

Men and Vegetarianism:
Motivations and Barriers to Becoming Vegetarian

An Independent Learning Project

Presented by

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To

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Men and Vegetarianism: Motivations and Barriers to Becoming Vegetarian

F. Liberty Mulkani

Abstract

This project sought to fill an information gap about the motivations and barriers that males face in becoming vegetarian. Although both men and women choose vegetarianism, there statistically appear to be more women than men who claim to be vegetarians in North America (Bedford and Barr, 2005; Smart, 1995; Stahler, 2006). Preliminary research suggested that a possible reason for this gender discrepancy is that men might experience more social pressures and expectations than women with respect to eating meat. The goal was to identify the motivations and barriers specific to men and provide suggestions about how to more effectively communicate the benefits of a vegetarian diet. This project is geared specifically towards humane educators, vegetarian advocates, and campaigners interested in encouraging men to adopt a vegetarian diet or to reduce their meat consumption.

The project consisted of semi-structured, private interviews with 10 vegetarian men living in the Vancouver, B.C. area. The participants were chosen based on whether they fit a particular set of criteria. Each interview was transcribed and the results were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings suggested that while men and women experience similar motivations and barriers to becoming vegetarian, males do appear to encounter some heightened and unique social pressures relating to public image and food choice. Teaching boys and young men about compassion and empathy was identified as a possible means of supporting male vegetarianism.

Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale

This Independent Learning Project (ILP) progressed out of a question that has continued to surface and resurface for me over the years: why is it that some people take action when they learn about social justice issues while others remain relatively inactive and what are the motivations and barriers to taking action? In both my personal and professional life I have observed that although men and women are similarly engaged when it comes to certain areas of social justice, the numbers seem unbalanced in some arenas—vegetarianism¹ is one such arena. Despite the fact that men are the dominant group in our society, they remain underrepresented within the vegetarian community (Bedford and Barr, 2005; Smart, 1995; Stahler, 2006). In order to examine this phenomenon, I have chosen to focus my ILP on the motivations and barriers that men face to adopting a vegetarian diet.

Although vegetarianism may not appear to be directly related to social justice issues, it definitely falls under this umbrella when viewed through a humane education lens. Humane education takes a holistic approach to social justice topics, by regarding “human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection as interconnected and integral dimensions of a healthy, just society” (Institute for Humane Education, 2007, What is Humane Education section, ¶ 5). The choice to adopt a vegetarian diet, therefore, can be considered from a number of different angles including how this choice affects oneself, other people, animals, and the environment. I hope to learn how these

¹ For the purpose of this project, references to vegetarians and vegetarianism will be inclusive of vegans and veganism unless otherwise stated.

and other considerations help to motivate or hinder men from choosing vegetarianism for themselves.

According to the most recent Vegetarian Resource Group poll (Stahler, 2006) on vegetarian adults in the U.S., 9% of the women polled said they never eat meat, while only 5% of the male respondents made a similar claim. In the same poll, 3% of the women called themselves vegetarian (as defined in the study as never eating meat, fish, or fowl), while 2% of the men considered themselves vegetarian. Other studies have also concluded that there are fewer male vegetarians than female vegetarians in both the U.S. and Canada. A U.S. study (Smart, 1995) of 12.4 million self-proclaimed vegetarians found, for example, that 68% were female while only 32% were male. In British Columbia, where I live, vegetarianism also seems to be skewed towards women. In a study on the lifestyle practices of self-described vegetarian adults in B.C. (Bedford and Barr, 2005), the researchers found that women were far more likely to be vegetarian than men with 71% of the vegetarian respondents being female versus 49% of the vegetarian respondents being male. These studies suggest that men might experience more barriers than women when it comes to adopting a vegetarian diet.

Social stigmatism surrounding vegetarianism may be one contributing factor to this discrepancy between the numbers of men and women who are vegetarian. It certainly appears to be more socially acceptable in North American society for women to choose vegetarianism than it is for men to make this choice. As Carol Adams (2000) explains in The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory: “gender construction includes instruction about appropriate foods. Being a man in our culture is tied to identities that they either claim or disown—what ‘real’ men do and don’t do.

‘Real’ men don’t eat quiche” (pp. 16-17). This point has been emphasized for me several times in my personal life. When friends and acquaintances learn that I am now vegan they are surprised, but they are not nearly as shocked as they are when they learn that my husband is also vegan. I believe that the negative responses to my husband’s veganism are due, at least in part, to the fact that he is a man: a man who, in the eyes of his peers, needs meat.

It is important to explore men’s motivations and barriers for adopting a vegetarian diet in order to discover more effective ways to encourage and support this decision. As a humane educator who volunteers for animal protection and health-oriented organizations, I sometimes find myself engaged in vegetarian outreach and education—having knowledge about the appropriate tools to use to help motivate men to feel comfortable choosing vegetarianism would certainly be helpful in these situations. Researching this topic will also allow educators and advocates the possibility of helping to construct a positive masculine vegetarian identity which would not only benefit the people advocating this type of diet, but also the men who want to go vegetarian but have not felt that there is enough social support for this action. Additionally, since men are the dominant social group, if they were more accepting of vegetarianism it follows that society as a whole would also be.

Without this research, I believe that there will be a missed opportunity. Although there currently appear to be more women than men who are receptive to the idea of going vegetarian, this imbalance may be partially due to the fact that men are not being effectively reached with vegetarian advocacy messages. If educators and advocates can learn to tailor their messages towards men, perhaps the demographics of vegetarians

could be leveled out to not skew so dramatically towards women. After all, the many health benefits of a vegetarian diet, such as decreased risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 2005), should be enjoyed by both men and women alike.

Through this ILP I hope to learn not only about what motivates and hinders men in their choice to go vegetarian, but also more about motivation in general. I suspect that the motivations and barriers surrounding this type of decision might also provide clues about the motivations and barriers that accompany the decision to take action on various other social justice issues. I hope that my research will help humane educators as well as advocates to be more effective in the presentation of their messages and to enable them to help motivate their audiences to take action when they learn about important social issues.

Goal

The goal of my ILP is to identify men's motivations and barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet. I plan to create a report based on personal interviews with vegetarian men in the Vancouver, B.C. area. This report will highlight the motivations and barriers surrounding their choices and will offer suggestions about how to effectively message men as a target audience in order to motivate and encourage more men to become vegetarian or to reduce their meat consumption. Vegetarianism has traditionally been seen as a women's issue (Adams, 2000) and I would like to help make this a more acceptable and comfortable choice for men.

I also hope to discover common themes in my research findings that could be applied to other areas of education and social advocacy. The motivators for men to become vegetarian, for example, might be some of the same motivators for men to get involved with environmental activism, human rights work, or animal protection campaigns. It is my hope that my conclusions can be built upon and then applied more broadly to be of benefit to educators and advocates interested in engaging men in a number of social causes.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this project is a general information gap about what motivates and hinders men in the choice to adopt a vegetarian diet. Although a limited amount of research has been conducted on motivations and barriers to choosing a vegetarian diet (Humane Research Council, 2005; Janda & Trocchia, 2001) I have not uncovered any research in this area that focuses specifically on men. This project will fill this void and provide specific data and suggestions about how to interest more men in vegetarianism as well as other topics relating to health and social advocacy. It is important for humane educators, social justice advocates, and the education community as a whole to learn more about this topic so they can be better equipped to comprehensively present information to men about how to lead more humane and healthy lives.

Population

The information gathered in this ILP will obviously be of benefit to educators, activists, and campaigners who are interested in motivating men to adopt a vegetarian diet or to reduce their meat consumption. The research findings of this project have the potential to help vegetarian advocates identify strategies to present vegetarianism in a more appealing way to men.

This project will also be of particular interest to humane educators, who, by profession, are charged with educating their students about topics that can be emotionally upsetting and potentially disempowering. In the same vein, this project will benefit advocates working on social justice campaigns who are faced with the difficult task of educating the public about problems in the world while at the same time attempting to motivate action from their audiences. This ILP will help these educators and advocates learn more about the motivation and barriers to action and hopefully enable them to be more successful at presenting difficult or disturbing topics in a way that motivates action and discourages inaction.

This project will also benefit the academic and research community, as it will add a missing piece of information to the study of the motivations and barriers to choosing vegetarianism. Future researchers can use the information revealed in this project as a reference for further studies about motivation, vegetarianism, and male identity.

From a health perspective, our society as a whole could benefit from this ILP if, as a result of the suggestions generated through this project, educators and advocates successfully motivate more men to reduce or eliminate meat from their diets. As noted above, there are many health benefits to a vegetarian diet.

Additionally, farmed animals also serve to benefit from this ILP if this project contributes to an eventual reduction in meat consumption.

Methodology

My research will begin with a detailed review of the studies that have already addressed motivations and barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet. Although these studies do not specifically focus on men, they will be useful for a general analysis of this topic. I will also examine selected works by authors who have studied vegetarianism, feminism, and male identity in order to familiarize myself with the differences between the motivations and barriers that men and women face in various life choices.

To gain information about the personal experiences of men who have chosen to go vegetarian or reduce their meat consumption, I plan to conduct qualitative research interviews. I will conduct a series of one-on-one interviews with approximately 10 men living in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia. I believe that one-on-one interviews will be the most effective means of collecting accurate data from male participants about their motivations and barriers surrounding vegetarianism, as men might be less inclined to share personal experiences in front of a focus group of their male peers.

Although my findings will be taken from a fairly small sample size, 10 participants should provide more than adequate information from which to draw some conclusions. Janda and Trocchia (2001) quote McCracken's explanation of qualitative research to support the merits of using a small sample size of research participants:

The purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people, share a characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one construes the world...qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in its objectives. (p. 1207)

Through these interviews I hope to gain in-depth information about what motivated and hindered these men in their choice to adopt vegetarian diets.

Each of the chosen participants will fit the following criteria: male, at least 18 years of age, fluent in English, vegetarian (eat no meat, poultry, or seafood) for at least 6 months, have no dietary restrictions due to medical conditions or religious affiliations, live in the Greater Vancouver area, and were not raised vegetarian. I will focus my interviews on men who have already made the choice to become vegetarian (as opposed to including semi-vegetarians and meat eaters) in order to examine their motivations for eliminating meat from their diets. Vegetarian men will also be able to provide information about the barriers they originally encountered and the barriers they may or may not continue to encounter surrounding this choice. In order to maintain a consistent study I will only interview men who personally chose to go vegetarian, not men who were raised vegetarian or eschew meat for religious reasons.

There are, of course, a number of limitations to this project. One significant limitation is that I am a woman who plans to interview men about a topic that can be quite emotionally charged and somewhat taboo: the choice to reduce or eliminate animal protein as a source of nourishment from one's diet. Although some men may feel uncomfortable speaking to a woman about their personal experiences and decisions, the

fact that I am a woman may also work in my favor. With a female interviewer, men might feel less inclined than they would be with a male interviewer to worry about being perceived as “macho,” and thus might be more willing to reveal their motivations and barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet. As vegetarianism is generally more common amongst women, male participants might also feel that it is more acceptable to speak honestly with a woman about this subject. As is the case with any study, however, there is the possibility that the participants might be inclined to answer the questions in a way that they perceive will please the researcher instead of sticking strictly to the honest facts.

Another limitation to this study is the population that I will be drawing from. The information collected will be reflective of men in the Greater Vancouver area of Canada, although it may also provide clues and information that apply to other populations. Vancouver is a fairly progressive city with a good selection of vegetarian restaurants and health food stores. Vegetarian products are also relatively accessible in local grocery stores. It is therefore likely that men in Vancouver might be more inclined to adopt a vegetarian diet than men in some other parts of the country. Given additional time and resources, I would ideally like to conduct similar studies in select cities across Canada and the U.S. in order to gain a broader perspective on this topic.

Finally, as this will be my first attempt at qualitative research, my own inexperience may provide additional limitations to this study. Although I plan to conduct my research in a professional and comprehensive manner, more experience in academic research would certainly be an asset.

Once the interviews have been conducted, I will transcribe the taped conversations and mark the dialogue with codes to identify the key themes. Next, I plan

to analyze the interviews using a qualitative narrative analysis as well as a quantitative analysis of recurring themes.

Time permitting, I would ideally like to develop and conduct a second phase of quantitative research. After completing and analyzing the qualitative interviews, the second phase of the study would involve the distribution of electronic surveys to a broad audience in order to measure my findings against the larger population. While the quantitative research would add another interesting layer to the project, my priority is the qualitative interviews. The quantitative survey portion of this research proposal, therefore, will remain as a plan for future research.

The final chapter of my ILP will include suggestions for educators and advocates who wish to put this information into practice.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

What we choose to eat is one of the most intimate and personal choices that each of us can make. There are numerous factors that contribute to our food choices; these factors may include: the foods our parents fed us as children, taste preferences, cultural and religious influences, social conditioning, eating habits, household income, knowledge and appreciation of nutrition, and peer group influences, to name a few. When an individual chooses to adopt a vegetarian diet, additional aspects such as animal welfare considerations, environmental concerns, and personal health issues are often thrown into the mix. Although each person possesses a unique set of influences that shapes his or her food choices, there are also some common factors that can be observed within subgroups of people. For the purpose of this project I will be looking at men as a subgroup and attempting to determine the particular motivations and barriers that they face in adopting a vegetarian diet.

Although my research did not uncover any studies that focused specifically on why men do or don't become vegetarian, I was able to glean some pertinent information that explored the motivations and barriers to becoming vegetarian in general. My literature review also provided me with some information about the differences in the motivations and barriers that men and women face in choosing a vegetarian diet, as well as possible explanations as to why there are more women than men who are vegetarian.

The books, articles, and websites that I consulted also contributed to my understanding about the social pressures and perceptions that men encounter around diet choices. These pressures seem likely to relate to potential barriers that men encounter when they consider becoming vegetarian. Additionally, my research clarified the extensive symbolism of meat in our culture, some historical facts about meat eating and avoidance in the Western world, and how these all inform the decision to eat meat or to choose vegetarianism.

In this chapter, I will discuss the various themes that I've identified within this subject area. The sections will include the following topics in the following order:

- Meat eating as a cultural norm
- Meat and masculinity
- The perception that vegetarianism is feminine
- Meat as a symbol of freedom
- Domination over women and nature
- Emotional detachment
- Psychic numbing
- Other barriers to vegetarianism
- Motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet
- Conclusion

Meat Eating as a Cultural Norm

One doesn't have to delve very deeply to realize that meat eating is a cultural norm in our society. Walk through the aisles of a supermarket and you're sure to see

meat products; pick up a menu in a restaurant and most of the dishes are likely to contain meat; turn on the television, glance at some billboards, or flip through a typical magazine and you'll undoubtedly find advertisements for meat. Meat eating, like most social norms, is so entrenched in our society that it is usually simply taken for granted (Kheel, 2004). When a person becomes a vegetarian, on the other hand, they are routinely asked to explain and defend their food choices (Kheel, 2004). Feminist author and theorist, Marti Kheel (2004), equates the challenges that people face when they eschew meat to the obstacles faced by those who go against the norm of heterosexuality. "Just as a woman is considered incomplete without a man," she explains, "so, too, vegetarian foods are viewed as incomplete without the addition of flesh" (p. 329). By going against the grain of a cultural norm, vegetarians are automatically set apart as "different." Something as basic as the food we nourish ourselves with takes on a deeper social meaning, whether intentional or not.

According to established theories within sociological literature, once our basic nutritional requirements are met, food becomes imbued with psychological and social meanings (Joy, 2003). Food, thus, becomes:

A social construct (Barthes, 1961; Maslow, 1987)....formed by ideas that are shaped by and reflected in the value system of a society. What one chooses to eat often reflects a cultural ideology that has been neither questioned nor challenged (Counihan, 1992). Therefore, food choices often reinforce social norms and values and fortify gender, ethnic, and class boundaries. (Joy, 2003, p.64)

The social construct of food has particular implications for men who are both considering and following a vegetarian diet. It is interesting to take note of the many gender

messages and stereotypes that are reinforced through carnism, the ideology of meat (Joy, 2003). One of the most prominent messages that I encountered repeatedly in my research is that meat is symbolically linked to masculinity (Adams, 2000; Allen and Ng, 2003; Bailey, 2007; Fiddes, 1991; Joy, 2003; Kheel, 1995, 2004; Smart, 1995).

Meat and Masculinity

Although meat is habitually eaten by both men and women in our culture, it is more often connected to masculinity and male traits (Adams, 2000; Allen and Ng, 2003; Bailey, 2007; Fiddes, 1991; Joy, 2003; Kheel, 1995, 2004; Smart, 1995). This may be due, in part, to the persistent “superstition that meat gives strength and that men need meat” (Adams, 2000, p. 17). In a U.K. study (1983) examining vegetarianism and the comparative meanings of meat, Julia Twigg, author and professor of social policy and sociology at the University of Kent, found similar evidence of this common association between meat and strength. Her research concluded that meat, and red meat in particular, was considered to have qualities associated with power, qualities such as: strength, aggression, passion, and sexuality (Twigg, 1983). Because these qualities are typically considered desirable for men to possess, men have traditionally been given larger portions and more access to meat in comparison to women and children (Adams, 2000; Fiddes, 1991; Kheel, 2004). For many men, consequently, meat has become “almost synonymous with ‘real’ food” (Fiddes, 1991, p. 14).

This message continues to be reinforced through the media with commercials and print ads telling men that they need meat in order to be “real men.” In three recent U.S. television commercials dubbed both “badvertisements” and “manvertisements” by the

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine [PCRM] (2007), the male characters are shown in situations where they must prove their masculinity in relation to (or despite) their food choices. In the first commercial for Burger King, a man walks out on his dinner date at a fancy restaurant, stating that he's "way too hungry to settle for 'chick food.'" He then goes to Burger King to join a mass crowd of men who are relishing their meaty burgers. The commercial continues along this cliché path as the men shove an SUV over a bridge with their newfound power and another man below hauls a giant tow-truck with his own body strength, motivated solely by a burger being baited before him.

The second commercial, for TGI Fridays, finds four men sitting at a booth about to dig into their meals. Each man in turn yells out the name of the meat they are about to enjoy until the last man ruins the continuity by holding up a piece of broccoli and shouting: "vegetable medley!" There is a moment of uncomfortable glances between the men before the traitor redeems himself by yelling: "sausage!" He is instantly welcomed back into the circle of "meat lovers."

The final manvertisement posted on the PCRM website opens with two men in the checkout line of a grocery store. The first man is embarrassed when the huge block of tofu he's buying isn't scanning properly. He smiles abashedly at the man behind him in line whose groceries include a large pile of red meat products—a stark contrast to the tofu, soymilk, and other vegetarian foods the main character is buying. The man buying the tofu then notices a magazine with a Hummer truck on the cover. He speeds out of the grocery store and immediately buys a Hummer. The commercial ends with the owner of the new Hummer driving away with a satisfied grin on his face; the copy along the bottom of the screen reads: "Restore your manhood." The message in this commercial is

particularly interesting, as it depicts a man who is clearly a vegetarian. The character is portrayed as being embarrassed about his diet choice in front of his peer, and he is only able to “restore his manhood” by buying a large truck.

The Perception that Vegetarianism is Feminine

Although the main message in these commercials is that “real men eat meat,” there is also a subtler but connected message about rejecting femininity and seemingly feminine foods. This idea of meat being masculine and vegetable foods being feminine is not unique, however, to these three commercials. According to Adams (2000), meat has traditionally been associated with masculinity and strength, whereas vegetables and plants have more often been connected with femininity and passivity; one might refer to a strong male individual as a meat-and-potatoes man, for example, while a weak or passive individual might be referred to as a couch potato or a vegetable. A study conducted by Susan Bastow, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at Lafayette University, confirmed the gender associations of various types of foods (Smart, 1995). By asking participants to rate foods on a scale of being either masculine or feminine, the researcher found that vegetarian foods were deemed feminine while meaty foods were considered masculine. In order to be a real man, therefore, men must not only eat meat for strength, but also to demonstrate that they are not feminine. This stereotypical male ideal seems a likely candidate as another barrier to men adopting a vegetarian diet.

There is, unfortunately, additional evidence that there is considerable pressure on men in our society to prove their masculinity through a denial of their “feminine side.” In his book, The Wimp Factor: Gender Gaps, Holy Wars, and the Politics of Anxious

Masculinity, Stephen Ducat describes this concept as “femiphobia” or the male fear of being feminine (2004, p. viii). Ducat believes that this anti-feminine anxiety in the male psyche is cultivated by social cues that reinforce the idea that “the most important thing about being a man is not being a woman” (p.6). This pressure extends to the foods men choose to eat; if men opt for vegetarian foods, for example, they risk being seen as effeminate through this rigid model of masculinity (Adams, 2000; Kheel, 2004).

As Adams (2000) explains, by choosing not to eat meat men are challenging “an essential part of the masculine role. They are opting for women’s food. How dare they?” (p. 48). Because meat, and especially red meat, has traditionally symbolized male virility and a “romantic steak dinner” is a cliché as a prelude to sex, the choice of a man to forgo meat in his diet can lead to questions about his sexual orientation (Adams, 2000; Bailey, 2007; Fiddes, 1991). In Meat: A Natural Symbol, Fiddes describes the story of a young man who moved to a new town to go to school and was viewed with suspicion by the members of the community because of his vegetarian diet:

It was really odd, they seemed to automatically assume that because I was vegetarian then I must be gay. I’m sure it was because of the thing about meat being a sort of virility symbol. And then of course, it wasn’t helped by the fact that I was living in a house with a woman who wasn’t my girlfriend – they couldn’t really comprehend that either. (1991, p. 147)

It is easy to imagine that with homophobia being such a prominent social fear, men might be inclined to shy away from adopting a vegetarian diet (or admitting that they have) in order to avoid being labeled effeminate or gay. Some homosexual vegetarians, in fact,

have admitted “that they had more difficulty ‘coming out’ as vegetarians than coming out as gay” (Kheel, 2004, p. 329).

Meat as a Symbol of Freedom

Meat eating also appears to be symbolic of human rights and freedom (Fiddes, 1991). In relation to animals and the natural world, the freedom to eat meat stands “for the freedom to exploit freely” (Fiddes, p. 64). Further, Twigg explains that from a historical perspective “meat was traditionally seen as the food of freemen and not of slaves” (1983, p. 23).

Along the same lines, eating meat can also be seen as a certain male liberation from a diet of vegetable foods imposed by women. In a U.K. television commercial for pre-cooked sausages, the male character emphasizes the fact that he is sneaking his meaty snack behind his wife’s back and taking a stand against her healthy, vegetarian menu plans. The segment begins with the man speaking to the camera in a hushed tone:

Shhh! Lucy, my beloved, seems to have over-oxygenated at her aerobics class so she’s decided to have 20 minutes under the sun-lamp browning. These days everything has to be brown...brown rice...brown bread...

Well I’m keeping up with the Browns too with these: new Wall’s sausages for the microwave. [Eats one cold, winks, and smiles]. They’re pre-cooked so a couple of minutes in the micro and they come out piping hot and perfectly brown.

And they taste just like good old bangers. No mess...[glances as if listening for his wife upstairs]...and no evidence that anything but celery hearts

and nut cutlets were ever here. Now that's what I call nouvelle cuisine! (Fiddes, 1991, pp. 96-97)

It is interesting to note the parallel images of the wife “browning” under the sun lamp and the perfectly browned sausages. The sausages, consequently, seem to suggest a subtle metaphor for male domination over women. As the character in the commercial warms the meat of the sausages, his wife’s flesh is also cooking to perfection.

Domination over Women and Nature

The connection between meat and domination also permeates the typically male pursuit of hunting. “Hunting, although not an exclusively male activity,” explains Kheel (2004), “has a long history of association with masculine self-identity” and is also an obligatory “rite of passage into manhood” in many cultures (pp. 330-331). According to Kheel (1995), several writers have defended hunting as both a necessary element for achieving manhood and a defining aspect of claiming “one’s status as a full human being” (p. 90). She quotes Paul Shepard from his book, The Tender Carnivore, as proposing that “man is in part carnivore: the male of the species is genetically programmed to pursue, attack and kill for food. To the extent that men do not do so they are not fully human” (as cited in Kheel, 1995, p. 90). In some cultures, in fact, boys are not considered eligible for marriage until they kill their first animal (Fiddes, 1991).

Just as meat is often associated with male virility, hunting is also commonly imbued with sexual allusions (Kheel, 1995). Kheel recalls sitting through a hunter safety training course and being surprised by the sexual terminology used to describe the act of hunting:

Bullets were called ‘balls,’ firing was called ‘discharge,’ and when a bullet hit an animal it was called ‘penetration.’ The power of a gun was referred to as its ‘penetration power.’ If a bullet was accidentally fired before the intended moment, it was labeled a ‘premature discharge.’ (1995, pp. 91-92)

Hunting, and eating the meat of the “kill,” becomes yet another metaphor for masculine power and sexual prowess.

Emotional Detachment

Vegetarians necessarily rebuff the acceptability of hunting by refusing to eat the flesh of animals. This objection to the killing of animals, in turn, can be “equated with sentimentality, childish emotions, or ‘Bambi-morality.’ By extension, this objection is seen as ‘womanish’” (Adams, 2000, p. 88). Neal Barnard, M.D., president of the Physicians’ Committee for Responsible Medicine, believes that the common ethical impetus for becoming vegetarian may be one of the reasons that there are more women than men who have made this dietary choice (Smart, 1995). “In American culture,” he explains, “compassion is something many men are afraid of and even feel threatened by...for women it’s an easier step” (as cited in Smart, ¶ 10). Furthermore, as psychoanalyst and feminist sociologist Nancy Chodorow explains, because girls don’t share the same pressure as boys to demonstrate a personal distance from the femininity of their mothers, “girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object world” (as cited in Kheel, 1995, p. 105). Girls, therefore, develop “a basis for ‘empathy’ built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not” (as cited in Kheel, 1995, p. 105).

If men generally have more difficulty than women accessing their emotions and registering (or perhaps admitting) their feelings of empathy for others, this might present another barrier to men becoming vegetarian. As Allen et al. (2000) note, “emotional distance, as a component of masculinity, plays a role in meat consumption” (as cited in Joy, 2003, p. 39). On either a conscious or a subconscious level, meat eaters may be further detaching themselves from their potential to feel empathy for the animals killed for food by engaging in a psychological process called “psychic numbing.”

Psychic Numbing

Psychic numbing is defined as:

An interruption in psychoemotional processing which leads to diminished or blunted feeling. It is facilitated by and manifested in various ego defense mechanisms. Psychic numbing is thought to allow one to participate in violent practices without experiencing apparent cognitive-affective disturbance (Lifton, 1986). (As cited in Joy, 2003, p. ii)

Psychic numbing, according to Joy (2003), is related to meat consumption as evidenced by “the collective and individual defenses observed in carnistic [or meat eating] culture” (p. ii). Joy conducted a study to examine whether meat eaters use defense mechanisms (denial, dissociation, avoidance, justification, rationalization, objectification, dichotomization, and overgeneralization) to psychologically validate their meat eating habits; she concluded “that psychic numbing facilitates meat consumption” (p. ii). Although psychic numbing is not specific to men, it certainly provides another clue about possible barriers to becoming vegetarian. Psychic numbing serves to reinforce the status

quo of meat eating in our society and provides an “out” for people considering vegetarianism but not fully committed to making the diet change.

Other Barriers to Vegetarianism

While some barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet may be subconscious or directed by social norms and expectations, others appear to be more related to practicality, education, and personal preferences. In a series of focus groups conducted by the Humane Research Council [HRC] (2005), the researchers identified the taste preference for meat as a primary barrier to becoming vegetarian, especially for men. Other barriers for both men and women included the perceptions that vegetarian foods take longer to prepare, that they must be combined in certain ways in order to achieve proper nutrition, and that there was not an acceptable variety of vegetarian food options available. The participants of these studies also expressed a concern that vegetarian foods lacked adequate protein for a healthy diet.

Another interesting barrier reported in the HRC research was the unattractiveness of the absolutist approach that participants felt was employed by most vegetarian advocates. A study conducted for the U.S. “5 A Day for Better Health” campaign found results that echoed this concern about the absolutism of healthy eating (Balch, Loughrey, Weinberg, Lurie, and Eisner, 1997). The researchers found that the participants were more interested in eating “better” than they were in eating “perfectly” (Balch, Loughrey, Weinberg, Lurie, and Eisner, p. 180). This particular barrier has led some vegetarian advocates to suggest that taking a softer approach to vegetarian outreach and focusing on

meat reduction as an acceptable first step to vegetarianism might be a more successful strategy for pro-vegetarian groups to employ (HRC, 2007).

In a study aimed at understanding “the motivations, tensions, and coping mechanisms underlying vegetarianism,” Janda and Trocchia (2001) found that “individual freedom versus social belonging” (p. 1220) was a major tension for vegetarians. The researchers observed that this tension was peaked at social gatherings and revolved around the difficulties that vegetarians face in upholding their vegetarian ideals in a carnistic society. Some vegetarians, consequently, choose to downplay their vegetarianism and keep their views private in social situations.

Family traditions are another commonly cited barrier to becoming vegetarian. Food is often associated with childhood and nurturing; it can, therefore, be difficult to consider rejecting the food that you grew up eating (M. Kheel, personal communication, July 4, 2007). Carol Adams also points out that family traditions that involve meat eating or the exploitation of animals, such as holiday dinners or hunting and fishing, can be very difficult for family members to consider abandoning (as cited in Smart, 1995, ¶ 29).

Unlike most of the barriers discussed above, health and fitness concerns, surprisingly, appear to represent both barriers and motivations for going vegetarian (Janda and Trocchia, 2001). Based on the individual participants in their study on vegetarianism, Janda and Trocchia (2001) concluded that, in general, “men associate enhanced physical fitness with increased meat consumption, whereas women do not make such an association” (p. 1235). Women, they found, appear to equate vegetarian diets with improved health and physical appearance. Although the study referenced above may lead us to believe that men are more inclined to view health as a barrier rather

than a motivator to adopting a vegetarian diet, health is often cited as a major motivator to becoming vegetarian by both men and women (HRC, 2005; Janda and Trocchia, 2001).

Motivations for Adopting a Vegetarian Diet

Despite the fact that there is certainly more information available about the barriers to vegetarianism, there is also a limited amount of information about possible motivators. While this information is not specific to men, it is still important to examine in order to achieve a complete understanding of this topic. Janda and Trocchia (2001) identified four themes of motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet: ethical concerns, health, sensory, and reference group influence (p. 1209). In an HRC study (2005), ethical concerns about inhumane treatment of animals was noted by vegetarians as their primary reason for not eating meat; other motivations for vegetarianism cited in the same study included: a general repulsion with meat and dairy products, improved health, and environmental concerns (p. 2). With respect to reference group influence, the fact that there are increasingly more well known male vegetarians, such as actors, musicians, and sports personalities, may also translate as a motivation for men to consider adopting a vegetarian diet (Smart, 1995).

Religion has traditionally been another motivation for eating a vegetarian diet. Not only do a number of religious practices prohibit their followers from eating particular meats or meat in general, but eschewing meat is also symbolic of an elevated state in some holy orders (Kheel, 2004). “Whereas consuming flesh typically is thought to signify higher status and virility in the secular realm, abstaining from flesh has typically

been thought to signify higher status in the spiritual realm” (Kheel, 2004, p. 330). Eating meat has historically “been thought to arouse the animal passions” and therefore vegetarianism has been viewed “as a means of rising above the realm of carnal desires” (Kheel, 2004, p. 330). As opposed to ethical concerns and feeling a connection and responsibility to animals killed for meat, religious motivations for vegetarianism are more commonly associated with creating a distance from animals and our “animal desires.”

The various motivators to vegetarianism that are explored above, although not exclusively taken from research directed at men, surely capture some of the male motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet. It will be interesting to discover whether different themes emerge with research focused solely on the experiences of men.

Conclusion

This review of literature has explored the information already gathered about the motivations and barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet. Although much of the information from the studies previously conducted on this topic is potentially relevant to men in general, there is currently no proof of this supposition. My ILP will help to correct this problem by providing empirical information about the motivations and barriers that men encounter when they consider adopting a vegetarian diet.

The literature and references consulted also provided a wealth of information about the associations between meat eating and masculinity. It seems likely that the ingrained masculine symbolisms of meat contribute to the barriers that men face with vegetarianism; again, however, this suspicion has not been empirically tested. Through my study I hope to demonstrate whether the masculine symbolisms of meat do in fact

play a determining role in whether men choose to become vegetarian or to eat a typical omnivorous diet.

The information gathered through this project has the potential to add an important piece to the puzzle of vegetarian theory as well as helping to identify what motivates and hinders men in choosing vegetarianism. With this knowledge, it is my hope that educators and advocates can learn how to present vegetarianism as a more attractive choice for men. If we learn what motivates men to become vegetarian, perhaps we can also discover how to help motivate men to take action in other social justice arenas as well.

Chapter Three

Qualitative Interviews with Vegetarian Men

Background Information

In order to gain an understanding of the motivations and barriers that men face in adopting a vegetarian diet, I conducted a series of qualitative interviews with vegetarian men living in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia. Apart from exploring motivations and barriers, the interviews also provided information about individual experiences of male vegetarians. Although staging similar interview sessions in cities across North America would surely have provided useful information and comparisons, I chose to focus my project solely on Vancouver and its suburbs because of time and funding constraints.

The interview process consisted of semi-structured, private interviews with 10 participants who were chosen based on their sequence of response to my interview advertisements as well as whether they met all of the participant criteria (see “Methodology” in Chapter One). Each participant was asked to complete a demographic information questionnaire (Appendix B) and to sign a voluntary consent form (Appendix C) before commencing their interview. All interviews were completed between November 6th and November 16th, 2007 and were tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis and coding.

The interview sessions were held at a variety of locations including a private meeting room at the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, participants’ workplaces, participants’ homes, as well as one interview being conducted at my

residence. The locations and schedules for the interviews were chosen based on convenience for the participants with particular emphasis placed on choosing locations that would provide a comfortable and private space in order to facilitate the sharing of personal information in a safe and relaxed environment. Depending on the participant, the interviews varied from 13 to 65 minutes in length.

Demographic Details of Participants

The participants ranged in age from 24 to 67 years old, with the average age being 41. While all participants fit the study's definition of vegetarian (eat no meat, poultry, or seafood), 4 participants categorized themselves as vegan (eat no animal products). Seven participants out of 10 were born in Canada (with 3 of them having been born in the city of Vancouver), 1 participant was born in The United States, 1 participant was born in South Africa, and 1 participant was born in New Zealand. Of the 10 men interviewed, 6 currently reside within the Vancouver city limits, 3 reside in North Vancouver, and 1 resides in the city of Coquitlam, a suburb of Vancouver. All but 1 participant identified themselves as Caucasian, with the 1 participant choosing to leave this question blank. Participants were employed in a variety of occupations including: administrative, public service, education, computer IT support, business ownership, program management, and positions within the animal protection and environmental protection fields; 1 participant was retired. The education levels completed by the participants ranged from high school diploma to Ph.D., with 6 participants indicating that they had completed a bachelors degree or higher and 1 participant leaving this section blank. The annual income levels reported varied significantly; 2 participants indicated their annual income as falling

within the \$26,000-\$30,000 range, 1 indicated their annual income as \$31,000-\$40,000, 2 marked their annual income as \$41,000-\$50,000, 4 reported an annual income of over \$50,000, and 1 participant refrained from disclosing their annual income level. Of the 10 participants, 3 identified themselves as single, 1 indicated that he was in a committed relationship, 3 marked that they were living with a common-law partner, and 3 indicated that they were married. With the exception of 1 participant who did not specify whether he practiced a religion, the other 9 interviewees revealed that they were agnostic and/or were not members of an organized religion. Only 1 participant I interviewed had a child; the numbers were split evenly, however, as far as whether or not the interviewees lived with a companion animal.

Interview Reporting Summary

After transcribing each interview, the interview texts were analyzed and codes were applied to indicate key themes revealed during the conversations. The key themes were then divided based on whether participants categorized them as motivators or barriers to becoming vegetarian. This next section will detail the interview findings, organized into the following categories and key themes:

Motivations for becoming vegetarian:

- Animal welfare concerns
- Health concerns
- Environmental concerns
- Meat aversion/disgust
- Influence of a partner

- Perceived cost benefit

Barriers to becoming vegetarian:

- Health worries
- Negative perceptions of vegetarians
- Inconvenience and taste preference
- Negative health experiences
- Apprehension about social awkwardness

After reporting the findings in the above categories and key themes, the remainder of the chapter will be devoted to detailing the participants' suggestions for male-focused vegetarian outreach, as well as other information revealed about the participants' experiences after they became vegetarian.

Motivations for Becoming Vegetarian:

Animal Welfare Concerns

The most commonly cited motivation for adopting a vegetarian diet was animal welfare concerns and the desire to reduce animal suffering, with eight participants mentioning this as a primary motivation. One participant described how he had reasoned that he should stop eating meat because he knew that he would not be able to personally kill the animals he had been eating, while another participant explained that his vegetarianism had grown out of his equal feelings of love and empathy for the animals his family kept as pets and the animals they routinely ate. Another participant recalled the guilt he had always felt about eating meat and how it had translated into shame and

the inability to look into the eyes of farmed animals before he decided to become vegetarian.

Significantly, two men specifically credited People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) for motivating them to adopt a vegetarian diet. In both cases the impetus to become vegetarian occurred after watching videos produced by PETA that exposed footage of slaughterhouses and animal farming techniques. In a different interview, a third man described how a chance viewing of a slaughterhouse documentary on television led to his instant decision to stop eating meat:

And...then one night, again I was sitting on the couch watching TV and a documentary about slaughterhouses came on and I have no idea why...I didn't get up and change the channel...I just sat there and watched it. It was about a half hour long...it wasn't...wasn't even sensationalized, it was just factual. And...it pained me so much to see that suffering...right then I decided to become vegetarian.

Some participants also mentioned books relating to animal protection or meat production as being motivators for changing their eating habits. Specific books referenced included Ruth Ozeki's My Year of Meats, Animal Liberation by Peter Singer, and Free the Animals about the Animal Liberation Front.

Health Concerns

Apart from animal welfare concerns, another motivator for adopting a vegetarian diet that was cited by four participants was health concerns and the belief that abstaining from meat would lead to improved health. One participant explained that he instinctually

felt that omitting meat from his diet was the healthiest choice to make, while another revealed that his initial reduction of red meat was motivated by a desire to reduce fat content in his diet as well as being repelled by information about Mad Cow Disease. Interestingly, anxieties about health were categorized as barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet just as frequently as they were categorized as motivators; this concept will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Environmental Concerns

Environmental concerns were mentioned almost as often as health as being a motivational factor, with three participants citing the environment as one consideration that led to their choice to become vegetarian. It is noteworthy, however, that participants pointed to environmental concerns as more of a secondary reason rather than a primary reason for eschewing meat. Some participants reported that reduced environmental degradation was an added benefit to becoming vegetarian rather than a key motivation in their decision.

Meat Aversion/Disgust

One participant explained that leading up to his decision to become vegetarian he had experienced an increasing disgust for unprocessed meats, especially meats that seemed particularly bloody or had visible veins. He remembered associating his meat-eating with gory scenes from the movie, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, or cannibalistic characters that would butcher and serve human flesh in horror films:

I started equating eating meat and seeing a dead animal and commercials on TV for the meat that you buy...I started equating it to like [The] Texas Chainsaw Massacre or something—when you see people cutting up people and serving up human flesh—and I kind of built it up in my head where I...it was the exact same thing.

This mental association of meat with violence, he explained, became a motivating factor in his choice to become vegetarian.

Influence of a Partner

Another participant cited living with a vegetarian partner as being his primary motivation for adopting a vegetarian diet. He described how he had been interested in vegetarianism for some time, but had hesitated to make that change in his own diet until he was living with another vegetarian. He related how this transition had been a natural response to his partner's diet and had served to provide more simplicity in their daily routine.

Perceived Cost Benefit

The final motivation mentioned by one participant was the perception that cutting meat from one's diet would save on grocery expenses. Although the potential cost benefit of a vegetarian diet was reported as a motivation by this participant, he did not perceive it as a major factor in his decision to adopt a vegetarian diet.

Barriers to Becoming Vegetarian:

Health Worries

Of the wide variety of barriers identified by the participants, one of the most prevalent barriers mentioned was the concern that becoming vegetarian would have a negative impact on health. Four participants mentioned health worries as a primary barrier to adopting a vegetarian diet. Several men admitted that they had harbored initial reservations about removing meat from their diets because they feared that they might not be able to get an adequate amount of protein from vegetarian foods. One participant explained that although he had quelled his own fears about the health of a vegetarian diet by researching the topic, he still routinely endures questioning by friends and family members who are concerned for his wellbeing and convey their apprehension about the safety of a meatless diet. While the participants all felt that their health worries had turned out to be unfounded, most indicated that they sometimes encountered non-vegetarians who held the persistent belief that vegetarianism is unhealthy.

Negative Perceptions of Vegetarians

Another barrier that four men recognized as a major deterrent to adopting a vegetarian diet was the negative impressions they held of vegetarians before making that choice themselves. More than one participant recalled thinking that vegetarians were “militant” and feeling compelled to forestall vegetarianism in order to avoid being associated with that type of personality. One man described his negative experience with a vegetarian woman that tainted his view of vegetarians:

The only experience I had with vegetarians really was my girlfriend and she was always in my face about it—that pissed me off so...I guess the only preconceived notion I had about vegetarians were...were that they're extremists and they're, you know, always lecturing you (both laugh). That was just something I couldn't do...I'm not that type of person....So I knew that I wouldn't become that type of person, but I was worried that other people were going to view me like: oh my god, here we have some radical, liberal hippie or something.

A number of participants said that they had categorized vegetarians as “freaks” in the past and that they had imagined vegetarians as skinny, sickly-looking people who had nothing in common with them. In one interview, a participant articulated his original perception of vegetarians in detail:

I thought of vegetarians as being...unhealthy, overly-thin, like, *supremely* underweight, and...just...but, like I say, always—it's kind of funny to think back to it—I just imagined they were very, very hippie, very...didn't do anything other than just sort of meditate and smoke dope and (both laugh)...eat vegetables. I just had this weird view of what a vegetarian looked like.

A different participant explained that where he had been raised vegetarians were so uncommon that they “might [as well] have been from a different planet.”

One man also talked about his concerns that people might perceive him as wimpy if he stopped eating meat. When asked what would have made it easier for him to become vegetarian, he replied:

Maybe if it wasn't so...if there wasn't such a stigma against guys. I've always had a problem...feeling masculine, 'cause I've always been kind of a sensitive

guy, an overemotional guy, so I didn't want to look like a real wimp becoming a vegetarian as well.

This participant revealed that this worry related to the fact that he had personally viewed vegetarian men as wimpy before he decided to become vegetarian himself.

Inconvenience and Taste Preference

While four men recounted preliminary worries that becoming vegetarian would make mealtimes more complicated, most of the participants expressed being impressed with the abundance and quality of meat-substitutes, the variety of stores that stocked vegetarian foods, and the familiarity of vegetarianism in Vancouver. One man, on the other hand, revealed that his biggest barrier for becoming vegetarian and maintaining his vegetarianism is the fact that he doesn't particularly like vegetables and that he hasn't been able to find meat-substitutes that he enjoys. This participant explained that all of his favorite foods were meat and that the idea of giving up his staple foods and getting used to new flavors had presented an initial barrier to becoming vegetarian.

Negative Health Experiences

Also related to food, two participants recounted stories about negative experiences they had endured due to their lack of knowledge about vegetarian food options and how to replace their missing calories with meat-substitutes or other vegetable foods. One man, for example, lost a significant amount of weight in his first few months as a vegetarian; he had continued his regular, strenuous exercise schedule but had simply removed meat from his diet without substituting any vegetarian foods, thus greatly

reducing his daily intake of calories. After his doctor identified the problem as a calorie deficiency, however, he was able to quickly return to his regular weight with a balanced vegetarian diet. Another participant described how his first attempt at vegetarianism had failed because of a similar experience:

Interviewer (I): Now did you experience any moments of doubt about whether it was a good idea once you decided [to become vegetarian]?

Participant (P): Absolutely. Primarily because the first time I did it all I did...my family was very much meat and potatoes and boiled vegetables.

I: Okay.

P: And so what I did...I just took out the meat and I just continued to eat the...the potatoes and boiled vegetables. I, no surprise, got really sick.

I: Uh-huh.

P: Because there's not a lot of nutrient value in that. And for sandwiches I would just take the meat out, so it would be mayonnaise and lettuce (both laugh), you know. So it really was not a healthy option...so...

I: Um-hum.

P: Yeah, that was definitely a big turn-off. That was the first time and I thought: oh, I guess it's not possible then—I don't know what people are talking about.

As this participant explained, his inexperience with vegetarian foods and consequent unsuccessful first attempt at becoming vegetarian created a barrier between his desire to adopt a vegetarian diet and his fears that it could not be accomplished in a healthy way.

Apprehension about Social Awkwardness

Two participants mentioned anxieties about dealing with awkward social situations as being a barrier when they first considered cutting meat out of their diets. In one interview a participant disclosed that he still occasionally feels uncomfortable when it seemed that he is inconveniencing people with his diet preferences. Another participant revealed that the “anti-vegetarian” attitude of his friends and family had presented a barrier when he first considered becoming vegetarian.

Suggestions for Outreach

At the end of each interview I asked the participants if they could think of any suggestions for how vegetarian advocates could more effectively reach out to men. The most common suggestions were to make vegetarianism seem more manly, cool, and mainstream and to provide more accurate information about the benefits of a vegetarian diet, the risks associated with meat consumption, and practical information about how to make the transition to a meatless diet. Some participants felt that vegetarian advocates were already doing a laudable job of making vegetarianism seem more mainstream and cool, but others felt that a greater effort could be made to make it seem more macho and sexy. A couple of the interviewees suggested that advocates advertise vegetarianism as being appealing to women and as a good way to meet girls; it was unclear, however, whether this response was prompted by me mentioning to some of the participants that statistically there are more female than male vegetarians in North America.

Another suggestion that was echoed by a few of the participants was to promote the image of strong, fit, male vegetarians in order to counter some of the negative

stereotypes of vegetarian men portrayed in popular culture. Two participants specifically expressed their belief that witnessing more professional, male, vegetarian sports figures in pop culture would likely lead to more men considering and possibly adopting a vegetarian diet.

Another participant referenced the many animated feature films in the past few years that have included pro-vegetarian messages—films such as Chicken Run and Over the Hedge. He felt that films with these types of messages should be promoted as he believes that they help to make vegetarianism seem more acceptable and commonplace within our society.

More than one participant also felt that more information should be disseminated to the public about the source of their food. These participants explained that if more people knew the realities of meat production they would be better equipped to make informed decisions about whether they wanted to continue eating meat rather than simply following the cultural norm.

Furthermore, several participants suggested focusing efforts on educating young people about vegetarian issues and teaching young men, in particular, to have compassion for all animals. One man elaborated on this concept of teaching compassion to boys from an early age:

And so if boys can be taught from a very early age that things like that, like even beetles, are...sentient beings that deserve the right to live their lives free from suffering. 'Cause I think boys...especially given today's culture, I think when boys become adolescents and then men they're kind of entrenched in the stereotypical roles that are really hard to shake. I think women are much more

flexible, you know, maybe because in society women can have...I think women have more opportunities in today's society, you know. Men still are kind of put into this box of certain roles they have to play, you know? 'Cause men...if they don't fit into that box they're considered gay....I think women can...do a variety of professions now and it's acceptable whereas a man is still taught to be a bit macho. So I think getting to men before they become men and educating them that it's okay to be sensitive and compassionate towards animals...it's not a weakness, it's a strength.

Many of the participants felt that educating young people was a key component in giving males the information they need and allowing them to feel comfortable with choosing vegetarianism.

Other suggestions for vegetarian advocates included making it clear to men that it was not as difficult as it might seem to be vegetarian and advertising more vegetarian groups and networks so it wouldn't seem like as alienating of a process.

Participants' Experiences after Becoming Vegetarian:

Reactions of Friends, Family, and Acquaintances

Although the purpose of this project was to identify males' motivations and barriers to becoming vegetarian, it is also interesting to look at the reactions of other people to the participants' choice to follow a vegetarian diet. While examining the reactions of others doesn't provide information about initial motivations or barriers for becoming vegetarian, it uncovers potential motivators or barriers to remaining vegetarian.

Participants reported receiving a variety of reactions from friends, family, and acquaintances relating to their decision to adopt a vegetarian diet. The reactions ranged from teasing and ridicule, to acceptance, support, surprise, and curiosity. The ratio of positive to negative reactions recounted by the participants seemed to be fairly equal, with some participants divulging that they had experienced both positive and negative reactions depending on who they were sharing their diet information with.

Several participants conveyed feeling that people were generally supportive of their decision to cut meat out of their diets. One man informed me that he had never experienced any tension with friends or family over his choice to adopt a vegetarian diet and that the only issue that occasionally arose was that some people were unsure of what to cook when they invited him for dinner. Most of the participants who mentioned positive reactions to their vegetarianism had also noticed that people tended to be very curious about their reasons for becoming vegetarian and wanted to know the details of their individual processes. One of the interviewees felt that this curiosity opened a door and allowed him to connect with people and educated them about the realities of modern farming.

A number of men also experienced negative responses regarding their vegetarianism. Half of the men described being teased or ridiculed by family and friends about their decision to become vegetarian; some men explained that the teasing had been fairly lighthearted, while others had been subjected to more of a hurtful teasing. One of the participants explained that although he had encountered several men who had reacted with negativity and hostility to his vegetarianism, he had never come across a woman who reacted negatively.

Another participant described how his in-laws had been particularly unhappy with his decision to become vegetarian and had repeatedly pressured him to start eating meat again. He went on to explain that raising his young daughter vegetarian has also attracted a lot of disapproving responses from friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Even after receiving backing from a child dietician, he revealed, people still seem to be uncomfortable with he and his wife's decision to feed their daughter a vegetarian diet.

A majority of the participants recalled reactions of surprise by people when they learned of their vegetarianism. In most of the scenarios, participants explained that people reacted with shock to the knowledge that they are vegetarian and say that they don't look vegetarian. One man reproduced a typical scenario for me:

I: How do people typically react when they find out that you're vegetarian?

P: Typically they go (both laugh): "Wow, you don't look vegetarian!"

(Interviewer laughs). I'm like, "No, I'm not sickly, I'm not pale, I'm healthy and I'm happy and active," right? And I'm not protesting, so...I just break the stereotype I think. I'm the average height and weight and...I'm healthy. So, people don't know what to expect.

A different participant explained that people are surprised that he is vegetarian because he is extremely active in intensive sports which is something that he doesn't feel is often associated with vegetarians.

Self-perception and Emotional Changes

Throughout the interviews, many of the participants also reported changes in self-perception and heightened emotional recognition which they felt resulted from their

choice to adopt a vegetarian diet. Several participants expressed feeling that their choice to become vegetarian had made them more aware of their emotions and had led to deeper consideration about the world around them and how they interact with other people. One participant revealed that he had often masked his emotions in the past and that people had generally thought of him as an unemotional person. This all changed, he contends, after becoming vegetarian as he was forced to recognize his feelings of disgust with himself for contributing to animal suffering through his meat-eating and was compelled to share his thoughts and emotions about this subject with others.

Another participant articulated how he had started donating to humanitarian organizations after becoming vegetarian and pondered whether there was any correlation between these two events. Several participants related feeling that they had become more compassionate in general since becoming vegetarian.

Three of the participants mentioned that being vegetarian made them feel good about themselves because they felt that they were not as much a part of the destruction taking place in the world. In one interview, a participant also divulged how becoming vegetarian has made him feel both strong and content:

I think actually in a way it gives me strength...in that I know that the stereotype says men are not supposed to be sympathetic or show a softer side and I think that gives me...I almost feel bullet proof when I say I'm vegetarian, because again I have the courage to say I am and I can look in the mirror and say, you know, my dietary choices do not cause another living thing to suffer. I think that takes strength.

All of the men that I interviewed expressed satisfaction with their choice to adopt a vegetarian diet.

Chapter Four

Summary and Conclusions

Summary: Interpretation of Findings

The qualitative research interviews that I conducted provided a glimpse into some of the various motivators, barriers, and experiences of men who choose to become vegetarian and maintain a vegetarian lifestyle. The ten participants who shared their stories and experiences with me allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the male vegetarian psyche and provided me with an opportunity to compare their reports against the information I uncovered in my review of literature. Through these interviews I was also afforded the chance to measure some of my own suppositions about possible motivators and barriers that men face in adopting a vegetarian diet against those cited by the participants in my study. I discovered that while some of my findings echoed the research and literary discourses that I had studied, my research interviews also uncovered some new and surprising information.

Overall, I found that many of the motivations mentioned by the participants in my study were ones that had been revealed in previous research on vegetarians (HRC, 2005; Janda and Trocchia, 2001). While the studies conducted by the Humane Research Council (2005) and Janda and Trocchia (2001) did not focus specifically on men, several of the key motivators identified in their studies for adopting a vegetarian diet were the same motivators that my male participants cited as their primary reasons for becoming vegetarian—namely, animal welfare concerns, health benefits, environmental concerns, and repulsion with meat.

In my study, however, I also identified the influence of a vegetarian partner, and the (potential) cost benefit of reducing meat from one's diet as being additional motivations for choosing a vegetarian diet. With regards to animal welfare concerns, several participants that I interviewed specifically cited slaughterhouse documentaries and books relating to meat production or animal rights as being primary motivators in their decision to become vegetarian; it is relevant to note that the participants who felt that their primary motivation was seeing footage of slaughterhouses also revealed that their decision to adopt a vegetarian diet was instant after watching these documentaries. Also noteworthy is the information that one participant provided about how his repulsion with "bloody" meat transformed into a disturbing mental association with human violence and cannibalism as depicted in horror films. His description of this mental progression of associating meat with violence is reminiscent of the link that some animal protection groups have made between violence towards non-human animals and violence towards people (see The Humane Society of the United States, First Strike Campaign; Society and Animals Forum; and the Animal Legal Defense Fund for more information on this concept).

Although most of the barriers reported by the participants in my study were also familiar from my background research, I was surprised by which barriers were prioritized by the participants as being the most relevant. While health concerns were cited as barriers in both the HRC (2005) and Janda and Trocchia (2001) studies, for example, I did not expect that they would represent one of the most common barriers reported during my interviews. This barrier ties into negative impressions of vegetarians, which was the other most often referenced barrier reported by the participants of my study. Many of the

negative impressions mentioned were related to images that the participants had once held of vegetarians as being unhealthy, underweight, skinny, gaunt, or sickly looking. It was not clear from the interviews, however, where these negative impressions of vegetarians had originated. Despite the fact that some of the participants could point to negative depictions of vegetarians in popular culture, the majority of the men I interviewed maintained that they were not personally influenced by pop culture.

It is also useful to recognize the different pressures that men and women face in relation to body image; as one participant pointed out during our interview: women often worry about gaining weight while men are worried about losing weight. The fact that vegetarianism was so commonly associated with images of skinny, underweight individuals by the men that I interviewed is surely implicated in the fear some participants reported that cutting meat from their diet would negatively affect their health and/or cause them to lose weight.

Some men also mentioned having the impression, in the past, that vegetarians were “militant” in their tactics with non-vegetarians and being deterred by this factor. More than one participant also described their journey towards vegetarianism as gradual and non-dogmatic. These reports seem to confirm the HRC (2005) findings that a non-absolutist approach to vegetarian advocacy might be a useful tactic to consider when reaching out to men.

Another interesting discovery from my interviews was the fact that the participants did not generally associate meat with masculinity or vegetarianism with femininity, as I had expected from my review of literature; if they did mention these associations, on the other hand, they did not seem to be overly concerned with these

concepts or feel that they represented a major barrier to their decision to become vegetarian. Only one participant voiced anxieties that becoming vegetarian might make him seem wimpy or less masculine in some way. Again, however, he did not see this as a pivotal barrier against adopting a vegetarian diet.

Several participants, nevertheless, felt that it was important for vegetarian advocates to try to portray vegetarianism as being more manly, macho, sexy, and cool. It seemed that although the men I interviewed didn't feel particularly influenced by pop cultural depictions of male vegetarians, they still recognized that this might be an important element for other men. This dichotomy led me to wonder whether the types of men who become vegetarian might be inherently more independent than the general population.

I also found it interesting that several participants mentioned PETA as an important influence in their decision to become vegetarian; many participants also felt that PETA was leading the way as far as making vegetarianism seem more mainstream and cool. I have wondered whether PETA's vegetarian celebrity and sports personality campaigns were effective, but more than one participant felt that these types of campaigns in particular were an important positive influence for both men and women who might consider becoming vegetarian.

With regards to the reactions of friends, family members, and acquaintances, more people reported receiving support and positive feedback to their vegetarianism than I had expected. Similarly, I had not anticipated that so many participants would cite friendly curiosity as a common reaction when people discovered that they no longer ate meat; I had, I suppose, presumed that most people would have experienced negative

reactions from their peers and relatives. It was less astonishing to hear that people were often surprised that the participants were vegetarian and that they frequently received comments about not looking vegetarian—these types of reactions point to the persistent stereotype of vegetarians as being unhealthy, sickly, and inactive.

While the reactions of others to the participants' vegetarianism seemed to have very little bearing on their initial motivations and barriers for choosing meatless diets, I felt that it was still relevant to examine this aspect of the participants' lives. It is, after all, not uncommon to hear people speak about how they “used to be vegetarian” and negative reactions from friends, family, and acquaintances can certainly provide added pressures and doubts to such a profound lifestyle change as the food one chooses to eat. By looking at not only the initial motivations and barriers to someone's choice to become vegetarian but also the ongoing occurrences that either reinforce or weaken their resolve to continue along that path, we are able to create a more complete picture of the process and gain further understanding about ways to effectively support these decisions.

I was quite intrigued by the fact that many of the participants felt that becoming vegetarian had opened them up to their own emotions and had made them feel more compassionate in general with respect to a host of issues facing the world. One participant even described how he had begun donating to humanitarian charities after adopting a vegetarian diet. These reports of emotional awakenings and heightened social awareness and compassion in relation to vegetarianism have important implications for humane educators and advocates of social justice issues in general. The accounts of these interviewees supports the idea that if men (or perhaps people on the whole) become

active in one social justice arena they might be more apt to branch out and become involved with other social justice issues.

Finally, I found it relevant that several participants in my study felt that it was important to teach young men in particular to be compassionate to all living beings before they grow up and risk getting trapped in a stereotypical macho role that doesn't condone empathetic expression. More than one participant sensed that if boys were taught that it was acceptable and even preferable for males to show sensitivity and empathy towards other people and animals, then it would be less challenging to reach out to men later in life and effectively educate them about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. This concept of teaching young men about compassionate living fits nicely into the humane education model and is an area that humane educators and vegetarian advocates might consider devoting more attention to.

Conclusions

I commenced this project in an attempt to discover the motivations and barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet that are specific to men. I also hoped to generate suggestions about how to effectively encourage men to choose vegetarianism as well as become involved with other social justice issues. While I was able to successfully achieve those goals through the completion and analysis of this research project, I also learned what a positive and transformative force the choice to become vegetarian can be in relation to helping men access their own emotions, humanity, and compassion. Each participant I interviewed described feeling good about their decision to adopt a vegetarian diet and

several men reiterated that they felt that this choice brought them more in line with their values and made them feel that they were causing more good and less harm in the world.

Living one's life by attempting to cause the most good and least harm possible is a central theme in humane education and the values taught through the programs at the Institute for Humane Education. Although it is impossible in our modern society to lead a life that is completely free of harm (be it harm to animals, the environment, other people, or ourselves), attempting to cause as little harm as possible by considering our actions is an enlightening goal to strive for.

This project has opened my eyes to the fact that while men and women may experience similar motivations and barriers for adopting a vegetarian diet, there appear to be more social pressures for men to avoid making choices that could risk branding them as wimpy or weak. Even though some men may choose to ignore these pressures, they are still keenly aware that they exist. I believe this is all the more reason to heed the advice of several of the participants and teach compassion and empathy to males while they are young enough to still be relatively untainted by the social pressures of their sex to be tough and macho and not to show a "weak underbelly" or be too sensitive about the suffering of other beings. Although it would be ideal to reach boys at a young age and teach them about these positive messages of compassion, this project has also made me realize that under the sometimes hard exterior that is presented to the outside world, most men are filled with empathy that they may simply not have recognized in themselves.

This project has also helped to clarify for me the importance of humane education and the relevance of the four elements of humane education (Weil, 2004) which I heard the participants of my study unknowingly reference over and over again. These elements

are: “providing accurate information....fostering the 3 Cs: curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking....instilling the 3 Rs: reverence, respect, and responsibility....[and] offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the Earth, and animals” (Weil, 2004, pp. 19-20). Although the participants I interviewed were not familiar with the four elements of humane education it is instructive to note the importance they placed on many of these elements in reference to their own journeys in adopting a vegetarian diet. I will certainly keep this fact in mind during my own pursuits as an educator.

While I realize that there is always more to learn about any given subject, it is my hope that this ILP can help provide humane educators and advocates with a small stepping stone towards more effectively reaching out to young men as well as to the larger population about the benefits of vegetarianism and the importance of taking action in other social justice arenas. For myself, I feel that this ILP has served to fuel a deeper curiosity about the motivations and barriers to action as well as the ever-evolving subject of masculine and feminine identity in our North American society. I look forward to continuing my investigation of these subjects in both my professional and personal lives.

Appendix A

Interview Preamble

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. I really appreciate the time you've taken to be interviewed today.

I'd like to begin by telling you a little more about the project. This study is designed to investigate the motivations and barriers that men face in becoming vegetarian. Through this study, I hope to gain an understanding of the experiences of male vegetarians in the greater Vancouver area. Your participation in this project will provide important information to the study of food choices; it will be of great benefit to my study, but also to other vegetarian men as well as the greater vegetarian community.

I will be asking you a series of questions and I will be tape recording our conversation so that I can reference it later in my academic report. It is important for you to feel that you can respond as openly as possible, with the understanding that there are no right or wrong answers and that all interviews will be anonymous. Please let me know if you are unclear about the meaning of any of my questions during the interview. Once the interview is finished, we can discuss any reactions you might have to the questions I've asked and you'll be given the opportunity to ask me any additional questions that you might have about the study. You are also welcome to call or e-mail me to discuss any thoughts or reactions you might have after the interview.

Before we begin I need you to take a moment to read and sign this consent form, allowing me to proceed with this interview. I want to bring your attention to the fact that you have the right to terminate this interview at any time during this meeting. Do you

have any questions before we begin or is there anything that you would like me to clarify at this time?

Interview Questions

- I understand that you are vegetarian—you don't eat any meat, poultry, or seafood, is that correct?
- Why did you stop eating meat?
- Before you decided to stop eating meat, was there anything that made you less comfortable or uncomfortable about idea of becoming vegetarian?
- Do you remember having any preconceived ideas about vegetarians before you decided to make the change yourself? If so, what were they?
- Prompt: Do you remember having any preconceived ideas about male vegetarians before you decided to stop eating meat?
- Before becoming vegetarian, did you experience any moments of doubt about whether it was a good idea? If so, can you tell me more about why you were ambivalent?
- Can you tell me what specifically influenced you to become vegetarian?
- Prompts: Were there any specific people who influenced you in this decision? Were there any specific books, films, or images that influenced you in this decision?
- Do you think there are any drawbacks to being vegetarian?
- Prompts: Are there any physical drawbacks? Are there any emotional or psychological drawbacks? Are there any social drawbacks?

- (If they mention drawbacks) Do you think woman experience these same drawbacks?
- Has your choice to be vegetarian ever lead to a conflict with another person? If so, could you tell me about some specific situations when conflicts arose?
- How do people typically react when they learn that you're vegetarian?
- Prompt: Do you think people are surprised when they learn that you are vegetarian?
- Is it a positive or negative or neutral surprise/reaction? Why do you think this is the case?
- Do you think the fact that you are a man has any bearing on the way people react to your food choices? If so, how?
- How do you think pop culture depicts men who are vegetarian? How do you feel about this? And/or what do you think about this?
- How has being vegetarian impacted your feelings/understanding about yourself as a person? How has it impacted your feelings/understanding about yourself as a male?
- What, if anything, would have made it easier for you to become vegetarian?
- What would you recommend that vegetarian advocates do when reaching out to males?
- Is there anything you'd like to add that you think is important for me to know before we complete the interview?

Conclusion

I have no further questions. Are there any other comments you would like to make or questions you would like to ask before we conclude?

I hope that this has been a positive and interesting experience for you. Your participation has been extremely helpful for my project and will also provide important information to the research and vegetarian communities. Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix B

Demographic Information Request Form

1. Full name:
2. Date of birth:
3. Age:
4. Diet (please check one):
 - ☐ Vegetarian (eat no meat, poultry, or seafood)
 - ☐ Vegan (eat no animal products)
5. City and country of birth:
6. City of residence:
7. Ethnicity:
8. Occupation:
9. Highest education level completed:
10. (Optional) Annual income level (please check one):
 - ☐ Under \$5,000
 - ☐ \$5,000-\$15,000
 - ☐ \$16,000-\$25,000
 - ☐ \$26,000-\$30,000
 - ☐ \$31,000-\$40,000
 - ☐ \$41,000-\$50,000
 - ☐ Over \$50,000

11. Relationship status (please check one or more):

- ☐ Single
- ☐ In a committed relationship
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Common-law
- ☐ Divorced

12. Do you have children?

13. Religion/Spiritual orientation:

14. Do you live with a pet?

Appendix C

Consent to Participate in Research

11/2/07

Purpose:

The purpose of this research project is to gain an understanding of male's motivations and barriers to becoming vegetarian. This project is being conducted by Liberty Mulkani, who is a graduate student of The Institute for Humane Education and Cambridge College, as part of the Independent Learning Project requirement.

Researcher:

Liberty Mulkani

(604) 812-5541

liberty4ny@hotmail.com

Procedures:

[1] This study involves one tape-recorded interview and the completion of a demographic request form.

[2] Completion of these procedures will require approximately 60 minutes of participation.

[3] The interview procedure is an informal conversation between the researcher and the participant. It will be tape-recorded for accuracy and convenience. It will cover a set of questions geared to help the researcher understand your experience becoming and being

vegetarian. The researcher will both ask you questions and sometimes take notes during the discussion.

Possible Risks and Safeguards:

This study is designed to minimize as much as possible any potential physical, psychological, and social risks to you. Although very unlikely, there are always risks in research, which you are entitled to know in advance of giving your consent, as well as the safeguards to be taken by those who conduct the project to minimize the risks.

I understand that:

[1] Although my identity shall be known to the researcher, all identifying information shall be removed at the time of transcription of the tape recordings.

[2] My responses to the questions will be pooled with others and all identifiers which might be used to identify me will be deleted.

[3] The information obtained from me will be examined in terms of group findings, and will be reported anonymously.

[4] All personal information I provide associated with my identity will not be released to any other party without my explicit written permission.

[5] If quotes of my responses are used in the research report, as well as any and all future publications of these quotations, my identity shall remain anonymous, and at most make use of a fictitious name.

[6] I have the right to refuse to answer any question asked of me.

[7] I have the right to refuse at any time to engage in any procedure requested of me.

[8] I have the right to withdraw from participation at any time for any reason without stating my reason.

[9] I have the right to participate without prejudice on the part of the researcher.

[10] It is possible that the procedures may bring to my mind thoughts of an emotional nature which may upset me. In the unlikely event that I should become upset or experiences emotional distress from my participation, the researcher shall be available to speak with me about my experience. She shall make every effort to minimize such an occurrence.

[11] A copy of this consent form with signatures will be given to me for my records.

Benefits:

I understand that my participation in this study may have possible and potential benefits.

[1] I may obtain a greater personal awareness, knowledge, and understanding of some of my food choices.

[2] Through future communications and possible applications of the findings of the research, indirectly my participation may bring future benefits to others who have the same experience or who wish to become vegetarian.

[3] My participation may enable the researcher and others working in this topic area to make a contribution to knowledge and theory to male's motivations and barriers to becoming vegetarian.

Summary Report:

Upon conclusion of this study, a summary report of the general findings will become available. If you would like a copy of the report, please provide the address to which you would like it sent (your e-mail or postal address):

Disclaimer:

Participation in this study puts participants at minimal psychological but no social or physical risks. The researcher, The Institute for Humane Education, and Cambridge College will not provide compensation or medical care in the unlikely event it can be established that injuries are incurred as a result of participation in this research project.

Consent of Researcher:

I have explained the above procedures and conditions to this study, and provided an opportunity for the research participant to ask questions and have attempted to provide satisfactory answers to all questions that have been asked in the course of this explanation.

Signature and date

Print name

Consent of Participant:

If you have any questions of the researcher at this point, please take this opportunity to have them answered before granting your consent. If you are ready to provide consent, read the statement below, then sign, and print your name and date on the lines below.

I have read the above information, have had an opportunity to ask questions about any and all aspects of this study, and give my consent to participate.

Signature and date

Print name

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F . L I B E R T Y M U L K A N I

OBJECTIVE

To use my academic training to educate people about social justice issues and positively change perceptions and policies that affect animals, people, and the environment.

EDUCATION

Candidate: Master of Education, Humane Education

Cambridge College, Cambridge, MA ~ 2005-Present

- Program focuses on animal protection, environmental ethics, human rights, and cultural and media issues; currently maintaining a 4.0 average

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theatre Major

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. ~ 1995-1999

- Course work included a focus on performance and directing techniques, leading rehearsals, traditional mask making, critiques, and academic writing

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Conference Coordinator

Animal Legal Defense Fund, (remote work) ~ 2006-Present

- Ongoing conference coordination and planning of semi-annual ALDF conferences
- Successfully planned and coordinated a national animal law conference at Harvard Law School, Spring 2006

Office Manager

Telescopic Camera Crane Ltd., North Vancouver, BC ~ 2005-Present

- Manage daily office operations for a company that rents specialized equipment for the film industry
- Coordinate bookings, contracts, insurance, crew, and bookkeeping details with various film Production Managers and Coordinators
- Perform all bookkeeping, bill payments, invoicing, lease reports, and monthly tax filing requirements

Animal Law Program Assistant

Animal Legal Defense Fund, Petaluma, CA ~ 2002-2006

- Provided case-specific legal research for attorneys
- Promoted the formation of law student organizations and animal law classes
- Liaised with hundreds of attorney and law student members
- Reviewed and awarded grant applications for law student projects
- Editing Assistant of attorney *Update* publication
- Maintained pleadings database and physical files
- Planned and presented at a national conference at Yale Law School

Server and Catering AssistantSparks Restaurant, Guerneville, CA ~ 2003-2004

- Prepared and served organic, gourmet vegan meals
- Ran a successful food booth at the San Francisco Farmer's Garden Market
- Coordinated and executed large catering events at weddings and festivals
- Educated customers about factory farming and the importance of local and organic products

VOLUNTEER WORK

President, Board of DirectorsVancouver Humane Society, Vancouver, BC ~ 2007-Present

- Coordinate and lead bi-monthly board meetings and annual general meeting
- Prepare and conduct annual performance review of Executive Director
- Oversee humane education program

Host Program VolunteerNorth Shore Multicultural Society, North Vancouver, BC ~ 2007-Present

- Matched with new immigrant to Canada; meet with match once a week to help them practice English, learn about Canadian culture, and adjust to life in Canada
- Attend events and outings with match

North Shore Dine-Out CoordinatorEarthSave Canada, Vancouver, BC ~ 2005-Present

- Organize and host bi-monthly vegan "dine-out" dinner events at restaurants
- Advertise dine-outs, coordinate registrations, liaise with chefs and restaurant managers, write dine-out copy for EarthSave newsletter, and collect and manage fees at events
- Promote the benefits of a plant-based diet

Director, Board of DirectorsVancouver Humane Society, Vancouver, BC ~ 2006-2007

- Participated in bi-monthly board meetings, financial planning, and e-mail discussions
- Wrote reports and presented information at board meetings about the society's humane education program (Power of One)

Committee Member and Presenter, Power of One Humane EducationVancouver Humane Society, Vancouver, BC ~ 2006-2007

- Co-presented programs at various schools in Greater Vancouver and Victoria areas
- Attended regular committee meetings to plan Power of One projects
- Wrote articles and curriculum for Power of One

SKILLS and ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Silver Education Award recipient, Celebrating Women and the Spirit of the Cranes, Burns Bog Conservation Society, 2007
- Volunteer of the Month, June 2004, Petaluma Animal Services
- Governor General of Canada's Award for Excellence in Race Relations, Vancouver Youth Theatre Ensemble, 1992
- Participated in and tabled at a variety of animal and environmental protection conferences
- Highly proficient in Windows XP, Word, Access, Excel, Publisher, and Mac platforms
- Conversational French, brown belt in kickboxing, piano Gr. 6 Royal Conservatory