimism;
- ❖ Symbolic engagement offering meaningful mental health advantages even without active involvement;
- ❖ Active engagement in activism and heightened ethical awareness increasing anxiety, burnout, and emotional overwhelm;
- ❖ Value misalignment contributing to diminished well-being within community spaces; and
- ❖ Inclusive spaces serve as foundations for identity coherence and psychological well-being.

This evidence supports the validity of Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) in showing that supportive networks reduce emotional harms and promote well-being. Likewise, the findings

support Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986) in that it illustrates how community members utilized both bonding and bridging ties to navigate identity, care, and collective empowerment.

In terms of Research Questions 2, 3, and 4, participants' reflections across themes convey that mental health and well-being are located within a broader dynamic of social recognition, political alignment, and ethical engagement in community. Participants emphasized that mental health exists not just personally or clinically, but relationally and socially mediated; it depends on access to networks that are affirming, inclusive, and ethically coherent.

4.3.6 Reflections on Richness and Limitations of Open Responses

The qualitative evaluations for the open-ended survey responses yielded helpful data on the experiences of queer vegans who use cannabis. In the areas of study this research focused on (identity, ethics, social capital and mental health), there was a lot of value in using qualitative, open-ended survey responses, particularly since it was organically participant-led. Participants provided open-ended reflections about their own experiences, and were no longer confined by the assumptions of an interview guide. This also included a level of spontaneous expressiveness on an emotional level that allowed for a range of themes related to random and habitual reflections about community, coping, activism and emotional exhaustion. Open-ended survey responses allowed for authenticity in responses, as many participants gave candid and vulnerable accounts. The opportunity to reflect in the form of disclosure provided the data to de-stigmatize and compare the contour of stigma, resistance, and relational ethics in regard to how they shaped participants' lives.

The data also had some limitations. Although open-ended survey responses provided breadth, they often lacked the depth, elaboration, and detail that semi-structured interviews would have added. Some respondents were very brief or elliptical in their survey answers, and we couldn't follow up on interesting or ambiguous comments. Accordingly, a few potentially rich insights remained underdeveloped, or simply went unanswered regarding context, chronology, or motivation.

In addition, while some participants expanded more fully on the connections among their identities and ethical commitments, others provided minimal detail or only commented on one aspect of their experience (e.g., veganism, queerness but not cannabis). This variance in responses pertaining to how thoroughly participants expanded may reflect that open responses

were voluntary, as well as differences in personal relevance or readiness to reflect their experiences. This variance raises matters of access and fatigue relative to qualitative research, particularly when using a survey, as participants more able to express themselves in writing, or more invested in the topic, may have been more likely to provide broader responses.

Overall, the qualitatively collected data and the work of participants not only enhanced this study's understanding of intersectional identity and social capital, but also demonstrated the value of using a number of flexible, diverse methodological instruments for research with marginalized communities.

4.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section brings together the quantitative results with the qualitative material found in the survey's open-ended responses to achieve a fuller understanding of how queer, vegan, and cannabis-using identities intersect to shape experiences of belonging, social capital, ethical consumption, and mental health. By addressing points of convergence and divergence, this section highlights how lived experiences affirm or disrupt the patterns observed above, responding to the original research questions and reinforcing the application of the study's theoretical frameworks.

4.4.1 Convergences and Divergences in Social Capital Dynamics

The quantitative findings show a difference in types of social capital; for instance, bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$) was higher than bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$). This finding contradicts the original proposition that marginalized groups would demonstrate more bonding social capital, given their desire for solidarity or support from and within identity-based communities. The qualitative data provided insights into this difference, as participant responses revealed reasons why they sought to build bridging ties across their communities rather than forming dense ties within one group.

Qualitative results from Theme 1 ("Negotiating Intersectional Belonging") suggest that high bridging social capital is often an act of collaboration. This collaboration serves as a direct response to the conditionality of belonging within identity-based spaces. Participants chose to develop diverse bridge networks (as discussed in Theme 1.1) specifically to deal with fractured belonging or exclusion. This allowed them to connect with what Putnam (2000) characterizes

as bridging ties that face outward, providing access to emotional, material, or activist resources. This "deliberate choice to be in a neighbouring network where ties look out to the 'outside world'" (as noted in Section 4.2.2) demonstrates that bridging capital is pursued not only for opportunity-seeking but also as a means of resilience amid multiple marginalization.

In stark contrast, the same qualitative data also show why bonding capital might be shallow. Theme 1.2 described intra-community conflicts, such as internal surveillance in vegan communities, biphobia and gatekeeping in queer spaces, and cultural rifts in the cannabis world. These dynamics frequently left participants feeling "too much" for any one community and/or reconciling that they were alienated because their expectations had not been met, further contributing to their sense of "fractured belonging" (as echoed in Theme 1.2, for example) and the emotional impact of not having a "real home" (from the qualitative insights related to conditional belonging). As a result, these participants struggled to create strong, trusting ties and had their bonding capital constrained within any singular identity-based community.

Importantly, the qualitative data destabilize the assumption that high bridging capital is an unadulterated positive. Instead, for many participants, bridging was not an expansive option, but rather a draining necessity. Participants speak to the "emotional labor of moving across and navigating contested space" (Theme 5.3 highlights aspects of emotional labor) and "identity fatigue" (a concept supported by qualitative data on continuous negotiation), suggesting that the work they were doing to draw attention to themselves and connect with each other across disparate, sometimes malicious spaces, felt heavy and burdensome. These facets aligned with theoretical approaches that speak to the "burden of intersectionality" (Puar, 2007; Ahmed, 2006), which allowed explicit engagement with Research Question 1 by demonstrating how a more complex strategy for social capital could be maintained through lived experiences of marginalization. They also more directly addressed Research Question 3, which explored the conditional nature of belonging in terms of social forms of capital, as well as their limitations on internal cohesion.

4.4.2 Intersectional Identity, Ethical Coherence, and Social Dynamics

Theme 3, ("Intersectional Identity and Ethical Coherence,") provides a significant explanation of how participants' intersecting identities informed their ethical commitments, social connections, and relationships with social capital. Many participants offered a coherent ethical stance shaped by empathy, respect for difference, and a commitment to liberation (Theme 3.1).

The role of these values was to provide a type of connectedness across diverse aspects of participants' identities which formed the basis for intersectional activism and ethical consumption (Theme 3.5) at times. For example, some participants imagined "vegan festivals with queer rights elements, edibles, etc." (see theme 1.2), where they were drawn to ways of making collective spaces that would weave together their multiple and complicated ethical and political identities.

Nonetheless, Theme 3 yielded considerable heterogeneity. Some participants discussed "emergent intersectionality" (Theme 3.2), occurring over time or through exposure to new communities. Others exhibited "identity compartmentalization" (Theme 3.3), where their queer, vegan, and marijuana-using identities existed in parallel without substantial connection or alignment. These differences are important to understanding how social capital building can be restricted: once identities are compartmentalized, opportunities for relationship building based on intersectional values are limited.

By contrast, for participants who viewed activism as part of their identity (Theme 3.5), ethical responsibilities were bound up with social networks. This group leveraged intersectional belonging as a starting point for collective action and support. Conversely, "the intersectionality issues" (Theme 3.4), such as misrecognition, marginalization, and exclusion from communities, often challenged or even precluded internal bonding, necessitating a reliance on the bridging social capital discussed in Section 4.4.1.

This section has addressed Research Question 1 by explaining how various identity configurations (integrated, compartmentalized, emergent) shape the development of social capital and its use. It also clarified Research Question 3, which sought to explain how identity structure impacts experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

4.4.3 Cannabis, Care, and Well-being: A Dualistic Social Role

Quantitatively, no statistically significant relationship emerged between cannabis use frequency and GAD-7 anxiety scores (Section 4.2.4). While daily users descriptively reported feeling panicky more often than other frequency groups, these differences did not reach statistical significance. The qualitative data from Theme 2 ("Cannabis, Care, and Contestation") and Theme 4 ("Community and Mental Health") add crucial depth, explaining the dualistic role of cannabis and community in participants' emotional well-being.

Beyond its roles in coping and pleasure, Theme 2 uncovered a noteworthy "therapeutic ambivalence" (Theme 2.3) in participants' experiences with cannabis, shaped by stigma, internalized doubt, and concerns about dependence. This qualitative insight is crucial for understanding why the quantitative analysis, despite describing a "moderate and positive" association between cannabis and anxiety, didn't reveal routine anxiolytic benefits. It illustrates that for this population, cannabis use is part of a broader ecology of contested meanings, not a universally or consistently beneficial tool.

In addition to understanding duality, Theme 4 identifies community as another salient yet ambivalent dimension of well-being. Participants located communities as emotionally affirming spaces (Theme 4.1, 4.2), in accordance with Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory, which shows how qualified communities can serve as an emotionally affirming space and protective buffer. However, they also spoke of the "emotional labor and cost of awareness" (Theme 4.3), integral to political engagement and constant awareness of systemic injustice. This emotional labor, or what Ahmed (2010) calls the "affective cost of consciousness," is not uncommon in the context of cannabis ambivalence, and demonstrates how different sources of potential benefit (community, activism, cannabis) are often experienced as double-edged.

Theme 4.4 also observed value misalignment and internal community contradictions as sources of distress, while Theme 4.5 addressed how any level of community engagement (e.g., social media activism) can positively impact psychological resilience. Clearly, the absence of a straightforward, statistically significant quantitative association between cannabis and mental health reflects greater tensions across a myriad of social stressors and coping mechanisms. These tensions are directly related to Research Question 2 (resilience and well-being) and Research Question 4 (emotional and psychological dimensions of ethical identity).

4.4.4 Overall Theoretical and Practical Implications

Integrating quantitative and qualitative results, this study achieved a multidimensional understanding of queer, vegan, and cannabis-using participants' experiences. While quantitative findings revealed structural dynamics, such as the divergence in social capital and the lack of clear associations between cannabis and mental health, qualitative storytelling provided the essential connections, contours, and emotional texture to interpret these.

The findings support and elaborate on all three theoretical models:

- ❖ **Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003):** The qualitative data highlighted the complexity of minority stress, including experiences with misrecognition, relational challenges in communities, and conditional belongingness. While the community can protect people from stress, it can do so only at the expense of burnout and affective exhaustion as an individual balances the desires and responsibilities of activism and/or various conflicting values.
- ❖ **Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016):** Empirical evidence indicated that the layering of identities can exacerbate vulnerability rather than diminish it. By examining how identities emerged, fractured, and resisted, we identified intersectionality as both a source of agency and a site of strain. This aligns directly with "the burden of intersectionality". (Puar, 2007; Ahmed, 2006)
- ❖ **Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986):** Greater bridging capital quantitatively is not seen as an indicator of abundant opportunities, but instead key to strategic acceptance of fragmented belongingness. Additionally, the data showed how symbolic and imagined forms of capital (e.g., digital and ideational community) can supplant active participation, and still provide an important source of emotional fortitude and perseverance.

The ties to practice implications are just as important:

- ❖ **Building Community:** For it is arduous to navigate so much of one's identity in a fragmentary way; we need many intersectional and inclusive spaces for navigating identity, spaces where we not only can feel safe, but can also experience joy, empowerment, and belonging.
- ❖ **Mental Health Support:** It is important that supports are culturally informed and trauma-informed, recognizing the complexities and stressors associated with being a queer vegan ally who may consume cannabis. Interventions should not only engage in addressing the experience of distress, but can also address the political dimensions of what is deemed to be ethical, social and interactive complexity of care mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- ❖ **Activism & Advocacy:** It is important to consider the emotional labor of intersectional commitment for activist movements. It is important to implement explicit strategies to limit burnout on the part of persons/facilitators with multiple marginalized identities.

Overall, this mixed-methods study provides a multifaceted awareness of the complex interconnections that shape identity, ethics, social capital, and mental health. By centering the experiences of queer vegans who use cannabis, the study contributes to sociological knowledge-building on the intersectional experiences of marginalized communities; and emphasizes the need for methodological plurality in intersectional studies.

4.5 Secondary Data Analysis

This section provides the secondary data analysis to contextualize and expand on primary findings. Secondary data comprised research articles, policy reports, and demographic data. The secondary data were compared to survey data to contextualize the participants' experiences within a broader structural and cultural context. The secondary analysis adds an extra layer of validity to the research and illustrates how queer, vegan, and cannabis consumer identities contribute to conceptualizations of social capital, resilience and marginalization.

4.5.0 Methodological Overview

A structured, thematic synthesis design (Thomas & Harden, 2008) was applied. Data sources were selected based on purposive sampling according to the study's domains: queer/LGBTQI+ identity and social capital; veganism and ethical consumption; cannabis use and stigma; and minority mental health. Data sources include peer-reviewed research, institutional datasets (e.g., Eurombarometer, EMCDDA, CDC), advocacy and policy reports published between 2010–2024. (e.g., ACLU, ILGA-Europe, The Vegan Society) Theoretical texts (e.g., Crenshaw, Meyer) were maintained, as those texts are used as the primary theoretical grounding for the project overall. The data was coded inductively and deductively through three stages: descriptive extraction, thematic extraction, and triangulated comparison with the primary data. The three stages helped to put together narratives at a micro level with social, legal, and policy trends at a macro level.

4.5.1 Contextual Findings

4.5.1.1 Queer Identity and Social Capital

Population-level data has demonstrated increased identification beyond binary gender categories, especially among youth. (Craig et al., 2021) Digital spaces and networks of mutual aid create bridging forms of social capital. Echoing survey responses that indicated online queer

spaces to be vital for a sense of belonging and affirmation of identity, digital spaces can lessen social isolation and provide horizontal forms of social connection. (Fox & Ralston, 2016; Weston, 1991)

Despite progress, there are still inequalities; trans and non-binary people do still experience disproportionate and systemic exclusion even in LGBTQI+ spaces. (Hughto et al., 2015) The extent of legal progress is inconsistent and inequitable across contexts; Thailand legalized same-sex marriage in 2024 (Human Rights Watch, 2024), while countries like Poland have increased negative, anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric in 2023. (ILGA-Europe, 2023) These examples illustrate the ways linking social capital and minority stress are affected by legal and institutional context. (Meyer, 2003; Hatzenbuehler, 2014)

4.5.1.2 Veganism and Ethical Consumption

The vegan movement is also increasingly understood as a political and ethical position rather than simply a diet. (Beck & Ladwig, 2021; Greenebaum, 2012) It has a strong relationship with environmentalism, anti-capitalism, and justice-related ethics. (Bergh, 2017) This means that collective identity often relies upon lifestyle behaviours. (Cherry, 2006)

Recent findings from two significant surveys, Eurobarometer 2996 (2023) and Eurobarometer 3226 (2024), indicate a rising public concern in Europe regarding animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and the These survey findings illustrate significant support for enhanced animal welfare legislation, and an increasing concern among the public about climate change associated with food production. It is established that the food industry is growing in the availability and consumer acceptance of plant-based products, partly because of concerns about health, animal welfare, and sustainability. Reports by ProVeg International (2023) and Green Queen (2023) indicate a growing propensity by consumers towards plant-based alternatives, reporting a 5.5% increase in the retail sales of plant-based meat and dairy products year-on-year across Europe overall. The market forecasts are predicting that the European plant-based food sector will comprise between USD 9 and 10 billion by 2030. Evidence from studies on ethical certifications indicate their impact on consumer purchase decisions, demonstrating how labels help establish trust and also identify common values important to ethical consumers.

However, there are also economic and cultural barriers to veganism. The “attitude - behaviour gap” (Carrington et al., 2010) recognizes that structural inequalities keep many from being able

to fully realize their ethical commitments. This is consistent with surveys which have illustrated disillusionment and exclusion in vegan spaces.

4.5.1.3 Cannabis Use, Stigma, and Legality

Cannabis use is in a dichotomous position between increased legalization and the continued stigmatization and racialized policing of cannabis use. (Béland & Giraud, 2019; Moore & MacLean, 2017) In some recent years, the legal environment surrounding cannabis use has shifted fairly dramatically in some countries. Germany has partially legalized cannabis use for limited possession and personal cultivation as of 2024. (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2024) Thailand legalized cannabis for both medicinal and economic purposes in 2022 but then, mid-2025 reversed course and criminalized use and supply of cannabis for recreational uses citing unregulated consumption and public health as the reasons. (Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, 2022; The Guardian, 2025) The Czech Republic is scheduled to legalize cannabis in 2026 for personal possession and cultivation in limited quantities (Ministerstvo spravedlnosti České republiky, 2025; International Cannabis Business Conference, 2025), while cannabis social clubs in Barcelona have emerged following a period of de-facto legalization, but are considered a legal grey area; the laws and regulations set forth by the municipality are not consistently enforced, creating a legal grey area. (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2024; International Cannabis Policy Conference, 2023)

These legal changes have specific implications for LGBTQI+ communities, which frequently utilize cannabis for both alternative community practice and as a tool for coping with psychological distress. Studies demonstrate that sexual and gender minorities (SGM) use cannabis more frequently and in greater amounts compared to heterosexual counterparts, likely due to increased levels of psychological distress, discrimination, and minority stress. For example, among queer youth, microaggressions and social rejection are linked to affective distress and consequent use of cannabis to cope with psychological distress. (Dyar et al., 2022; Feinstein et al., 2017) Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory can help explain these developments as it outlines how distal (e.g., stigma, legal repression) and proximal (e.g., internalized homophobia) minority stressors create bad mental health and substance use among queer identity populations.

According to Hatzenbuehler (2014), the structural stigma contained in the legal system had effects on mental health and also on pathways to accessing supportive resources. Conversely,

some studies note that cannabis use among queer populations may offer a means of identity work and relational bonding, even in situations of social disapproval, and legality being less than clear. (Scaccia et al., 2024)

4.5.1.4 Mental Health in Minority Populations

Mental health disparities are ubiquitously recorded within LGBTQI+ populations across the globe, documenting higher levels of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance use, compared to cisgender and heterosexual populations. This is no fault of the LGBTQI+ individuals; the explanation for this disparity is explained through ongoing and repeated exposure to stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion. (Hatzenbuehler, 2009) Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) articulates how external stressors (e.g., homophobia, transphobia, legal inequity) and internalized stressors (e.g., concealment, conflicts about one's identity) work together to create psychological distress, with structural stigma (found in institutions, regulation and policies, public assumptions and behaviours) also directly predicting poor mental health outcomes for queer populations. At an interpersonal level, emotional labour accompanying identity management, such as code-switching or self-monitoring, is an important but under-considered feature of LGBTQI+ mental health. (Pachankis et al., 2017; Frost et al., 2019)

Quantitative data from national surveys like the BRFSS in the USA (2010–2023), provide strong support to these findings, providing large-scale evidence of mental health inequities among sexual and gender minorities. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023) The data consistently indicates that LGBTQI+ respondents experience worse mental health, characterized by more poor mental health days and unmet needs for psychological care, and they also report more chronic stress indicators. Cannabis use interacts with these processes as well and in complex manners. Some research characterizes cannabis as a self-medicating approach of managing symptoms of anxiety and trauma. (Bonar et al., 2020) However, other literature warns that stigma against cannabis use may further marginalize LGBTQI+, especially when coupled with racial or class-based oppression. (Ketcherside et al., 2023; Scaccia et al., 2024) It is also noteworthy that queer individuals could be seen to be using cannabis not just for symptom management, but as a method of affect regulation within a network of affirming peers-revealing complex relationships with mental health, substance use and social capital.

This knowledge calls for a more intersectional mental health framework which recognizes the harms of structural oppression and the adaptive and agentic strategies marginalized people create to build resilience. As a number of authors argued, research in the mental health domain should focus on the lived experiences of individuals that are multiply marginalized, accounting for how intersecting identities, including race, class, gender identity and sexual orientation, create specific vulnerabilities and strengths. (Crenshaw, 1991; Bowleg, 2012) Consequently, understanding the mental health of LGBTQI+ people includes an understanding of not only the psychiatric outcomes, but also the socio-political conditions within which health is produced, resisted and navigated.

4.5.2 Triangulated Insights: Alignment with Primary Findings

This subsection offers direct comparisons between the outcomes of the secondary data analysis conducted (in Section 4.5.1) and the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of this research. In the process of triangulation, comparison opportunities arise that display points of convergence, divergence, and contextualization, thereby validating and deepening the overall understanding of this study.

4.5.2.1 RQ1: Identity and Social Capital

The first research question explored how participants at the intersections of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use experience and access types of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) in their social networks. The quantitative evidence presented in Section 4.2.2 showed a surprising finding: participants reported a greater mean score for bridging social capital ($M=4.16$, $SD=1.147$) compared to bonding social capital ($M=3.29$, $SD=1.424$). This finding contradicted the author's initial presumption that members of marginalized communities tend to draw support mainly from sharing experiences in their bonded, homogeneous networks.

The qualitative data from Theme 1: "Negotiating Intersectional Belonging, Social Capital, and Ethical Consumption" (Section 4.3.2) provides salient context for this quantitative observation and indicates why participants may have weighted bridging ties in their responses. Participants regularly described experiences of "conditional acceptance" or "internal divides" within identity-based communities (e.g., notions that vegans can be "*too complex when it comes to these specific issues*" or that LGBTQI+ communities are fragmented and biphobic). This fragmentation has implications for the potential development of strong bonding social capital

within specific identity groups, but it can be inferred that the increased bridging social capital should not be understood simply as opportunity-seeking, but rather as a strategy for developing resilience in negotiating these complex social realities. As one participant described, "*I feel more accepted in vegan spaces than LGBTQ+, because LGBTQ+ can be fragmented and can discriminate for other things like appearance or language.*" The search for acceptance in a number of networks indicates a conscious decision to invest in outward-facing connections, despite the emotional labor.

This cycle of social capital fits within the secondary data analysis presented on Queer Identity and Social Capital (Section 4.5.1.1). As noted earlier (Craig et al., 2021) broad population-level data shows a shift to multiple identities beyond binary gender identities, especially among youth. The analysis also suggests a growing array of identities, and that many of these identities may (naturally) lead to an increased number of networks and networking strategies. Additionally, other studies presented describe that trans and non-binary people, for example, are still subjected to disproportionate and systemic exclusion, even in some of the spaces considered LGBTQI+. (Hughto et al., 2015) Digital spaces are on the rise, and mutual aid networks, as mentioned by Fox & Ralston (2016) and Weston (1991). Quantitatively, transgender people had higher bridging capital than other community members, and these online spaces are considered great pathways to create queer social capital; they often provide ways to connect and support and an alternative way of connecting and less isolation, especially when offline spaces are fragmented or unsupportive. This triangulation of evidence shows that while LGBTQI+ communities were generators of social capital, the variant shapes of this capital are shaped by both the ongoing necessity of working through internal divisions and the stigma that comes from broader society, reflecting the complicated relation of social capital shown in the primary data. Qualitative accounts of finding the "intersectional synergy," such as "*being queer and being vegan has the same principle - to respect and be respected*", can also be examples of the operationalization of new or improved bridging ties that launch aspects of identity outside of one category.

4.5.2.2 RQ2: Collective Action and Ethical Practice

Research Question 2 examined the influence of social capital in this community on individual expressions of resilience and well-being and collective action related to social justice issues (e.g., veganism, LGBTQI+ rights, cannabis legalization). In quantitative terms, the research showed animal rights was the ethical concern rated highest ($M = 4.62$, $SD = .960$), followed

by environmental sustainability ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .960$) and fair labor practices ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.093$). This relates to a conception of veganism as a broad commitment that extends beyond a diet to also include environmental and social justice. The interesting quantitative finding about LGBTQI+ rights being the lowest-rated consumer issue ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) in this queer sample supports speculation that the low importance for this consumer issue may be an assumption of inclusivity rather than a consumer preference or priority.

The qualitative findings outlined in Theme 3: "Intersectional Identity and Ethical Coherence" (Section 4.3.4) presented rich explanations about how ethical commitments lead to collective action and practice. Many participants discussed that they were sharing an ethical coherence based on a commitment to empathy, respect, and liberation; they explained how their work drew connections across their identities. Participants were very evident that their ethical coherence presented numerous opportunities to engage with activism, and they described this framework as *"Fighting for cannabis justice, queer liberation, and animal rights feels like a single movement"*. Ethical consumption was often treated as a political act, and participants described the politically intentional ways they supported *"I support minority-owned businesses, queer collectives, and cannabis reform groups—it all ties together for me."* In addition to selecting vegan options as a form of "everyday resistance". This suggests that collective action informs daily ethical decisions that stand in solidarity and are made from common values and mutual assumptions of who our others are and how we are similar. Conversely, Theme 3 also revealed "identity compartmentalization" in which some respondents did not think about their multiple identities as necessarily related, which could limit the potential of their collective action if they did not have a perceived unified and intersectional ethical sensibility.

The secondary data analysis offered a macro context to the findings. Section 4.5.1.2

Veganism and Ethical Consumption in practice suggests that increasingly, the vegan movement is being framed as a political and ethical position that intersects with environmentalism and anti-capitalism. (Beck & Ladwig, 2021; Greenebaum, 2012; Bergh, 2017) In addition, the surveys such as Eurobarometer 2996 (2023) and Eurobarometer 3226 (2024), illustrate that animal welfare and environmental sustainability are becoming increasingly relevant to members of the public throughout Europe, corroborating some of the high quantitative ratings for these concerns in the primary data. This broader societal change lays the groundwork for the ethical consumerism observed in the study. The discussion on

Cannabis Use and Social Capital Amidst Marginalization (Section 4.5.1.3) similarly indicated that cannabis use does bring with it some stigma, use is also a form of alternative community practice, and is a vehicle for identity work and relational bonding, even in a space of social disapproval. (Béland & Giraud, 2019; Moore & MacLean, 2017; Scaccia, 2024) This also resonates with qualitative stories where cannabis was being a vehicle for political and ethical recognition and a facilitator for a "holistic worldview" (RQ2). Ultimately, both cases are connected in that identity may be compartmentalized, but the systems of value underneath can combine into potent forms of collective action through a variety of social capital avenues that challenge oppression and share a common goal.

4.5.2.3 RQ3: Challenges and Barriers

The qualitative data cited in Theme 1: "Negotiating Intersectional Belonging" (Section 4.3.2) and Theme 2: "Cannabis, Care, and Contestation" (Section 4.3.3) provides deeper insight into these challenges as participants described their experience of "internal schisms and conditional acceptance" in the vegan community ("*not 'vegan enough'*") and LGBTQI+ communities ("*fragmentation, biphobia, misogyny, and gatekeeping*"). Participants appeared to experience "fractured belonging" and the emotional labor of navigating various and often contrary expectations of their identities. In relation to cannabis users, the qualitative data illuminated "stigma, skepticism, and therapeutic ambivalence" even within these more accepting communities, with some participants questioning cannabis as a medicine ("*It is a drug, not medicine.*") or attempting to impose boundaries on its use ("*It's only a treat*"). This illustrates that the relationship observed between cannabis and anxiety did not appear to be straightforward quantitatively, as cannabis consumption occupies a contested space and, at times, can serve as a coping mechanism, yet can also contribute to perpetuating stigma and ambivalence. Geographic distance and "disillusionment" were two of the other prominent barriers to engagement and social capital development.

These micro-level incidents of challenge are profoundly contextualized by the secondary data. Looking specifically at the Mental Health in Minority Populations (Section 4.5.1.4), it confirms global mental health disparities among LGBTQI+ populations, and ties higher rates of anxiety and depression to "the ongoing and repeated exposure to stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion". (Meyer, 2003; CDC, 2023; Pachankis et al., 2017) Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory, the theoretical backbone of this study, is strongly reiterated here, as it demonstrates the cumulative effects of distal (external) and proximal (internal) stressors. The secondary data

on Cannabis Use, Stigma, and Legality (Section 4.5.1.3) also indicates that cannabis users, particularly those from racialized groups, continue to experience the social stigma and legal criminalization of their substance use despite legalization in some areas. (Béland & Giraud, 2019; ACLU, 2020) This level of macro-stigma makes the issues found in the primary data harder to navigate, often presenting barriers to social capital connectivity and continuing feelings of alienation. The triangulation shows that even though these communities offer an opportunity for shared identity and space for mutual support, they also serve as a location where participants engage with compounded marginalization and contradictions in their social roles, which complicates and often makes the process of cultivating social capital draining.

4.5.2.4 RQ4: Strategies for Cultivation

Research Question 4 was aimed at exploring what practices, spaces, and strategies individuals at this intersection of identity create and pursue through which social capital is developed and cultivated, especially regarding how to effectively navigate their intersecting identities. The prominence of bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$) over bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$) identified a marked difference in social capital development strategies beyond sealed-off groupings. To bolster this, the significant and positive correlations between "Bridging Social Capital Events" and "Bridging Social Capital Connect" and "Linking Social Capital Resources" suggested that participating in events led to wider connections as well as more access to social capital resources, indicating that being active in a social space is also a strategy.

The qualitative data provided an abundance of thick descriptions of these strategies. Theme 4: "Community and Mental Health" (Section 4.3.5) specifically indicated community belonging as a potential source of "emotional nourishment", validation, and resilience. The participants were seeking and creating "inclusive, welcoming spaces" that embraced the "fullness of their intersectional identities", which they articulated was required to prosper mentally. This strategy exhibited "selective affinity" or a purposeful search for those spaces where identity could happen free of judgment. Cannabis itself was a constituted strategy of self-care, coping, and even self-discovery, with participants discussing its purpose for "*relaxation, sleeping, anxiety*" and for "*Creativity*" and "*Spirituality*". Even the minimal, symbolic engagement, such as "just following queer vegan activists online", was said to be effective strategies for comfort and a sense of "low-intensity belonging", as well as illustrating the important role imagined communities can play in solidarity. Furthermore, the qualitative data on "Activism as Identity" (Theme 3.5) illustrated the manner in which political activism and ethical consumption were

basic strategies for building social capital. The agential character of personal identity traits are signified through the connection of personal values with collective action because the participants are involved in the same struggles.

The secondary data analysis supports and adds to the findings and understanding of these strategies. The Queer Identity and Social Capital (Section 4.5.1.1) makes specific mention of how "Digital spaces and networks of mutual aid are bridging forms of social capital", which is consistent with participants' emphasis of feeling comfortable in online spaces and maintaining connections and securing resources that way. (Fox & Ralston, 2016; Weston, 1991) The emerging trend of "ethical certifications" influencing consumers' choices in the Veganism and Ethical Consumption (Section 4.5.1.2) section gives a macro-level context for participants' strategy of ethical consumerism as "identity and political stance". (Micheletti & Stolle, 2012) Further, research that examined cannabis use among SGM populations as a coping mechanism for minority stress and "identity work and relational bonding" connects with the qualitative understanding of cannabis use as a care practice, and a way to connect with self and others. (Dyar et al., 2022; Feinstein et al., 2017; Scaccia et al., 2024) The triangulation of data demonstrates that participants at this intersection are intentionally and strategically engaging in a variety of strategies (from searching out specific inclusive spaces and being involved in online communities, to personal strategies such as cannabis use for self-care or engaging in activism as a part of identity) that contribute to social capital and resilience against the impact of compounded marginalization.

Discussion (Chapter 5)

5.1 Introduction

This dissertation offered an exploratory investigation into the unique social context of veganism and LGBTQI+ identity and cannabis use, and how participants navigate marginalizing identities and build and maintain social capital in relation to social and ethical consumption and the impact on mental health. This study involved a panoramic examination of the lived experiences of participants within an under-researched population, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. This chapter will provide an overview of the findings from the integrated quantitative, qualitative, and secondary data analyses in Chapter 4. It will critically engage with the research questions, and consider broader theoretical

implications, as well as practical relevance to community building and social justice activism. Limitations and strengths will be discussed with final recommendations for future research.

5.2 Synthesis of Key Findings and Engagement with Research Questions

The mixed-methods approach provided a multi-layered perspective on the complex interconnections that affect aspects of identities, social capitals, ethical action, and well-being. This section interprets these trends in response to the three research questions posed by the study. This section delves into the sociological significance of the integrated findings, re-evaluating and interpreting the patterns observed in relation to each of the four guiding research questions.

5.2.1 Re-evaluating Social Capital at the Intersections (RQ1)

Research Question 1 explored how individuals at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use experience and utilize different forms of social capital. The quantitative findings indicated that participants reported a greater mean score for bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.147$) compared to bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$), which ran counter to the assumption that marginalized identities primarily draw from in-group solidarity in social capital.

As presented in the qualitative insights from Theme 1: "Negotiating Intersectional Belonging, Social Capital, and Ethical Consumption" (Section 4.3.2), study participants consistently described instances of "conditional acceptance" and the existence of "internal divisions" within identity-based communities. For example, one participant stated: *"I feel more accepted in vegan spaces than LGBTQ+, because LGBTQI+ can be fragmented and can discriminate for other things, like appearance or language."* This narrative profoundly illustrates how participants made a strategic decision to cultivate bridging ties as a direct response to a perceived lack of stable bonding opportunities within their immediate identity groups.

Section 4.5.1.1 on Queer Identity and Social Capital provides crucial additional context. The growing diversity of gender and sexual identity, particularly among youth, as well as the increasing presence of digital spaces and mutual aid networks, directly supports the observed preference for bridging capital. The findings suggest these results significantly refine Putnam's

(2000) theorization of social capital, highlighting how bridging occurs not merely as an elective option for civic engagement but becomes a strategic necessity for belonging and securing vital resources in fractured contexts of in-group relations.

5.2.2 Ethical Action and Collective Identity (RQ2)

Research Question 2 explored the role of social capital in supporting an individual's ability to show resilience and how it can mobilize collective action. Quantitatively, ethical concerns were evaluated, and animal rights ranked overall highest ($M = 4.62$, $SD = .960$), which confirmed the interpretation of veganism as a political and ethical position. By comparison, LGBTQI+ rights were lower ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) as a consumer concern, which presents a sociological conundrum for a queer sample.

Theme 3: "Intersectional Identity and Ethical Coherence" (Section 4.3.4) richly explains this dynamic. Many participants articulated a notion of ethical coherence grounded in their anti-oppression work, viewing their activism as part of "a single movement," which encompassed rights for queer (LGBTQI+), animal, and cannabis. Ethical consumption was largely framed as political action, supporting minority-owned businesses and viewing vegan purchases as "everyday resistance" to large corporations. However, for a few participants, their identities were "compartmentalized" to their detriment, hindering cross-identity collective action.

Secondary data on Veganism and Ethical Consumption (Section 4.5.1.2) and Cannabis Use and Social Capital Amidst Marginalization (Section 4.5.1.3) further confirm broader shifts toward ethical consumerism and the use of stigmatized practices like cannabis as sites for identity work. (Adams & Gruen, 2014) These data highlight how collective action stems from shared values, even when explicit identity-based consumption is seemingly deprioritized, suggesting a deeper, underlying commitment to justice that informs their broader activism.

5.2.3 Navigating Compound Marginalization (RQ3)

Research Question 3 explored the specific social capital challenges and potential areas of social capital. Quantitatively, moderate levels of anxiety were reported ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 6.31$), and there was no statistically significant correlation between frequency of cannabis use and anxiety ($r(26) = .036$, $p = .854$). A crucial finding was that a small but notable minority (13.33%) of cannabis users did report exclusion from vegan or LGBTQI+ spaces.

The qualitative insights from Theme 1: "Negotiating Intersectional Belonging" (Section 4.3.2) and Theme 2: "Cannabis, Care, and Contestation" (Section 4.3.3) provide important context here. Participants described a "fractured sense of belonging" alongside emotional complexities when sharing their lived experience of identity-based exclusion. Cannabis use was revealed to be both a coping mechanism and a site of "therapeutic ambivalence", where some framed cannabis use as therapeutic while others described it as stigmatized, questioning its medicinal value ("*It is a drug, not medicine*") or setting boundaries ("*It's only a treat*"). This complexity explains why the quantitative relationship between cannabis and anxiety was not straightforward. Situational factors such as geographic distance and "disillusionment" were also cited as barriers to building community.

The data collected from Mental Health in Minority Populations (Section 4.5.1.4) directly corroborates Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory, demonstrating how distal and proximal stressors lead to compounded psychological distress. The pervasive stigma surrounding cannabis use, and the additional stigma for racialized users of cannabis as detailed in Section 4.5.1.3, inhibit linking capital and serve to reinforce alienation. (Page & Singer, 2010) This convergence establishes that intersectional marginalization compounds barriers to mental well-being and cohesion, necessitating a multi-faceted understanding of stressors.

5.2.4 Cultivating Resilience and Community (RQ4)

Research Question 4 aimed to provide greater understanding of how participants are building social capital and managing their intersecting identities. Quantitatively, the study indicated the relative importance of bridging social capital ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.147$) over bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$), identifying an active and outward-looking approach to community building. Further bolstering this, significant positive correlations between "Bridging Social Capital Events," "Bridging Social Capital Connect," and "Linking Social Capital Resources" suggested that active participation in events led to wider connections and increased access to social capital resources, indicating that engaged presence in social spaces is a key strategy for this population.

In Theme 4: "Community and Mental Health" (Section 4.3.5), participants described explicit strategies for cultivating social capital and resilience. These included actively seeking "inclusive, welcoming spaces" that embraced the "fullness of their intersectional identities", often demonstrating "selective affinity" or a purposeful search for judgment-free

environments. Participants also utilized cannabis as a multi-faceted form of self-care, creativity, and spirituality, discussing its purpose for "relaxation, sleeping, anxiety" and for fostering "*Creativity*" and "*Spirituality*". Even symbolic forms of participation, such as "*just following queer vegan activists online*", provided significant emotional comfort and a "low-intensity belonging", underscoring the vital role imagined communities can play in solidarity. Furthermore, Activism as Identity (Theme 3.5, Section 4.3.4.5) was identified as a key strategy, as participants linked their personal values to collective engagement, viewing their activism as integral to their self-concept.

The secondary data analysis robustly confirms and expands on these strategies. Queer Identity and Social Capital (Section 4.5.1.1) highlights the potential of "Digital spaces and networks of mutual aid" for building bridging social capital, aligning with participants' comfort in online spaces and reliance on them for connection. (Fox & Ralston, 2016; Weston, 1991) The broader movement of Veganism as Ethical Consumption (Section 4.5.1.2), understood as a political and ethical stance, contextualizes participants' "everyday resistance" through ethical purchasing. (Green Queen, 2023; ProVeg International, 2023) Lastly, the understanding of cannabis use among SGM populations as "identity work and relational bonding" and a coping mechanism for minority stress, as discussed in Cannabis Use, Stigma, and Legality (Section 4.5.1.3), echoes the primary data on cannabis's role in emotional sustainment. (Feinstein & Newcomb, 2017)

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Empirical findings from this mixed-methods research study, triangulating quantitative patterns with rich qualitative narratives and contextual secondary data, offers meaningful contributions to current sociological theory. This study upholds existing conceptualizations while actively refining and expanding their application to multiply marginalized people, bouncing between cross-cutting and nuanced social fields.

5.3.1 Refining Social Capital Theory

The implications of this study sharply refine the dominant understandings of social capital and social networks, particularly those of Putnam (2000) , Bourdieu (1986) , and Coleman (1988). The quantitative data indicating that bridging social capital had a higher mean value ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.147$) than bonding social capital ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.424$) not only contradicts the notion

that marginalized communities largely depend on strong, homogenous in-group ties, but also significantly nuances Putnam's (2000) primary understanding of bonding capital for in-group solidarity. For the queer, vegan, cannabis-using population, bonding social capital appears to be less about mere civic engagement or access to wide-ranging opportunities. Rather, the qualitative data revealed how bridging capital was mobilized as a strategic and necessary adaptation to "conditional acceptance" and "internal divides" among the different communities that the participants identified with. Participants consciously expressed seeking "intersectional synergy" and investing in "outward-facing connections," even when it meant expending a degree of "emotional labor", which illustrates a rational choice to navigate their beliefs on behalf of a fragmented sense of belonging by developing broader connections. This fits with Coleman's (1988, 1990) rational choice assumptions about actors who cooperate to pursue their personal interests, even in vulnerable situations, and reiterates that for this population, where social capital is relied upon for support, the network of connection often extends beyond tightly bonded relations.

Moreover, the study implicitly engages with Bourdieu's (1986) notion of social capital, which he conceptualizes as a resource often mobilized through social relations with pre-set conditions that can either facilitate or prevent its repurposing, invariably working to reproduce social inequality. While Bourdieu focused on the use of social capital by privileged actors, this study underscores how multiply marginalized groups strategically use social capital (rather than being merely subjected to it) either in the form of bridging ties or through online/offline mutual aid networks, as a counter-hegemonic means to access resources and facilitate collective action despite substantial constraints imposed by structural oppression and expanding disadvantage. The "low-intensity belonging" developed through "imagined communities" also moves beyond Putnam's (2000) account of tangible civic engagement, suggesting that solidarity and psychological safety can exist through less tangible forms of community connected via digital relationships. Ultimately, the study re-centers social capital as a dynamic and adaptive resource that exists in the context of both structural limitations and the strategic agency of marginalized people.

5.3.2 Advancing Intersectionality Theory

This research significantly contributes to Intersectionality Theory, as theorized by Crenshaw (1989) and Collins and Bilge (2016), by illustrating how intersectionality is lived in ways that exceed merely additive models of oppression. Although these theories represent how "the

multiple social identities... come together to create distinct and accumulating forms of oppression and marginalization", this study demonstrates that intersectional experience also represents an active site of internal struggle, negotiation, and varying degrees of coherence. The substantial quantitative finding that most respondents (60%) identified as "*Rarely*" or "*Never*" connecting veganism with their LGBTQI+ identity is a strong indication of "identity compartmentalization". This indicates that lived intersectionality may not always emerge from a seamless articulation of identities but can represent distinct, parallel self-conceptions, and therefore impact the possibility of social action based upon shared values of intersectionality.

Qualitative narratives provide rich examples of "the burden of intersectionality", where individuals feel "emotional labor" and "identity fatigue" as they navigate "misrecognition, marginalization, and exclusion" across and within their communities. Experiences such as feeling "too queer for vegan spaces, too vegan for queer spaces, and too 'out there' for cannabis groups" demonstrate the multiplicative rather than additive nature of stigma, a central tenet of intersectionality. (Puar, 2007; Ahmed, 2006) Yet, the study also documents how this very struggle can concurrently foster an "emergent ethical coherence" and a "holistic worldview", as identities become connected through principles of empathy and liberation. This simultaneous duality, in which intersectionality is both a source of strain and a significant motivator of "intersectional synergy" and "Activism as Identity", contributes meaningfully to the theoretical understanding of how positioned identities along multiple lines are simultaneously generative, not only of vulnerability, but also profound forms of agency and resistance.

5.3.3 Nuancing Minority Stress Theory

Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory, which argues that heightened contact with undesired distal (external) and proximal (internal) stressors creates mental health inequalities among marginalized populations, receives critical nuance from this study's findings. While the quantitative data showed a moderate level of anxiety in the sample ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 6.31$), the results did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between cannabis use frequency and GAD-7 anxiety scores ($r(26) = .036$, $p = .854$). This finding is critically illuminated by the qualitative concept of "therapeutic ambivalence" related to cannabis use. Participants' sense of distrust (e.g., "It is a drug, not medicine") and purposefully developed boundary identification (e.g., "It's only a treat") reflected a nuanced perception of cannabis, rather than a straightforward identification as a consistent anxiolytic. Indeed, this indicates that

coping responses are themselves embedded in the "contentiousness of contested meanings" and social stigma, where the potential for further stress or ambivalence can oppose a direct stress-buffering role.

Moreover, Theme 4: "Community and Mental Health" (Section 4.3.5) provides another distinct but integrated layer to Minority Stress Theory by complicating the very practice of community. While the qualitative data indicated that "inclusive, welcoming spaces" provided important "emotional nourishment" and psychological refuge, it also suggested the "emotional strain and the cost of awareness" associated with constant exposure to injustice and the demands of activism. As Ahmed (2010) indicated regarding the "affective cost of consciousness", this study expands Minority Stress Theory by showing that even protective factors, such as community engagement and self-care mechanisms, embody a duality for multiple marginalized individuals, serving to be both protective and emotionally straining and burdensome. This requires a deeper theoretical understanding of resilience that embraces the complex interplay of social support and cumulative stressors, highlighting the heightened sense of emotional responsibility as minoritized individuals navigate forms of social exclusion and other categorizations.

5.3.4 Expanding Ethical Consumerism Theory

This research significantly expands ethical consumerism theories by investigating its manifestation within a unique intersectional population. Traditional models typically rely on the direct translation of ethical values into purchasing behaviors. However, it is particularly interesting to note that, despite many participants identifying as queer, the quantitative finding from this sample indicated LGBTQI+ rights were the least important consumer issue ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$). This presents an intriguing sociological puzzle that adds complexity to the notion of direct value-to-purchase translation.

Insights from the qualitative data obtained from Theme 3: "Intersectional Identity and Ethical Coherence" (Section 4.3.4) indicate that, for many, *"LGBTQI+ inclusivity was already perceived as an underlying, inherently assumed value of the larger combined vegan/queer circle of existence, rather than a separate part of consumer decision-making."* Such cultural understandings of ethical coherence embody a deeper foundation of shared values ultimately based on a mutual agreement towards broader forms of liberation and justice, rather than explicit marketing or particular identity labels associated with consumption. For many in this

group, ethical consumerism could also be described as a comprehensive political act: purchasing vegan products is "everyday resistance", and supporting "minority-owned businesses" is an associated aspect of a broader fight against oppressive systems.

Also noteworthy is the qualitative insight about "identity compartmentalization," in which for some participants, identities exist side by side, but without any direct connection, which indicates that ethical consumption is not always an integrated, intersectional practice for everyone, even if it is a powerful mechanism for some. Thus, it is plausible that the "attitude-behavior gap" (Carrington et al., 2010) in ethical consumption may also take into account the degree to which a consumer has internally consistent intersecting identities and external structural barriers. The incorporation of cannabis consumption as a potential ethical issue (e.g., opting for organic, local products, or ethical sourcing more generally) also pushes ethical consumerism theory forward, demonstrating how personal "self-care" choices can exist with broader ethical and political implications and are focused on the characteristics that distinguish the public and private nature of consumer behavior. Overall, this research suggests that ethical consumerism is less about brands that are positioned transparently with an identity in intersectional communities and more an earnest commitment, despite sometimes conflicting beliefs and histories of commitment, to broader notions of justice and liberation.

5.4 Practical and Policy Implications

The nuanced findings from this study about the lived experience of queer, vegan, attracted to cannabis-users, have significant applied and policy implications for fostering inclusive communities, improving mental health, and facilitating advocacy for social justice.

5.4.1 For Community Organizations and Advocacy Groups

Community groups and advocacy organizations working within or across LGBTQI+, vegan, and cannabis communities should proactively foster explicitly intersectional and genuinely inclusive spaces. The qualitative findings revealed how participants, while sometimes finding acceptance, frequently encountered "conditional acceptance" and "internal divides" within specific identity-based communities. This included feelings of "not 'vegan enough'" or experiences of "*fragmentation, biphobia, misogyny, and gatekeeping*" in LGBTQI+ spaces. Therefore, going beyond mere tolerance, organizations should develop approaches to create spaces that enable participants to experience the "fullness of their intersectional identities", where they can find "intersectional synergy" and "thrive mentally" without needing to

compartmentalize. This involves designing programs, venues, and events that explicitly affirm all these identities, for instance, by designing a "*vegan festivals with queer rights elements, edibles, etc.*"

In addition to recognizing the "emotional labor" and "affective cost of consciousness" (Ahmed, 2010) of study participants, organizations should consider the additional emotional well-being burden placed on activists and community members with multiple marginalized identities, and take steps to mitigate burnout for these individuals by creating intentional relief options such as safe rest spaces, peer support groups that acknowledge intersectional stress, and trauma-informed mental health supports. Participants identified ways in which they had a "low-intensity belonging" in "imagined communities" through online and symbolic participation. (Anderson, 1983) As a result, supporting accessible online spaces and a wider community aligned from a values perspective, even among those who may engage at low intensity, can contribute greatly to emotional and psychological wellness.

5.4.2 For Policymakers and Legal Frameworks

The results of this research study have significant policy implications, particularly relating to cannabis legislation and LGBTQI+ rights. The persistent social stigma and legal criminalization surrounding cannabis use, despite ongoing efforts toward legalization in some contexts, actively perpetuates social marginalization and limits "social inclusion and restricts opportunities to build bridging social capital". (e.g., Béland & Giraud, 2019; Moore & MacLean, 2017; ACLU, 2020) The primary data's observation that a small but notable minority (13.33%) of cannabis users reported exclusion from vegan or LGBTQI+ spaces, coupled with secondary data detailing racialized enforcement of cannabis law, underscores that policies must extend beyond decriminalization or legalization. They must actively recognize and address unequal histories and develop truly inclusive legal and social conditions for people who use cannabis. The swift change of course regarding cannabis legalization in Thailand, and the differences in policy with regard to more progressive approaches, e.g., Germany, shows how essential it is that policy is consistent and fair to allow communities to thrive and continue to build social capital and Figure 3 well-being. (Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, 2022; The Guardian, 2025; Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2024)

The quantitative finding about LGBTQI+ rights being a lower priority for consumers ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) is not necessarily intuitive; however, it does not simply suggest the need to

bolster support, advocacy and legal protections. Rather, the finding suggests that for this intersectional population, fighting for LGBTQI+ rights may represent an extremely entrenched and assumed standard of political and ethical intersectionalism that supports all other activism. Thus, for policymakers, this is about enhancing foundational anti-discrimination legislative power and connections for institutional capital formation that leads to "linking social capital" and reduces "structural stigma," which is a direct predictor of poor mental health. Additionally, secondary data indicating that trans and non-binary individuals experience disproportionate exclusion even within some LGBTQI+ spaces underscores the need for highly specific and intersectional policy considerations that address inequalities both within and between communities. (Hughto et al., 2015)

5.4.3 For Individuals and Personal Well-being

In the case of people who inhabit an immensely complicated intersectionality, the findings in the study suggest that intentional self-consciousness and the ability to exercise agency around the community they fall into are not just instrumental in fully claiming their identity but also exploring the more foundational layers of identity relations, particularly for those who experience "emergent intersectionality" where "identity compartmentalization" is perceived as normative. The intentional cultivation of an "ethical coherence" that allows a person to take actionable steps on behalf of a collective while ensuring the values they uphold can be enacted collectively is useful.

The research sheds light on the duality in its coping strategies and community investment. While spaces of belonging can provide some degree of "emotional nourishment", it is suggested that one treats themselves with respect by creating boundaries to intentionally care for themselves, and to manage the "emotional weight and burden of awareness" associated with the injustice and activism around it. Using cannabis as self-care may provide some relief to the individual, but even then, creates a "therapeutic ambivalence" (Fraser et al., 2014), and, in most cases, should only be seen as complementary to a more holistic framework of mental health (including perhaps professional care). Ultimately, constructing resiliency involves connecting through direct and "symbolic" ways of belonging, not ignoring different kinds of social capital for purpose, and prioritizing self-care, while continuing to work and struggle for justice.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study provides valuable insights about the intersectionality of the LGBTQI+, vegan, and cannabis-consumer populations. However, I must acknowledge limitations of this study at the outset, which will ultimately impact the generalizability and richness of findings for certain constructs. First, since participants were recruited largely through online or web-based social media and digital platforms, there was a chance of bias regarding the potential for sample representativeness. When researchers recruit participants from online sites, they implicitly and/or explicitly exclude other individuals who perhaps have barriers to remote technologies, and/or lack the digital literacy skills to engage meaningfully with these technologies. Second, participant self-selection implies that this study, like most other research, is not representative of the entire sample of participants we were seeking, since individuals who tend to participate in research tend to share certain demographics and experience. This premise alone suggests that these differing characteristics contribute to outcomes that researchers will make legitimize and interpret for the sake of data interpretation.

This means that the high levels of bridging social capital (e.g., personal networks that bring inclusive values into contact) and ethical consumption practices observed may be representative of a particular segment of this population, such as the self-selected activist-leaning segment.

Second, recruitment of N=45 individuals (and subsequently a sample size of N=45 for participants interviewed) limited the generalizability of the quantitative inferential statements.

While the quantitative data revealed useful descriptive patterns and associations (Section 4.2), its exploratory nature means it can only explore possible relationships rather than describe generalizable population patterns. Consequently, the lack of statistically significant differences in GAD-7 scores across differing identity factors (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, cannabis use frequency) should be interpreted cautiously, as a larger sample might reveal more nuanced statistical relationships.

Thirdly, while the open-ended survey questions yielded valuable qualitative data, they inherently lacked the richness, elaboration, and detail that semi-structured interviews would have produced. Some participant comments were succinct or elliptical, preventing the opportunity for follow-up questions to explore context, chronology, or underlying motivations. As a result, a few potentially rich insights (e.g., the full complexities of "therapeutic

ambivalence" related to cannabis or the factors contributing to "identity compartmentalization") remained somewhat underdeveloped. However, variety in participants' ability or willingness to elaborate their lived experience in written responses also indicates that those who are more capable writers, or those more engaged with the topic, might have provided richer data, and highlights the potential limitations of fatigue and access related to scholarly qualitative inquiries using surveys.

Lastly, even with its strengths and rigor in a distinct interdisciplinary examination of a triadic intersection of identities, the exploratory nature of the study means that its research is primarily intended for a scaffold for further research.

5.6 Strengths of the Study

While there are limitations noted in the dissertation, this study does have some notable contributions that demonstrate significance for sociological knowledge and for understanding traditionally marginalized communities.

First, it is original in examining the triangular convergence of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis use. As described in the literature review, a significant knowledge gap exists about the specific ways these three identities interact and are negotiated. The study disentangles these complex realities and generates new knowledge regarding a relatively unique population and for a problem domain that has received little research attention. The research questions and interpretations are clearly relevant and responsive to the realities of particular groups, being explicitly grounded in and informed by the lived experiences and practices of the communities being studied.

The use of a convergent parallel mixed-methods design also greatly contributed to the rigor and validity of the conclusions. The blending together of both quantitative and qualitative data collection modes provided an even more fine-grained, nuanced and holistic understanding of a complex relationship.

The triangulation, comparing quantitative survey results with qualitative open-ended survey responses and secondary data analysis has developed a rich and layered understanding of the interconnectedness of layered identities, social capital, ethical consumption, and mental health. The requirement for methodological pluralism, in the capacity of an essential component of intersectional research, was also justified.

Thirdly, several benefits of the researcher's positionality and insider identity provided a particular benefit for methods. As an active participant and connector in both communities, the researcher possessed significant firsthand experience and extensive networks, gaining a level of trust and access that may be difficult for an 'outside' researcher to gain. (Rose, 1997) This access was beneficial in recruiting a niche population for the study and helped illuminate the authentic and vulnerable lived experiences of challenged and often stigmatized groups. While reflexivity was employed to mitigate potential bias, this identity and experience were invaluable in enriching the qualitative data collected.

Ultimately, the study has made an invaluable contribution to knowledge by generating informative data that shed light on under-researched identities and establishing a strong foundation for future research.

5.7 Future Research Directions

This study not only lays an important base and meaningful contributions to understanding the integrated intersectional experiences of queer, vegan, and cannabis-using people, but also opens up a plethora of potential future work. Addressing the noted limitations and moving beyond the new learnings, there are a number of identifiable pathways to clarify sociological knowledge in this topic area.

At the outset, future research needs to entail larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability and statistical reliability, particularly in quantitatively exploring patterns related to this triadic membership. Conducting research with larger sample sizes would allow researchers to complete more powerful inferential statistical analyses that would verify and add to the descriptive patterns established in this study (e.g. the preference for social capital forms of bridging, and the complex relationship between cannabis use and anxiety). Additionally, it is imperative that a wider range of participants are recruited from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and geographic groups so the study findings are not overrepresented by one group (e.g. urban, middle-class, white). This variation would greatly help in comprehensively examining how race and class interact to shape experiences of marginalization and the building of social capital in this triad.

The second point is that, given the extensive but shallow nature of the open-ended survey data, future work may benefit from an understanding of more in depth qualitative methodologies such as semi-structured interviews or ethnography. These approaches would allow researchers

to engage more deeply with the nuances related to "therapeutic ambivalence" in relation to cannabis, examine the function of "identity compartmentalization", and provide a more complete accounting of the emotional labour associated with candidates negotiating "fractured belonging". Being able to follow-up on interesting or ambiguous comments would also provide richer contextual understanding, and subsequently nourished narrative, allowing for greater nuance and distinction in evolving theoretical models.

Thirdly, there is an urgent call for longitudinal research that studies the evolving nature of the intersectional identities, social capital, and well-being over time. As the legal and social landscapes for cannabis use and LGBTQI+ rights are changing rapidly, longitudinal studies could track changes in individuals' experiences of stigma, their responses to stigma, and the evolution of their strategies for developing social capital and managing mental health outcomes within these updated macro-level contexts. Such studies could also capture how perceived "ethical coherence" or "identity compartmentalization" shifts or stabilizes across different life stages or as a result of major exogenous social events.

Fourthly, specific research could examine the sociological puzzle of LGBTQI+ rights being a lesser concern in ethical consumer considerations for this community. Future qualitative research could investigate whether this reflects an underlying assumption of acceptance in their local community, an emphasis on more basic mutual ethical commitments such as animal welfare, or a conclusion that consumer-based activism is perceived as less effective regarding LGBTQI+ issues.

Finally, building on the strategies for resilience identified in this study, future research programs could focus on developing and assessing targeted, intersectional interventions. This includes designing and testing community-driven initiatives that recognize and respond to specific challenges (e.g., "internal community fragmentation", "emotional burnout in activism") but also explicitly utilize the strengths (e.g., bridging social capital, "symbolic community", "holistic ethical framings") to create meaningful inclusion and promote well-being for multiply marginalized individuals. Such interventions might also aspire to develop best practices for online community moderation that recognizes and supports intersectional identities and actively mitigates internal conflict.

Conclusions (Chapter 6)

The goal of this dissertation was to investigate the complicated social landscape at the intersection of veganism, LGBTQI+ identity, and cannabis usage. This study set out to understand how participants who are multiple marginalized members of society build and maintain social capital, engage in ethical consumption practices, and deal with mental health. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative, qualitative, and secondary data were collected to provide a meaningful, triangulated description of lived experiences that answer sociological assumptions, and expand on the current theoretical frameworks. As an exploratory study with a purposive sample of N=45, the potential to generalize from these findings is limited. While the study was able to provide nuanced, rich insights into the experiences of a particular intersectional population, the quantitative relationships should be viewed with caution and the findings of this study cannot claim to represent wider demographic trends. These limitations, however, will seed important future research.

An important finding concerned a shift in the balance of social capital among participants. In opposition to dominant conceptualizations that suggest marginally situated populations have little use for bridging social capital as a result of reliance on bonding ties for representations of solidarity, findings instead indicated that participants relied more heavily on bridging social capital. The outward-facing orientation was not a matter of happenstance but were necessary adaptations to internal division, conditional acceptance, and gatekeeping of the people encountering adversities within identity-based communities. Participants sought out networks that were diverse and flexible to achieve access to various emotional and material resources which reinforces a much slighter take of social capital as a unique adaptive and agentic resource to be used for survival and collectivity even when social worlds are fractured.

When considering ethical consumption, while concern for animal rights was predictably central among participants ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.960$), the relatively low prioritization of LGBTQI+ rights as consumer concern ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.276$) posed a compelling sociological puzzle. Qualitative analysis indicated that many participants viewed queer inclusion as a value that was already assumed and rooted in their larger social circles, rather than an isolated point of ethical consideration. Ethical consumption was not framed as issues or identity-based, but as a practice of ethical "everyday resistance" informed by an ethical worldview that integrated animal rights, environmental justice, cannabis reform and queer liberation. All of this challenges narrow framings of consumer activism, and emphasizes the importance of making sense of ethical consumption as part of a holistic political praxis that is intersectionally informed.

The research also explored the complicated, ambiguous role of cannabis use and community engagement in mental health. Although anxiety levels in the sample were moderate, there was no statistically significant relationship identified between cannabis use frequency and anxiety scores. This study does not contest the therapeutic use of cannabis, but rather this finding illustrated the complicated, contested meanings of cannabis use. In lived experiences, cannabis provided both a coping resource and a source of stigma, which relates to what the participants described as “therapeutic ambivalence”. Likewise, community engagement was found to be potentially both a space of emotional nourishment, and one of psychological strain, with participants acknowledging the “affective cost of awareness” and even the demands of activism and rejection experienced, all while within inclusive spaces.

These results offer substantial theoretical refinements. Social Capital Theory is reframed not as a closed system of civic engagement but as an open-ended, responsive strategy that marginalized agents use in attempting to move through multiple layers of exclusion. Intersectionality Theory is pushed forward by providing empirical evidence of how a juxtaposition of identities is not always experienced as coherence, but can be described as disembedding, a contradiction of identities, and fluctuating states of coherence. Minority Stress Theory is refined by demonstrating that protective factors (like community and cannabis use) can contribute to some of the emotional work an individual must engage as they try to navigate stress. This adds to the complexity of resilience theory, and still suggests that resilient individuals navigate complexities of ambivalence, comfort and stress that can often be unknowable. Lastly, Ethical Consumerism Theory expands by demonstrating that commitments to ethical engagement (intersectional ethical commitments) often exist through performative practices that do not match self-defined identity labels or market categorization.

This study makes a unique contribution to research on a largely under-specified social group in sociology: queer cannabis users, who are vegans. This study shows how multiple marginalized people do not just absorb structural barriers, but resist and navigate these barriers in their everyday life through particular social practices, ethical commitments, and negotiations of identity. This research also offers important ways that we can move towards more inclusive communities, foster intersectional policies, and create appropriate and relevant mental health interventions.

By foregrounding lived experience at a largely unfreighted intersection of identity, ethics, and stigma, this dissertation is valuable groundwork for future research. It substantiates the critical

need for research that not only works to denounce forms of structural exclusion, but also recognizes the creativity, resilience, and ethical imagination of people living in the cracks. In so doing, it provides critical insight into rethinking understandings of social capital, solidarity, and justice in light of complex, embodied intersectionality.

Appendices

Appendix A: Supplementary Quantitative Data

Figures

Figure A-1 Age Distribution of Participants

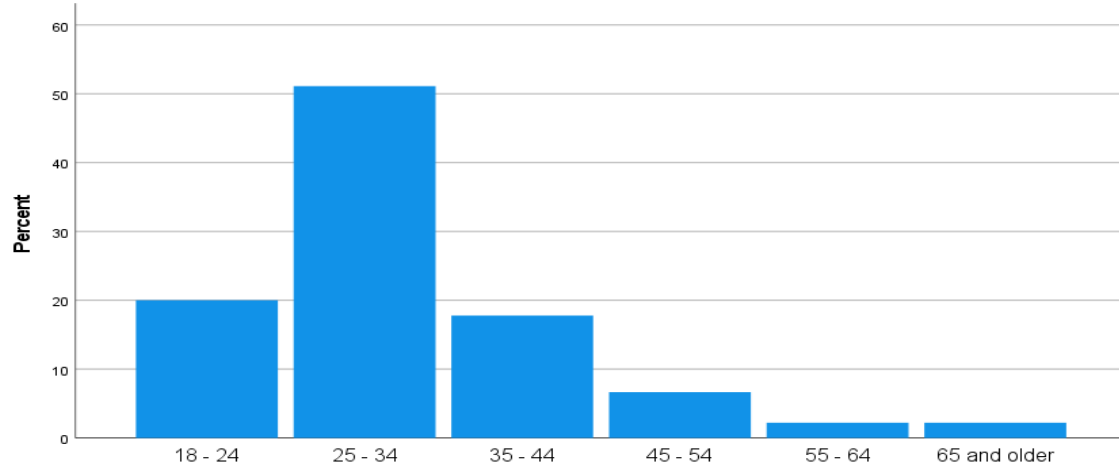


Figure A-2 Gender Identity Distribution of Participant

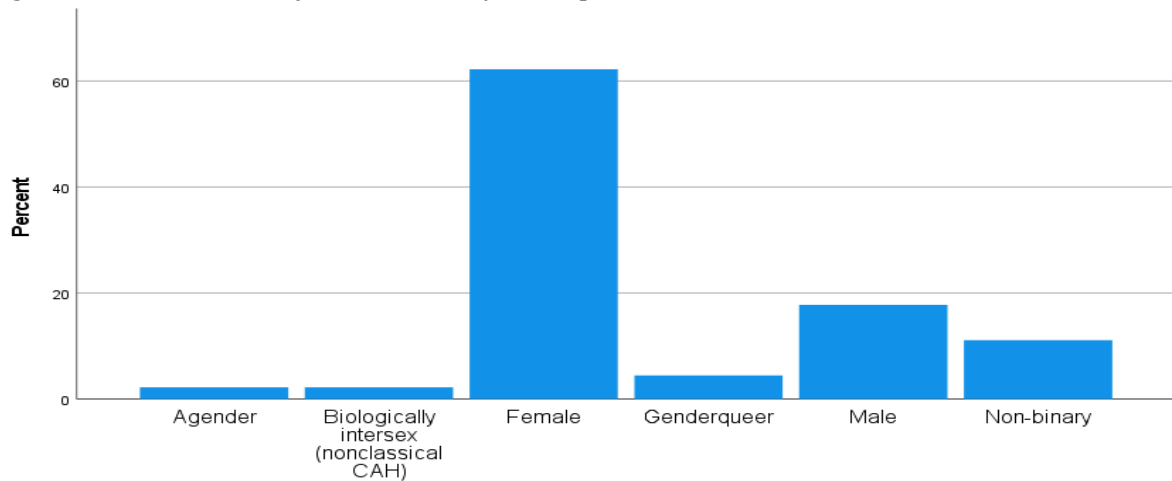


Figure A-3 Sexual Orientation Distribution of Participants

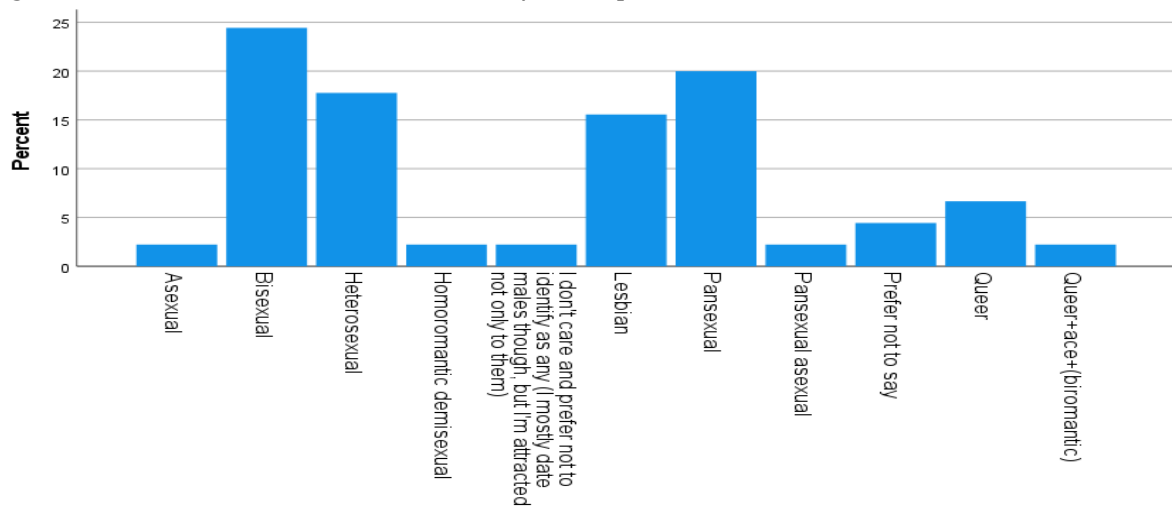


Figure A-4 Ethnicity and Race Distribution of Participants

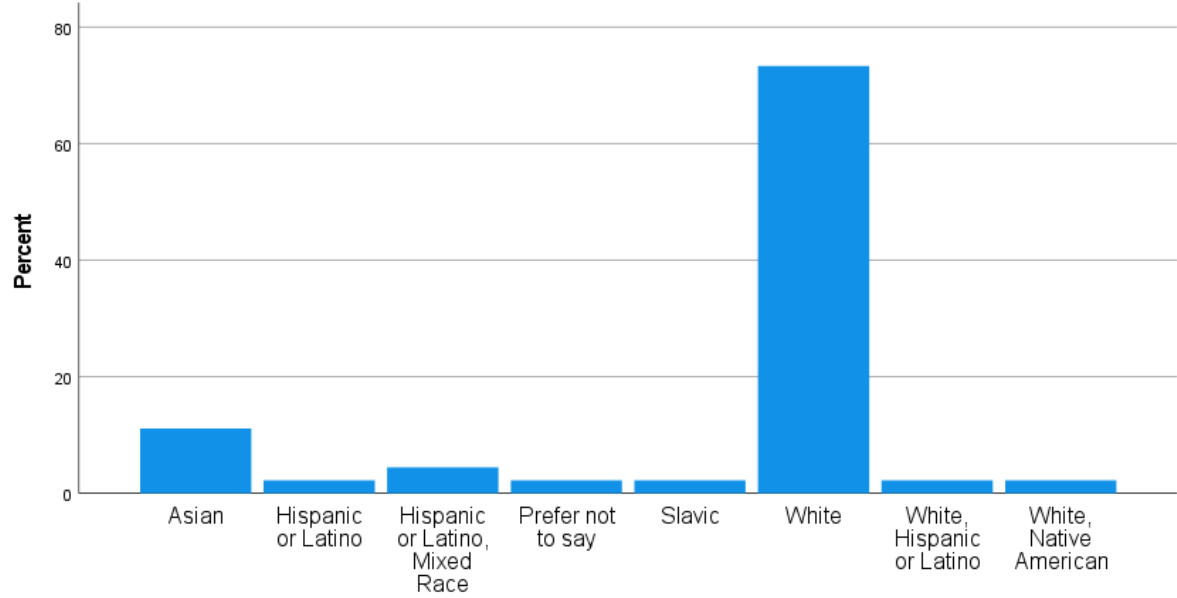


Figure A-5 Residential Area Type Distribution

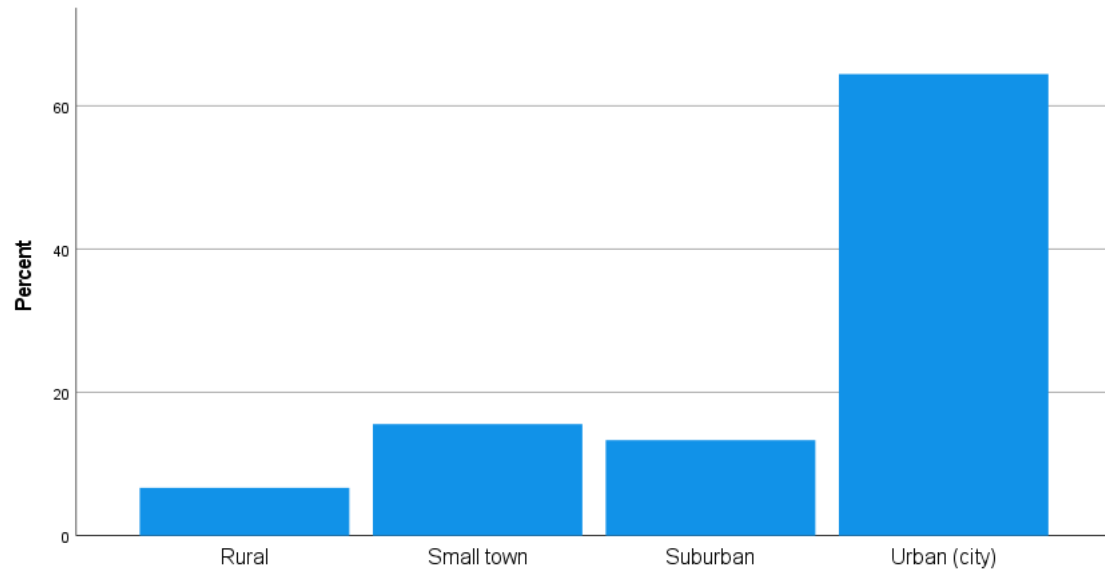


Figure A-6 Region Distribution of Participant

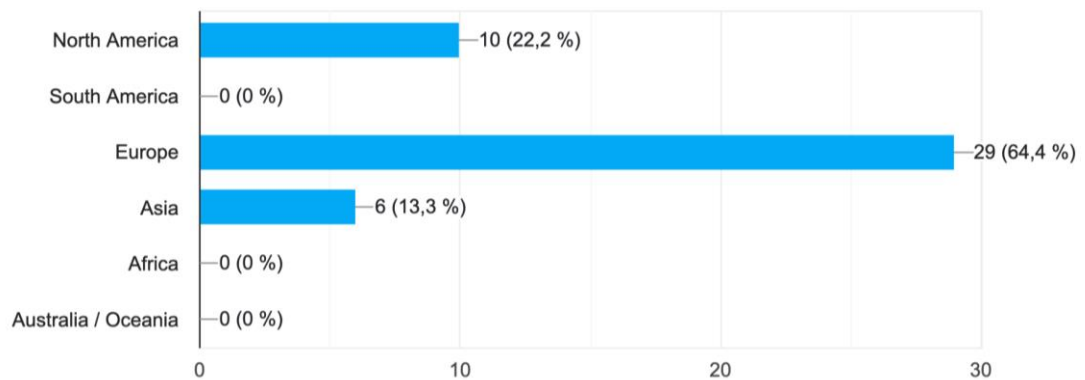


Figure A-7 Years of Veganism Among Participants

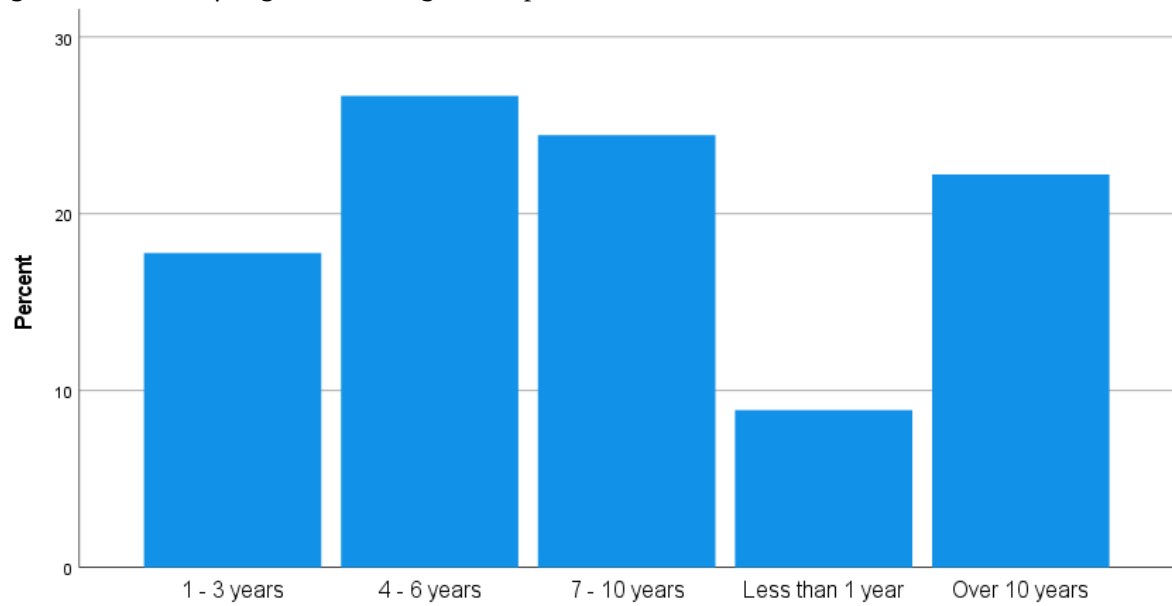


Figure A-8 Importance of LGBTQ+-Friendly Vegan Brands

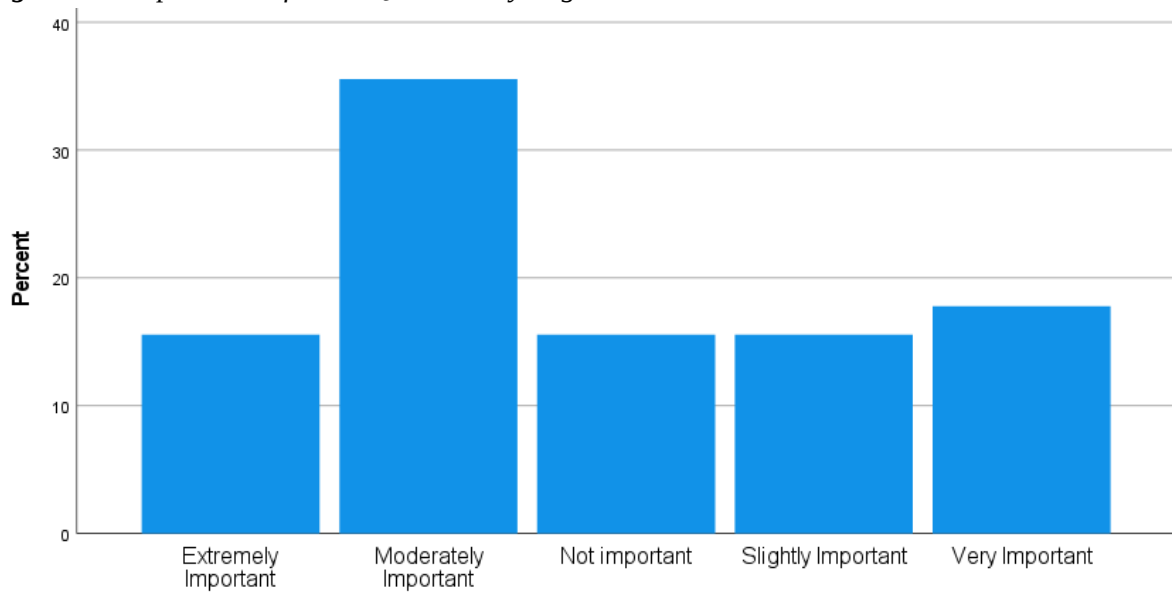
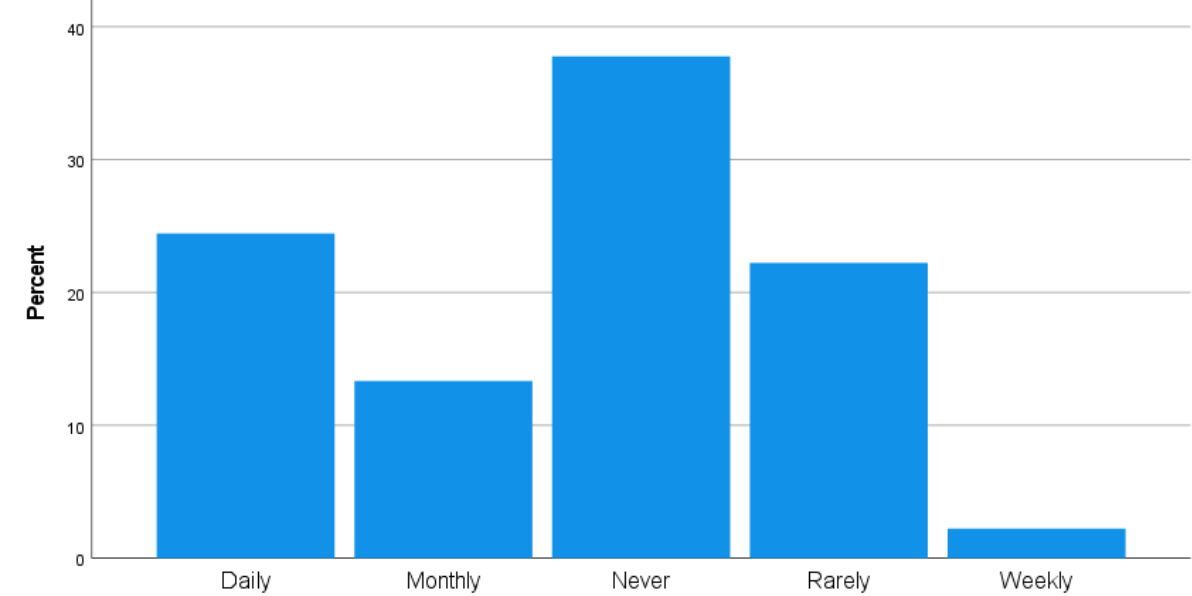


Figure A-9 Cannabis Use Frequency Distribution



Tables

Table A-1 Descriptive Statistics for Social Capital Types

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Bonding_social_capital	3.29	1.424	45
Bridging_social_capital	4.16	1.147	45
Linking_social_capital	3.58	1.158	45

Table A-2 Repeated Measures ANOVA for Social Capital Types

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
SocialCapital	Sphericity Assumed	17.526	2	8.763	10.942	.000	.199	
	Greenhouse-Geisser	17.526	1.809	9.688	10.942	.000	.199	
	Huynh-Feldt	17.526	1.882	9.312	10.942	.000	.199	
	Lower-bound	17.526	1.000	17.526	10.942	.002	.199	
Error(SocialCapital)	Sphericity Assumed	70.474	88	.801				
	Greenhouse-Geisser	70.474	79.595	.885				
	Huynh-Feldt	70.474	82.809	.851				
	Lower-bound	70.474	44.000	1.602				

Table A-3 Descriptive Statistics for Shared Values with Close Friends

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	3.29
Std. Deviation	1.42
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1 (Strongly Disagree)	7 (15.56%)
2	7 (15.56%)
3	9 (20.00%)
4	10 (22.22%)
5 (Strongly Agree)	12 (26.67%)

Table A-4 Descriptive Statistics for Comfort in Discussing Identity with Close Friends

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	4.16
Std. Deviation	1.15
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (4.44%)
2	3 (6.67%)
3	5 (11.11%)
4	11 (24.44%)
5 (Strongly Agree)	24 (53.33%)

Table A-5 Descriptive Statistics for Connecting Outside Immediate Social Circle

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	3.58
Std. Deviation	1.16
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1 (Strongly Disagree)	1 (2.22%)
2	9 (20.00%)
3	10 (22.22%)
4	13 (28.89%)
5 (Strongly Agree)	12 (26.67%)

Table A-6 Descriptive Statistics for Participating in Events to Meet New People

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	3.18
Std. Deviation	1.30
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1 (Strongly Disagree)	5 (11.11%)
2	11 (24.44%)
3	8 (17.78%)
4	13 (28.89%)
5 (Strongly Agree)	8 (17.78%)

Table A-7 Descriptive Statistics for Access to Resources from Communities

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	3.13
Std. Deviation	1.20
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1 (Strongly Disagree)	5 (11.11%)
2	8 (17.78%)
3	14 (31.11%)
4	12 (26.67%)
5 (Strongly Agree)	6 (13.33%)

Table A-8 Pearson Correlations within Social Capital Measures

	Bonding_Social_Capital_Value s	Bonding_Social_Capital_Comfo rt	Bridging_Social_Capital_Conne ct	Bridging_Social_Capital_Even ts	Linking_Social_Capital_Resourc es
Bonding_Social_Capital_Val ues	1.0	0.597822714211 5764	0.378898065803 11697	0.43745935954 2895	0.283171987940 4529
Bonding_Social_Capital_Co mfort	0.59782271421 15764	1.0	0.512568870868 1885	0.27017713842 28487	0.232515392426 8212
Bridging_Social_Capital_Co nnect	0.37889806580 311697	0.512568870868 1885	1.0	0.35249609036 93963	0.123391272471 42741
Bridging_Social_Capital_Ev ents	0.43745935954 2895	0.270177138422 8487	0.352496090369 3963	1.0	0.348610072523 3214
Linking_Social_Capital_Res ources	0.28317198794 04529	0.232515392426 8212	0.123391272471 42741	0.34861007252 33214	1.0

Table A-9 *Descriptive Statistics for Ethical Concerns*

Variable	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical Concerns: Environmental Sustainability	45	1	5	3.82	0.960
Ethical Concerns: LGBTQI+ Rights	45	1	5	2.91	1.276
Ethical Concerns: Animal Rights	45	1	5	4.62	0.960
Ethical Concerns: Fair Labor	45	1	5	3.82	1.093
Ethical Concerns: Small Businesses	45	1	5	3.09	1.294

Table A-10 Sexual Orientation by Importance of LGBTQ+-Friendly Vegan Brands (Crosstabulation)

Sexual Orientation	Extremely Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Slightly Important	Very Important	Total
Asexual	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bisexual	2	4	0	2	3	11
Heterosexual	0	3	3	2	0	8
Homoromantic demisexual	0	0	0	0	1	1
I don't care/prefer not to identify	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lesbian	2	3	0	1	1	7
Pansexual	0	4	2	0	3	9
Pansexual asexual	1	0	0	0	0	1
Prefer not to say	0	0	1	1	0	2
Queer	1	1	0	1	0	3
Queer+ace+(biromantic)	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	7	16	7	7	8	45

Table A-11 Chi-Square Tests for Association Between Sexual Orientation and Importance of LGBTQ+-Friendly Vegan Brands

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.848 ^a	40	.312
Likelihood Ratio	45.698	40	.247
N of Valid Cases	45		

a. 55 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .16.

Table A-12 Environmental Sustainability Concerns by Residential Area Type (Crosstabulation)

Environmental Sustainability Concerns	Rural	Small Town	Suburban	Urban (City)	Total
1	0	0	0	1	1
2	0	1	0	3	4
3	0	4	1	2	7
4	2	2	3	16	23
5	1	0	1	8	10
Total	3	7	6	29	45

Table A-13 Animal Rights Concerns by Residential Area Type (Crosstabulation)

Animal Rights Concerns	Rural	Small Town	Suburban	Urban (City)	Total
1	0	1	1	0	2
3	0	0	1	2	3
4	1	0	1	1	3
5	2	6	3	26	37
Total	3	7	6	29	45

Table A-14 Importance of Environmental Sustainability

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	3.82
Std. Deviation	0.96
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1	1 (2.22%)
2	4 (8.89%)
3	7 (15.56%)
4	23 (51.11%)
5	10 (22.22%)

Table A-15 *Importance of Animal Rights*

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	4.62
Std. Deviation	0.96
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1	2 (4.44%)
3	3 (6.67%)
4	3 (6.67%)
5	37 (82.22%)

Table A-16 *Importance of LGBTQI+ Rights*

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	2.91
Std. Deviation	1.28
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1	7 (15.56%)
2	10 (22.22%)
3	15 (33.33%)
4	6 (13.33%)
5	7 (15.56%)

Table A-17 *Importance of Fair Labor*

Statistic/Category	Value
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Mean	3.82
Std. Deviation	01.09
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1	2 (4.44%)
2	3 (6.67%)
3	10 (22.22%)
4	16 (35.56%)
5	14 (31.11%)

Table A-18 Importance of Small Businesses

Statistic/Category	Value
Mean	03.09
Std. Deviation	1.29
N	45
Value Counts & Percentages	
1	7 (15.56%)
2	5 (11.11%)
3	19 (42.22%)
4	5 (11.11%)
5	9 (20.00%)

Table A-19 Importance of LGBTQI+-Friendly Vegan Brands

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Moderately Important	16	35.56
Very Important	8	17.78
Extremely Important	7	15.56
Slightly Important	7	15.56
Not Important	7	15.56
Total	45	100.00

Table A-20 Pearson Correlations among Ethical Concern

	Ethical_Concern_Environmental_Sustainability	Ethical_Concern_LGBTQI_Rights	Ethical_Concern_Animal_Rights	Ethical_Concern_Fair_Labor	Ethical_Concern_Small_Businesses
Ethical_Concern_Environmental_Sustainability	1.0	0.5416210295728366	0.2279172667824498	0.4671555073515789	0.23252485924398525
Ethical_Concern_LGBTQI_Rights	0.5416210295728366	1.0	0.3614528805935057	0.584064661096619	0.15569409281546584
Ethical_Concern_Animal_Rights	0.2279172667824498	0.3614528805935057	1.0	0.37945160656843424	0.30776853134586224
Ethical_Concern_Fair_Labor	0.4671555073515789	0.584064661096619	0.37945160656843424	1.0	0.49354234568293914
Ethical_Concern_Small_Businesses	0.23252485924398525	0.15569409281546584	0.30776853134586224	0.49354234568293914	1.0

Table A-21 Cannabis Use Frequency by GAD-7 Nervousness Levels (Crosstabulation)

Cannabis Frequency	Not at all	Several Days	More than Half the Days	Nearly Every Day	Total
Daily	1	1	3	6	11
Monthly	0	3	1	2	6
Never	5	3	3	6	17
Rarely	1	2	3	4	10
Weekly	1	0	0	0	1
Total	8	9	10	18	45

Table A-22 Correlations Between Cannabis Use Frequency and GAD-7 Total Anxiety Score

Correlations

		1 Frequent user, 0 Infrequent user	GAD_7_Total
1 Frequent user, 0 Infrequent user	Pearson Correlation	1	.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.854
	N	28	28

GAD_7_Total	Pearson Correlation	.036	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.854	
	N	28	45

Table A-23 Independent Samples T-Test for GAD-7 Scores by Cannabis Use Frequency

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
GAD_7_Total	Equal variances assumed	.521	.477	-.185	26	.854	-.43750	2.35876	-5.28600	4.41100
	Equal variances not assumed			-.189	25.202	.852	-.43750	2.31671	-5.20692	4.33192

Table A-24 Ethical Cannabis Choice (Binary)

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
I do not use cannabis	19	42.22
I don't know	7	15.56
Always	6	13.33
Sometimes	5	11.11
Often	5	11.11
NaN	1	2.22
Unless I'm not aware	1	2.22
Rarely	1	2.22
Total	45	100.00

Table A-25 Frequency of Ethical Cannabis Choice in Past Month

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
I do not use cannabis	22	48.89
Always	7	15.56
Rarely	7	15.56
Sometimes	4	8.89
Often	4	8.89
Never	1	2.22

Total	45	100.00
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Table A-26 *Factors Influencing Cannabis Product Purchases (N=45)*

Option	Count	Percentage (of N=45)
I do not use cannabis	20	44.44%
Quality	19	42.22%
Price	15	33.33%
Recommendations from friends or community	13	28.89%
Availability	11	24.44%
Brand values (e.g., ethical practices)	9	20.00%
Legal Status	7	15.56%
Convenience	4	8.89%

Table A-27 *Cannabis Legal Accessibility in Location*

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
No	28	62.22
Yes	11	24.44
Unsure	6	13.33
Total	45	100.00

Table A-28 *Discussion of Cannabis Use with Friends or Community Members*

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Sometimes	15	33.33
I do not use cannabis	14	31.11
Rarely	9	20.00
Never	4	8.89
Always	3	6.67
Total	45	100.00

Table A-29 *Feeling Excluded by Cannabis Use from Communities*

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
I do not use cannabis	19	42.22
No, never	18	40.00
Yes, rarely	5	11.11
Unsure	2	4.44
Yes, frequently	1	2.22
Total	45	100.00

Table A-30 Contingency Table: Cannabis Legal Access by Cannabis Use Frequency

Cannabis Legal Access	Daily	Monthly	Never	Rarely	Weekly
No	6	4	10	7	1
Unsure	0	1	4	1	0
Yes	5	1	3	2	0

Table A-31 Contingency Table: Excluded by Cannabis Use by Cannabis Use Frequency

Excluded By Cannabis Use	Daily	Monthly	Never	Rarely	Weekly
I do not use cannabis	0	0	17	2	0
No, never	7	5	0	5	1
Unsure	0	1	0	1	0
Yes, frequently	0	1	0	0	0
Yes, rarely	3	0	0	2	0

Table A-32 Descriptive Statistics for GAD-7 Anxiety Symptoms

Variable	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
GAD-7: Nervous/Anxious	45	0	3	1.84	1.147
GAD-7: Unable to Stop Worrying	45	0	3	1.58	1.177
GAD-7: Worrying Too Much	45	0	3	1.73	1.116

GAD-7: Trouble Relaxing	45	0	3	1.51	1.121
GAD-7: Restless	45	0	3	0.98	1.097
GAD-7: Easy to Annoy	45	0	3	1.60	1.116
GAD-7: Feeling Afraid	45	0	3	1.04	1.127

Table A-33 Frequency of Veganism-LGBTQI+ Identity Connection

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Rarely	14	31.11
Never	13	28.89
Sometimes	7	15.56
Always	6	13.33
Very Often	5	11.11
Total	45	100.00

Table A-34 Community Involvement and Coping with Stress/Anxiety

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Moderately	15	33.33
Not at all	14	31.11
Very much	7	15.56
Somewhat	5	11.11
Extremely much	4	8.89
Total	45	100.00

Table A-35 Selected Pearson Correlations with GAD-7 Total

Variable	Pearson r	p-value
Bonding_Social_Capital_Values	0.292	0.052
Bonding_Social_Capital_Comfort	-0.013	0.934
Bridging_Social_Capital_Connect	0.132	0.386

Bridging_Social_Capital_Events	-0.084	0.584
Linking_Social_Capital_Resources	0.073	0.634
Ethical_Concern_Environmental_Sustainability	0.080	0.601
Ethical_Concern_LGBTQI_Rights	0.255	0.091
Ethical_Concern_Animal_Rights	0.201	0.186
Ethical_Concern_Fair_Labor	0.146	0.338
Ethical_Concern_Small_Businesses	0.189	0.214

Table A-36 ANOVA for GAD-7 Total by Gender Identity

Statistic	Value
F-statistic	0.408
p-value	0.840
df	5
Group	Mean GAD-7
Female	9.86
Male	9.25
Non-binary	12.20
Agender	10.00
Genderqueer	15.50
Biologically intersex (nonclassical CAH)	11.00

Table A-37 ANOVA for GAD-7 Total by Sexual Orientation

Statistic	Value
F-statistic	1.041
p-value	0.432
df	10
Group	Mean GAD-7
Heterosexual	5.12
Bisexual	10.36
Lesbian	11.14
Prefer not to say	9.00

Homoromantic demisexual	16.00
Pansexual asexual	10.00
Asexual	12.00
Pansexual	12.44
Queer	14.67
I don't care and prefer not to identify as any (I mostly date males though but I'm attracted not only to them)	4.00
Queer+ace+(biromantic)	14.00

Table A-38 ANOVA for GAD-7 Total by Cannabis Use Frequency

Statistic	Value
F-statistic	1.711
p-value	0.167
df	4
Group	Mean GAD-7
Daily	12.82
Never	7.88
Rarely	12.10
Weekly	3.00
Monthly	10.67

Table A-39 Contingency Table: Veganism-LGBTQI+ Connection by Intersectional Identity Activism Role

Veganism, Connection	LGBTQI	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes, occasionally	Yes, very often
Always		0	1	0	1	4
Never		7	1	1	0	4
Rarely		3	1	4	3	3
Sometimes		1	1	0	3	2
Very Often		2	0	1	0	2

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