

Focus Groups on Vegetarianism

A study of four focus groups conducted in Seattle



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Report in Brief

In February 2002, the Humane Research Council (HRC) conducted a series of four focus groups to understand the range and relative importance of people's motives, objections, and barriers to adopting vegetarian and vegan diets, as well as general perceptions of vegetarians, vegans, and vegetarian advocates. This document includes a detailed report on the findings from those focus groups and HRC's interpretation of the results. This report was originally published in April 2002 under HRC's previous name and was reissued in December 2005 with minor updates, including omission of the HRC opinion section.

HRC Information

HRC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to maximizing the effectiveness of animal advocates by applying professional, cost-efficient, and informative consumer and market research methods.

To learn more about HRC, please contact us:

By phone: (206) 852-4848

By e-mail: info@humaneresearch.org

Online: <http://www.humaneresearch.org>

By post: Post Office Box 70180
Seattle, WA 98127-0179

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Introduction and Background

This qualitative research report was originally published in April 2002 and represents the first research report produced by the Humane Research Council (HRC), then called the ARmedia Institute. This report is intended to help vegetarian and animal advocates begin to understand the most effective tactics and approaches to persuading people to adopt vegetarian and vegan diets. Specifically, this report attempts to provide some insight regarding answers to the following questions:

- Why do vegetarians and vegans choose to avoid meat (and/or dairy)?
- Why do people who consume meat and dairy object to vegetarian diets?
- What are peoples' perceptions of the animal liberation movement, its activists, and its current vegetarian advocacy approaches?

A comprehensive understanding of these questions is impossible to obtain from any single research project, but we hope that this report is a catalyst for the development of additional research projects and a renewed desire to understand the drivers of vegetarianism and veganism.

HRC conducted a series of four focus groups in Seattle on February 8th and 9th, 2002, comprised individually of vegetarian women, non-vegetarian women, vegetarian men, and non-vegetarian men. Each group included seven to nine participants recruited by Gilmore Research (Seattle) using a database of over 40,000 local residents. Participants were engaged in an approximately 90-minute discussion by a research professional (moderator) with 14 years of experience in conducting focus groups. The moderator followed a discussion guide developed by HRC. Prior to the group discussion, participants completed a questionnaire that covered unaided primary reasons for either choosing vegetarianism or veganism (in the case of vegetarians and vegans) or for objecting to a vegetarian diet for themselves (in the case of non-vegetarians). This step ensured that individual-level ("unaided") information was gathered for each participant in these areas.

Please keep in mind two important caveats as you read through this report.

1. These focus groups were conducted in Seattle, which we feel is comprised of people who are more informed about animal issues than residents in other cities and is generally more progressive than other cities or rural areas throughout the U.S. (more vegetarian restaurants, cooperatives, advocacy groups, etc.). Any single city in isolation, particularly one that is more progressive, will to some extent bias the results; more groups must be conducted to validate these results across a variety of geographies.
2. The group of vegetarian men were the most difficult to recruit, indicating that they represent a relatively small percent of the Seattle-area population. This also resulted in a group of participants that were unusually aware of animal issues -- three members of the group were vegans and all engaged in animal advocacy on various levels.

Executive Summary

KEY FINDINGS

- Vegetarians generally hold that the inhumane treatment of animals on factory farms is the primary motivator for choosing their diets, but non-vegetarians clearly indicate that health is the primary (and in some cases the only) motivator that could convince them to consider vegetarianism. Note that this reflects how people reacted to different discussions and stimuli presented during the groups, and does not necessarily represent the *effectiveness* of these approaches in convincing people to adopt vegetarian diets.
- Both vegetarians and non-vegetarians agree that it is less effective to combine the messages of inhumane animal treatment and health in a single cohesive argument. For instance, the use of graphic slaughterhouse imagery *in conjunction with* nutritional information or recipes should be avoided because the former is viewed as sensationalism, while the latter appeals to a much broader audience interested in vegetarianism for health or other reasons.
- Skepticism of vegetarianism, the animal rights ideology, and the movement's sources of information is high. Animal rights groups and their demonstrations, literature, and messages seem to lack credibility and are viewed as tools of propaganda. The meat and dairy industries also lack credibility, while government is somewhat credible and doctors are much more credible (at least as perceived by non-vegetarians).
- Non-vegetarians cite taste, accessibility (convenience, cost), and variety, generally in that order, as the key reasons why they would not want or be able to adopt a vegetarian diet. Vegetarian food was considered by many non-vegetarians to be unavailable, too expensive, and too difficult to prepare, while tofu and many meat alternatives were not well-received.
- Most vegetarians and non-vegetarians felt that vegetarian advocates isolate themselves, creating an "us versus them" mentality and a perceived moral inequity between the groups. This encourages a defensiveness that hurts the cause. Participants felt that "negative" animal rights activities, such as yelling at fur protests and use of graphic imagery, were examples of what not to do.
- The environmental reasons for choosing vegetarianism are not as well understood as reasons relating to health or animal treatment. The environmental argument for vegetarianism, therefore, can present more of a challenge given the time and effort it may take to explain the connection to some individuals.

WHY VEGETARIAN?

Vegetarian participants gave a number of reasons for choosing to adopt vegetarian or vegan diets – inhumane animal treatment, improved health, environmental issues, and a general sense of repulsion toward meat and/or dairy were among the top reasons. Inhumane animal treatment was the first or second choice for nearly every vegetarian or vegan participant. It was unclear, however, whether the issue was paramount in their decision to go vegetarian, or merely was the issue with which they most identified once they were already vegetarian. Health, also a major reason, was clearly secondary to animal treatment, while environmental reasons were mentioned only a few times. The repulsion associated with consuming meat and dairy products was surprisingly high among vegetarian participants, and seemed as important as the ecological or environmental reasons for choosing a plant-based diet.

WHY NOT VEGETARIAN?

Non-vegetarian participants also identified a variety of objections and barriers to personally adopting vegetarian or vegan diets, including enjoying the taste of meat, the high price, inconvenience, and lacking variety of vegetarian foods, and perceived nutritional requirements. Of these barriers, taste was easily the number one reason, particularly for men, while women also pointed to the lack of availability of vegetarian foods as a key reason. Cost, convenience, and variety were often-mentioned and appeared to represent key barriers to the adoption of vegetarianism. Nutritional requirements, while mentioned by some participants, did not seem to be a major barrier.

METHODS OF PERSUASION

Corresponding to the previous reasons for or objections to adopting vegetarian diets, the recommended approaches to persuading others vary by group. Vegetarians and vegans, most of whom cited inhumane animal treatment as their primary motivation, felt that message would be most effective. At the same time, non-vegetarians (who were also generally older) believed that the health argument would be most effective, and indicated that using the animal cruelty message could even be detrimental to the cause if its delivery engendered defensiveness due to feelings of moral inequality.

Consistent feedback from all groups indicated that combining different arguments into a single, catch-all message was less effective. Specifically, the use of graphic imagery or harsh statistics lessened the efficacy of a standalone health argument. This was true in part because of the immediate reaction of most people to turn away from upsetting images or statistics, and in part because of the lacking credibility of what is perceived as “sensationalist” material. The propensity to disbelieve numbers and to question the credibility of sources was consistent and generally applied to sources on both sides of the issue (i.e., vegetarian advocates as well as the meat and dairy industries).

For this reason, vegetarian advocacy tools such as Vegan Outreach's Vegetarian Living and PETA's Vegetarian Starter Kit were both received with mixed opinions. The former, in particular, was discounted because of its combination of slaughterhouse imagery with health, nutrition, and recipe information. Many non-vegetarian participants thought both pieces of literature were forms of propaganda, but the Vegetarian Starter Kit was seen as more positive and more clearly targeted at people on the verge of adopting a vegetarian diet. Both pieces of literature received positive feedback as well, predominantly from vegetarian participants who felt that Vegetarian Living had a nice progression of information for people interested in food animal issues or that the Vegetarian Starter Kit provided good practical information for those considering vegetarianism.

As stated, many non-vegetarian participants felt that high cost, inconvenience, and lacking variety of vegetarian foods were major blocking factors to widespread adoption. Many participants also complained about an inability to find vegetarian food when eating out or traveling, and suggested more vegetarian products, more quick-service restaurants, and lowered costs as potential methods of driving vegetarian adoption.

PERCEPTIONS OF ACTIVISTS AND THE MOVEMENT

Perceptions of vegans, vegetarians, and vegetarian advocates were not bad, per se, but many participants had had experiences with “militant” proponents of vegetarianism that turned them off. Further, some participants felt this behavior was indicative of the movement as a whole, and in general that vegetarian advocates isolate themselves from the non-vegetarians they are trying to influence with their arguments against eating meat. This may appear to some non-vegetarians to be arguing from a moral high ground and may also create the perception that vegetarianism (or veganism) is an all-or-nothing decision.

Detailed Findings: Why Vegetarian?

Note: Throughout this report, the term vegetarian (and derivatives such as vegetarianism) will be used to include both vegetarians and vegans. Where distinctions between the two exist, they are called out within the report.

Vegetarians have various reasons for choosing to reduce or eliminate animal products from their diets – personal health, the treatment of farmed animals, concern for the earth’s resources, religion, spirituality, general repulsion of meat or dairy, concern for slaughterhouse workers, and so on. Participants in these groups generally ranked inhumane animal treatment and personal health as the primary motivators for their choice of vegetarian diets, followed at a distance by environmental reasons and repulsion toward meat. Information for this section comes almost entirely from discussions with vegetarian participants, augmented occasionally with observations of non-vegetarian participants.

INHUMANE ANIMAL TREATMENT

Both vegetarian groups, women and men, identified the treatment of animals on factory farms as their primary reason for choosing a vegetarian diet, followed closely by health-related reasons. Animal treatment was more of a primary reason for men – at the expense of other reasons – than for women, while the latter seemed to place more of an emphasis on health as a motive. Animal cruelty was widely recognized as inherent to current farming practices, with specific mentions of battery cages, overuse of growth hormones (also cited as a major health concern for humans), and inhumane slaughter. According to one female participant, age 43: “I didn’t like the idea of killing, so I gave up meat. Then I noticed dairy gave me sinus infections, so I gave up dairy. Factory farming issues made me give up eggs.” Participants in the non-vegetarian groups also were surprisingly aware of the conditions of animals on factory farms, but as expected were not as aware as the vegetarian participants.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Health closely followed animal treatment as a reason for choosing a vegetarian diet, particularly among women. One 43-year-old vegetarian female participant who had been a vegetarian for twenty years said with pride: “Five years ago I had blood work done and my doctor said it was the most perfect he’d ever seen.” According to participants, the major health benefits of adopting a vegetarian diet include reduction of hormones and antibiotics in the food consumed, decreased risk of high cholesterol or high blood pressure, and weight reduction. However, while most vegetarians recognized the health benefits, some participants felt that

vegetarian diets can also result in health problems if appropriate attention is not given to nutritional requirements. According to a female vegetarian, age 46: “My kids would like to be vegetarians, but they don’t eat enough of the other right things to do that – I still feel they need protein.” Vegetarian participants generally thought of veganism as an even healthier alternative, but sometimes described it as either “too healthy” or requiring too much effort to combine the right foods.

As noted, hormones in particular received considerable mention by participants, many of whom had surprisingly comprehensive knowledge of the use of hormones and antibiotics in current factory farming processes. “Now with the hormones, (health) is a bigger risk factor than it was – half the reason our kids reach puberty at the age of eight now is all the hormones in the meat and milk...not to mention the antibiotics,” said a female vegetarian. Hormones were also mentioned by non-vegetarian participants as one of the reasons that might make them consider adopting a vegetarian diet. Awareness of hormones and antibiotics in animal-based foods was high among these groups, but pushing general awareness of these issues to the otherwise unknowing public may prove an effective catalyst for converting people to vegetarian diets.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Environmental concerns ranked considerably lower than animal treatment or health as reasons for participants choosing vegetarian diets. Excessive use of the earth’s resources was mentioned by several participants, and was the first choice for two, but more often was either not identified at all or identified as only a tertiary reason for being vegetarian. As with health, participants’ knowledge of the impact of an animal-based diet on the environment was substantial (note the distinction with non-vegetarians, who generally had little knowledge of the connection between factory farming and the environment), with one vegan woman pointing out that you can “float a battleship with the amount of water it takes to raise a cow for food” and several participants acknowledging the ability to feed more people with the grain used to feed farm animals than with the animals themselves. Global hunger as an argument, however, resonated only mildly with these participants, some of whom felt that in general the problem could be alleviated by reducing consumption in first-world countries and focusing instead on resource distribution to those areas experiencing severe hunger problems.

REPULSION OF MEAT AND/OR DAIRY PRODUCTS

A number of participants, particularly women, claimed that eating meat (or, more specifically, the thought of eating animal flesh) repulsed them enough that they decided to go vegetarian. This reason was strong enough that it appeared to be equally as important as environmental reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet. However, repulsion was the first unaided choice for only one female participant, and not mentioned at all by most participants. Of particular note for those who did mention being repulsed was a dislike for the taste and texture of meat, although most of the vegetarian participants had little or no problem with the sight or smell of raw or cooked meat (for instance, those vegetarians who live with non-vegetarian people). Those participants who were repulsed by the taste and texture of meat also expressed some incredulity as to why companies would want to make (or consumers would want to buy) faux meat products.

Detailed Findings: Why Not Vegetarian?

Because of the important role food plays at the center of our daily social and cultural lives, discussions regarding personal food choices can elicit strong emotions and defensive postures. The reasons non-vegetarian participants gave for objecting to a vegetarian diet for themselves were perhaps even more varied than the reasons given by vegetarians for adopting vegetarian diets – participants identified taste, accessibility (including cost and convenience), variety, and health as the most-mentioned objections or barriers, with taste seemingly at the top of the list. Each of these barriers is discussed in more detail below.

TASTE OF MEAT AND/OR DAIRY PRODUCTS

For some vegetarians, the taste of meat is a deterrent to eating it, but for non-vegetarians taste appears to be a major barrier to adopting a vegetarian diet. This seemed most true for non-vegetarian men, among whom five of the eight participants listed taste as their first objection to vegetarianism. Taste was also important for women, but about equal to the lacking variety of alternative foods regarding their objections to a vegetarian diet. Regarding alternatives, the non-vegetarian groups were split between those who immediately rejected the idea of trying tofu and faux meats (the minority) and those who have tried them and found them distasteful (the majority). Those non-vegetarian participants who had tried tofu generally did not like it and were also unimpressed by faux meat products such as Gardenburgers or tofu dogs; one non-vegetarian female participant said she does not “like anything that they try to make look or taste like meat.”

ACCESSIBILITY (CONVENIENCE AND COST)

Non-vegetarian participants also listed “accessibility,” which for our purposes includes both the convenience and price of vegetarian food, as a barrier to adopting a vegetarian diet. In the Seattle area, where these participants live and work, vegetarian food is available at nearly every grocery store and restaurant. That said, many participants – both vegetarians and non-vegetarians – cited difficulty finding a range of vegetarian food options while eating out, traveling, or staying with friends. Eating out at convenience or fast-food establishments was mentioned as a particular source of frustration. Also mentioned was the time and effort it takes to prepare vegetarian foods, which was thought to be considerable given the perceived need to combine certain foods in order to maintain a nutritionally balanced diet. According to one non-vegetarian male participant, age 20: “(A vegetarian diet) is expensive and takes too long to prepare meals. I eat out a lot and there are few fast food places with vegetarian meals.”

Some participants also commented that vegetarian food is inaccessible due to the relatively higher cost of those food items in grocery stores. According to a non-vegetarian female participant, age 50: “The food that I buy – Healthy Choice and other TV dinners – the vegetarian ones...they’re three or four bucks some of them. Then you’re looking at Smart Choice for a dollar?” Another mention was made regarding the lack of vegetarian food available at “college student prices.” Also, in the male non-vegetarian group, participants were asked if they would be willing to pay more for free-range chicken, given the perceived benefits of free-range over traditional battery cages, with only two saying “yes.” Interestingly, however, almost

all male participants said they would be in favor of passing legislation that allowed ONLY free-range farming of chickens, even with the knowledge that this would likely increase prices. In short, the choice to pay more is a difficult one when faced at the store, but in the context of improving animal treatment, participants were willing to except a mandate from outside (i.e., the government) that would impact the cost of vegetarian food.

LACKING VARIETY OF VEGETARIAN FOODS

“If I had to object to becoming a vegetarian, I think the first objection would be lack of variety,” said one non-vegetarian female participant, age 50, who was very open to the idea of vegetarianism. Closely related to the accessibility of vegetarian food is also the perceived variety of such foods. This was mentioned by many non-vegetarian participants, although less frequently than either taste or convenience. The perceived lacking variety of vegetarian foods was a major barrier, particularly among non-vegetarian female participants. It is worth repeating: these groups were conducted in Seattle, where the variety of vegetarian food is arguably far greater than in almost any other part of the country. And while variety was cited by non-vegetarian male participants as well, particularly the younger ones, the issue appeared to be much more important for women.

It is important to also note that variety of vegetarian foods extends beyond just the availability of products at grocery stores. As touched upon in the previous section, the variety of available vegetarian foods when eating out, traveling, or visiting a friend's house is nearly as important. According to a vegan female participant, age 37: “(When I've gone out), there have been many times I haven't been able to eat, because there hasn't been anything for me to eat.” It appears that both vegetarians and non-vegetarians find it difficult to maintain animal-free diets due to a combination of lacking variety and lacking awareness of what is already available.

HEALTH AND NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Health issues seem to be a somewhat less important barrier, in particular getting the requisite nutrients from one's diet. However, lack of sufficient protein was a perceived barrier mentioned by several non-vegetarian participants, both male and female, and seemed a primary health concern relating to a vegetarian diet. Participants also mentioned the importance of cow's milk in meeting their perceived calcium needs. As stated previously, several vegetarians also expressed the concern that diets without animal protein could be deficient in nutrition if “enough of the right foods aren't eaten.” Generally, participants recognized that a vegetarian diet could be a healthy option. However, some participants also expressed the belief that a non-vegetarian diet can also be healthy as long as meat is eaten in moderation.

OTHER FACTORS

Other objections or barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet included the influence of participants' families, religious and spiritual beliefs, and a general sense of skepticism toward individuals or organizations promoting vegetarianism. Regarding skepticism, there seemed to be a strong feeling that those promoting vegetarian diets have an agenda, which in the case of these participants made them discount the message (See the next section for more information).

Detailed Findings: Methods of Persuasion

Determining how to persuade the general meat- and dairy-consuming population to forego, or at least reduce these elements of their diet, was a key focal point for this research. The importance of knowing which messages resonate most with the largest and most persuadable segments of the population cannot be overstated. Further, defining those segments and identifying the most effective mediums to reach them with a pro-vegetarian message is crucial to gaining widespread adoption of vegetarian diets. This research will help begin to identify those target audiences and messages, but more qualitative and quantitative research is needed. See <http://www.humaneresearch.org> for up-to-date information about HRC's research on these and other topics.

Traditional vegetarian advocacy, particularly in the context of animal rights activism, has focused on what Howard Lyman calls the “three legs of the stool for promoting plant-based diets – health, animal treatment, and the environment.” The question arises regarding which of these “legs” is most effective or which should be used in specific circumstances for particular target audiences. These focus groups indicate that limiting vegetarian advocacy to these three key arguments is insufficient, and that targeted messages should be delivered to audiences for which the message will be most relevant. Still, these three arguments represent a good starting point for evaluating the effectiveness of the movement's approaches to vegetarian advocacy. The arguments were also mentioned frequently by the groups' participants.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Regarding health as a motivating factor for choosing a vegetarian diet, a stark dichotomy exists between vegetarian and non-vegetarian participants. Nearly all of the vegetarians we spoke to mentioned health as a secondary or tertiary reason for adopting a vegetarian diet, almost always following animal cruelty. However, non-vegetarian participants indicated that personal health is the primary, and in most cases the only issue that would make them eliminate or reduce their consumption of meat or dairy products. According to a non-vegetarian female participant, age 38: “the only thing at this point in my life that would (convince me to adopt a vegetarian diet) would be a directive from my physician saying ‘you need to stop eating (meat) or you’re going to be dead.’” A doctor's recommendation or mandate seemed to be the most influential and most credible potential motivator for non-vegetarian participants.

As stated earlier, participants' primary health concerns associated with meat (and to a lesser extent dairy) included hormones, antibiotics, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and weight control. More important than any of these in isolation, however, was the notion of having something tangible and relevant to the individual being targeted with the message. In other words, recommendations to adopt a vegetarian diet for general improvement of one's health were not very convincing, even if given by a doctor. More meaningful to non-vegetarian participants was tying consumption of meat or dairy to a specific health problem that they are experiencing. However, while many participants understood that (excessive) meat consumption was bad for their health, they were also somewhat

dissuaded by the notion that vegetarian diets are not nutritionally complete. To be as persuasive as possible, the health argument would have to also be defensive, providing clear evidence that vegetarian diets can meet the body's requirements without too much inconvenience.

The majority of vegetarian participants recommended empathy for the condition of animals on factory farms as the primary motivating message, but some also recognized that health could be an important motivator for non-vegetarians. According to one vegetarian male participant, age 32: "[I would persuade people to choose a vegetarian diet by talking about] the hormones they put in it...mention Creutzfeldt's and how animals get it." Also, a 23-year old vegetarian female recommended that the vegetarian advocacy movement "could win more followers with the health argument." Among non-vegetarians, it should be noted that the potential for health as a motivating factor was much stronger among women and older participants (the majority of participants in the male non-vegetarian group were over age 45). While perhaps not surprising, knowing these differences, and particularly the appeal of health to specific audiences, can help the movement increase its effectiveness in "marketing" vegetarianism.

INHUMANE ANIMAL TREATMENT

Health concerns were cited by non-vegetarian participants as the primary or only reason they might adopt a vegetarian diet. However, the treatment of animals on factory farms was the primary motive for vegetarian participants and was among the top messages they recommended for persuading others to adopt vegetarian diets as well. According to one female vegan, age 37: "The number one thing to try to convince someone, I would show them the life of an animal that's going to be slaughtered." Vegetarian participants cited gory pictures, slaughterhouse visits, and commercials with graphic footage of farm animal abuse as effective advocacy tools. However, not all vegetarian participants agreed that discussing the treatment of animals was the best way to get others to consider vegetarianism. Several participants felt that graphic footage or discussions of slaughterhouses were aggressive tactics that should be avoided given the polarization that may come from using a morality-based argument (see "Absolutism and the Moral High Ground" later in this section for more).

These aggressive tactics, however, were also mentioned by some non-vegetarian participants as being potentially effective in convincing them to adopt vegetarian diets. "What would it take for me to stop (eating meat)? I find the pictures and the publicity to be quite upsetting – it's increasing my awareness and I wonder if I need this meat to survive," said a female non-vegetarian participant, age 50. Most non-vegetarian participants had a surprisingly complete understanding of the treatment of animals on factory farms, and in some cases, mostly among female participants, exhibited feelings of guilt for being a consumer of meat or dairy products. For most participants, however, this guilt proved to be a tenuous reaction, and had not translated into any change of buying habits, with the occasional exception of a switch to free-range chicken or eggs.

As stated previously, for most non-vegetarian participants, the treatment of animals was either secondary to health or not an issue at all. For some non-vegetarians, the use of aggressive tactics actually deterred them from considering

the issue at all. According to one non-vegetarian female participant, age 22: “I think that anytime that somebody is trying to get you to not do something and they show horrible pictures...I don’t like that.” Most of the non-vegetarian male participants were unmoved by pictures or graphic descriptions of factory farms, indicating that “it wasn’t anything they hadn’t seen before” or showing skepticism that those pictures were actually representative of most farms.

One male non-vegetarian, age 20, responded to a *Vegetarian Living* guide by saying, “I’m usually not convinced by pamphlets. The pictures they always show are the worst they can find.” Using the treatment of animals as a motivator to promote a vegetarian diet can be hit or miss and seems to depend largely on the gender, age, and moral persuasion of the target individual. Perhaps just as important is the timing of this message with respect to the psychological and behavioral state of the target audience. For instance, once a person has ended or significantly reduced their consumption of meat, they may be more open to the ethical question of animal treatment on factory farms.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The ranking of reasons given for choosing vegetarian diets suggests that environmental issues are less effective motivators than concerns relating to health or animal treatment. The affect that meat and dairy consumption has on the environment is similar to the abuse of animals in that the ramifications are largely external to the individual, and do not represent the clear and present danger to them that health does. For non-vegetarian participants who feel a sense of guilt or self-consciousness regarding their consumption habits, that guilt seems to focus on the treatment of animals rather than the environment.

It appears from participants’ comments that part of the ineffectiveness of using the abuse of natural resources as an argument for adopting a vegetarian lifestyle can be attributed to a lack of awareness. Almost all participants, vegetarian and non-vegetarian, were aware of the treatment of animals on factory farms, and of the health concerns associated with consuming meat or dairy, but many did not understand the connection to environmental devastation. This lacking awareness can make vegetarian advocacy through environmental arguments more difficult, because the advocate must first explain the link between animal consumption and the environment. This poses less of an issue for one-on-one advocacy, but may have significant implications for use of the environmental argument in mass media communications such as commercials or print advertisements.

REACTIONS TO LITERATURE

In order to gauge reactions to specific approaches of vegetarian advocates, we gave copies of Vegan Outreach’s *Vegetarian Living* pamphlet to all participants and copies of PETA’s *Vegetarian Starter Kit* to non-vegetarian female participants for feedback. *Vegetarian Living* is similar in content to *Why Vegan* (also by Vegan Outreach), probably the vegetarian advocacy movement’s most popular piece of literature, but with a gentler approach. It is a 15-page pamphlet that includes information on health and nutrition, food alternatives, the environment, and factory farming, along with a variety of pictures for each topic. The *Vegetarian Starter Kit* by PETA is a larger format, 23-page brochure and is targeted at those who are already considering adoption of a vegetarian diet. It includes information on health

and nutrition, animal treatment, and the environment, and places special emphasis on food alternatives, replacements, and recipes.

Some participants felt that these were good introductory pamphlets, but the most consistent feedback received was that combining positive information and imagery with negative imagery (such as graphic photos of animal mistreatment) is less effective than providing either in isolation. “When I see pictures like these I turn off right away” said one non-vegetarian female participant, age 34. This sentiment was echoed by most non-vegetarian participants, who felt that emphasis should be put on providing a positive spin for vegetables and the vegetarian diet rather than the “sensationalism” of graphic imagery. A series of participants’ remarks confirm these conclusions:

- “Anyone advocating vegetarianism has to be careful when they put pictures of animals being mistreated in with other kinds of information like nutrition. A lot of other people think of vegetarians as crazy and putting in photographs of something so incredibly repulsive can be harmful because (people discount the value of it) and don’t even read the beginning part. It’s better to discuss it rather than show it visually. Shock value is not good.” – Female, 37, vegan, *Vegetarian Living*.
- “I was great until I got to the part with the pictures. I just can’t stomach that and I personally just wouldn’t read it.” – Female, 46, vegetarian, *Vegetarian Living*.
- “The whole last half of the booklet is devoted to pictures of mistreated animals, so you really see their agenda. If you look at all the reasons we gave for being vegetarians, animal rights was just a small, non-important reason for us. So if they really wanted to be persuasive, they would focus on other reasons.” – Female, 25, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Living*.
- “Up until you start seeing the butchered animals and stuff, to me that negates anything that was before it. It’s sensationalism is what it is.” – Female, 38, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Living*.
- “I’m usually not convinced by pamphlets. The pictures they always show are the worst they can find.” – Male, 20, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Living*.
- “This is more appealing, with the recipes and certain kinds of vegetables, how they’re good for you – and with vitamins – but when you get to the middle...ugh, it’s better to have it be more positive.” – Female, 22, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Starter Kit*.
- “Judging by the cover I’d be interested in taking a look, but by the fourth or fifth page you get to slaughtered animals, so I’ll just shut it and not even get to the recipes.” – Female, 38, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Starter Kit*.
- “If I’m not going to eat meat, it won’t be because of these pictures. They turn me off visually, but it won’t make me not buy it. It just makes me think of the organization as propaganda.” – Female, 45, non-vegetarian, *Vegetarian Starter Kit*.

The vegetarian participants seemed to have less of an issue with this combination of messages, perhaps because they felt they were no longer part of the problem. Throughout the focus groups, those who were no longer a complicit part of animal agriculture seemed more open to the ethical argument against consuming animal products. According to one vegetarian male, responding to a *Vegetarian Living*: “it’s a really nice progression, it starts off with basic information and then you get to chopped up animals at the end.” Also, specifically concerning the graphic imagery, another vegetarian participant said “the people I’ve known who have become vegetarians because of a strong impulse, it’s because of an emotional reaction to pictures like this.” Still, the overall feedback suggested that the use of negative information and imagery is an immediate turn-off to people who might otherwise be receptive to positive reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet.

Another consistent response to these pieces of literature was that they appear targeted toward people already on the verge of adopting vegetarian diets. The combination of messages, along with the graphic imagery, was thought to be too much for the casual reader. A female vegetarian participant summed it up well: “This is good for people interested in animal rights and environmental issues. For someone who is seeking out knowledge and wants to know more this is great, but I don’t think this is something you hand some random person on the street...it’s too long for one thing, (and) it’s depressing. For someone who is not seeking it out, the pictures are too graphic and it’s not fun.” This is not to say that graphic imagery or negative information should not be used at all, but rather should be used strategically and should be separated from the more positive messages relating to health benefits, food alternatives, recipes, and so on.

ACCESSIBILITY AND VARIETY

Barriers including inconvenience, high cost, and lack of variety seem to have a significant impact on the perceived viability of a vegetarian diet and were as important as animal cruelty for some people. Many non-vegetarian participants believe vegetarian foods are hard to find, expensive, and lacking in variety or ability to meet their nutritional needs. When asked what single most effective thing could be done to get others to adopt vegetarian diets, one male vegetarian participant said he “would develop more vegetarian-friendly products – Gardenburgers and other meat replacements.” Although this was met with disagreement from two others in his group who claimed that the vegetarian food market was already saturated with such products, lacking convenience and variety were key objections given by non-vegetarian participants. Note also that in Seattle there are a large number of vegetarian restaurants, cooperatives, and groceries carrying vegetarian products, so that this concern regarding accessibility and variety is likely more pronounced in other cities or regions.

All participants generally agreed that vegetarian foods are available in local stores, but non-vegetarian participants clearly did not believe the variety was sufficient enough to offer viable replacements for meat and dairy products. Many were willing to consider vegetarian foods only if they matched meat- or dairy-based foods on cost, taste, nutritional value, and convenience. According to a 60-year-old non-vegetarian male participant, “If the taste was the same, the cost was the same, and I was getting the same nutrition out of it, I’d try it (vegetarianism).” Also, the variety of convenient grocery items, like vegetarian TV dinners, is very small relative to the variety of meat- and dairy-based dinners. Most non-vegetarian participants were unable or unwilling to spend what they thought would be an extra amount of time preparing vegetarian foods themselves. This was more of a concern for males than for females, and women also felt that if vegetarian foods were clearly labeled as being meat- or dairy-free, the added convenience would allow them to make the transition much more easily.

More of a concern than finding alternatives at grocery stores seems to be eating out – there was a strong belief that vegetarian options at restaurants, particularly convenience restaurants, were few and far between. “Unless I go to Safeway and just buy some veggies and cook a vegetarian meal, I can’t just go out and pick up a cheap meal quick that’s vegetarian...there’s no vegetarian McDonalds,” said one non-vegetarian male participant, age 20. Cost, in addition to convenience, was a

major contributor to this objection. According to one non-vegetarian male participant: “You have to decide, do you want to pay a dollar a pound for free-range chicken, where they’re allowed to move around, or 59 cents for the blind ones?” As stated previously, there was some theoretical willingness to pay more for more healthy or humane foods, but this was difficult to maintain when in the store, and nearly impossible to maintain for those with lower incomes.

ABSOLUTISM AND THE MORAL HIGH GROUND

Many participants, vegetarian and non-vegetarian, remarked that current vegetarian advocates have created a separation between themselves and the population they are trying to influence by disallowing any sort of gradual adoption of vegetarian diets. This “absolutism,” as we are terming it, dictates that one **MUST** go vegetarian or, in even more extreme cases, **MUST** go vegan, which eliminates any maneuvering room for those who want (or need) to make a slower transition. This absolutism seems related to persistent use of the ethical argument regarding animal treatment, where any consumption of meat or dairy products is a violation of that perceived ethical imperative. If and when more use is made of health, environmental, or other arguments, this sense of absolutism could be replaced with less exclusionary messages. Health-related campaigns that include, for instance, eliminating meat and dairy from one’s diet for a single day every week, could allow the vegetarian advocacy movement to reverse or at least mitigate this perception.

Participants in all groups also made a strong case for using a soft approach when discussing vegetarian-related issues with non-vegetarians, when the intent is to get them to adopt a vegetarian diet. Taking the moral or ethical approach to convincing someone to end their complicity in farm animal mistreatment immediately establishes a moral hierarchy between those discussing the issue, and may put the recipient on the defensive. Said a vegan male participant, age 28: “You have to wait until somebody’s ready and in the meantime maintain an unbiased, non-judgmental position...people naturally want to stay away from moral issues because it’s a breeding ground for conflict.” For the same reasons that non-vegetarian people have immediate negative reactions to graphic slaughterhouse imagery, they do not want to be preached to by someone acting as their moral superior. Some participants had a negative impression of animal activists and vegetarian advocates because they felt that a critical finger was being pointed at them. See the next section for more on this topic.

POSITIVITY VERSUS NEGATIVITY

There was also consistent feedback from participants that vegetarian advocacy is more effective when it highlights the benefits of a vegetarian diet rather than the detriments of meat- and dairy-based diets. Negative approaches may be used effectively regarding health concerns (i.e.: don’t eat beef because it leads to high cholesterol), but non-vegetarian participants also expressed a desire for more positive approaches. For instance, positioning vegetarian foods as good sources of certain nutrients or as proactive ways to control specific health concerns can be effective ways of convincing people to replace meat and dairy products with plant-based foods. “What really gets my attention is when they say how good certain foods are for you,” said a non-vegetarian female participant, age 22.

Participants' dislike for negative approaches was also evident in their reactions to vegetarian literature, protest tactics, and one-on-one confrontations. It seems closely linked to the emphasis placed on the graphic imagery of slaughterhouses or other sources of animal mistreatment. Many participants felt that the positive side of the vegetarian diet or lifestyle should be emphasized more than it is currently, including the establishment of support groups, alternative cooking classes, and in general living one's life as an example. This notion also extends to protests and campaigns – while these are sometimes negative in nature, participants felt that protests could be more effective when portrayed in a funny or lighthearted way, and by providing positive alternatives to what we are asking people not to do (i.e.: don't eat hamburgers, try Gardenburgers instead).

INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND AGE

A number of factors influence a person's susceptibility to the various messages promoting a vegetarian diet. Many factors were not explicitly covered in this research, such as ethnic background or place of residence (particularly urban versus rural), but we are able to obtain a surface-level understanding of the affect that one's gender and/or age has on that susceptibility. Gender, in particular, is better understood given the separation of women and men in these groups. In general, women are more willing to acknowledge the benefits of a vegetarian diet and seem more open to the idea of adopting such a diet themselves. This was evident not only during the groups themselves, but also during the recruiting process – female vegetarians were much easier to recruit than male vegetarians, indicating the former represents a significantly larger percent of the Seattle-area population. In several cases, non-vegetarian female participants were interested in vegetarianism, but had held back due to lack of support – and in some cases disapproval – from their male partners and husbands.

Regarding age, the vast majority of vegetarian participants made their decisions to become vegetarian or vegan relatively early in their lives. The majority of female participants adopted vegetarian diets in their early to mid twenties, while the majority of male participants adopted vegetarian diets in their late teens or early twenties. When asked what age should be targeted by vegetarian advocates, most vegetarian female participants immediately answered “high-school girls” and one suggested “getting the idea in their heads as early as age twelve.” Still other participants expressed the need for young adults to be out of the house (i.e.: having left for college) before they could easily make dietary choices without being under their parents' control. Young people generally are impressionable, rebellious, and may not yet have fallen into the animal-based dietary habits of family and friends. More research will be needed to validate the susceptibility of different age groups, but it is clear from this study and other research that age is an influential factor in one's readiness to try vegetarianism.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Activists and the Movement

The primary focus of this research was not to gauge current perceptions of vegetarians, vegetarian advocates, or animal rights activists, but we are able to get a general sense based on participants' feedback. It does not seem that non-vegetarians hold negative opinions of vegetarian and vegetarians, but some non-

vegetarians claimed that they had been “moralized to” by those advocates, which they said turned them off immediately. The male vegetarian participants had strong beliefs that people thought of vegetarians as “scrawny hippies,” “sensitive fags,” or some other perceived negative connotation, but most vegetarian female participants had had little experience with such negativity; this may be attributable to society’s perceptions of men, and the resulting incongruity of men choosing diets free of animal products. That said, one non-vegetarian female participant, age 25, said “there’s definitely a negative connotation (with the term ‘vegetarian’), but I think that’s changing as it becomes more mainstream,” with several others in her group agreeing.

Another observation made by participants was the separation of vegetarians from the rest of society. According to one vegetarian male participant: “The most vocal element always gets the most attention, so the ALF and PETA become the image for the lifestyle.” When asked if that was a good or bad thing, another participant said “it segregates the vegetarians and vegans from the rest of society, it creates a war between conflicting ideas.” Many participants seemed to feel this “war” was a major inhibitor to the growth of vegetarianism, and that vegetarian advocates would do well to be less exclusive by not allowing the establishment of a barrier between themselves and the bulk of the population who consume meat and dairy products. This relates closely to the ideas of absolutism and the moral high ground previously discussed. PETA in particular was perceived as a radical fringe group by some non-vegetarians. Although PETA’s *Vegetarian Starter Kit* received some positive feedback, several non-vegetarian participants had immediate negative reactions to seeing the PETA logo.

Appendix A: Participant Profiles

Group 1: Female Vegetarians

Participant	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Household Income	Age Went Veg
1	26	College Grad	Single	< \$25,000	Age 5
2	46	Some College	Married	\$75,000-99,000	Age 28
3 – Vegan	37	College Grad	Married	\$25,000-49,000	Age 25
4	43	Graduate Degree	Living w/ Partner	\$75,000-99,000	Age 23
5	26	College Grad	Single	< \$25,000	Unknown
6	18	High School	Single	\$50,000-74,000	Age 15
7	23	Some College	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Age 11

Group 2: Female Non-Vegetarians

Participant	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Household Income	How Often Eat Meat
1	34	Graduate Degree	Married	\$25,000-49,000	Occasionally
2	50	Graduate Degree	Married	\$75,000-99,000	Often
3	22	Some College	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Often
4	45	Some College	Divorced	\$25,000-49,000	Occasionally
5	35	AA / Vocational	Married	\$50,000-74,000	Occasionally
6	25	College Grad	Single	< \$25,000	Occasionally
7	38	College Grad	Married	\$75,000-99,000	Often

Group 3: Male Vegetarians

Participant	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Household Income	Age Went Veg
1	34	College Grad	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Age 10
2 – Vegan	33	AA / Vocational	Living w/ Partner	\$25,000-49,000	Age 21
3	25	College Grad	Single	< \$25,000	Age 17
4	18	High School Grad	Single	\$50,000-74,000	Age 15
5 – Vegan	22	College Grad	Single	< \$25,000	Age 18
6	22	AA / Vocational	Single	\$50,000-74,000	Age 21
7	23	College Grad	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Age 17
8 – Vegan	28	AA / Vocational	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Age 23
9	19	High School	Single	\$25,000-49,000	Age 16

Group 4: Male Non-Vegetarians

Participant	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Household Income	How Often Eat Meat
1	60	Graduate Degree	Married	\$25,000-49,000	Often
2	51	College Grad	Living w/ Partner	\$75,000-99,000	Occasionally
3	43	Some College	Married	\$25,000-49,000	Often
4	33	High School	Single	\$75,000-99,000	Often
5	47	Some College	Married	\$50,000-74,000	Often
6	19	Some College	Single	Unknown	Occasionally
7	20	Some College	Single	Unknown	Often

Appendix B: Vegetarian Discussion Guide

Intro

Names
Purpose of Focus Group
Why we are here
Favorite color

Current habits

[SHOW OF HANDS] How many of you would say you are vegetarians or vegans?
How many would say I am a vegan?
How long have you been vegetarian or vegan?
How often do you eat beef? Chicken? Pork? Seafood?
How often do you consume eggs? Milk? Other dairy products?

Why Vegetarian?

What are the main reasons for your choice to be vegetarian?

What reasons do you think most vegetarians cite?
What influenced your decision to become vegetarian? Probe with...
Doctor's recommendation?
Did you read or see something that changed your mind?
Other friends or family members that are vegetarian?
[DISCUSS]

What hurdles did you face becoming vegetarian? (Probe with food availability, cost, acceptance by friends or family, health issues.) How did you manage to overcome those hurdles? What hurdles do you face in maintaining your vegetarianism? How do you overcome them?

Do you ever try to get others to go vegetarian? Why do you try? What do you talk to them about?

If you wanted to persuade large numbers of people to become a vegetarian, what would you do or say? How would you persuade me?

Reactions to Specific Veg Arguments

Health

What affect does eating meat or being vegetarian have on one's health? Explain why you think this.
What health issues concern you the most – probe with cancer, heart disease, weight gain, etc.

Environment

What affect does eating meat or being vegetarian have on the environment? Explain why you think this.
Do you think the diets we choose have any affect on global hunger and sustainability? What affect?

Animal Cruelty

What is your opinion of current animal breeding and slaughtering processes? Explain.

Do you make any specific dietary choices to try to reduce cruelty? (Probe with free range, organic, etc.).

Which of these three arguments is most powerful for you? Why? What other arguments would you cite?

[HANDOUT] Here is a list of reasons for being a vegetarian. Add any that are missing. Then rank.

Vegan

How many of you know what a vegan is? Define it.

Have you ever considered becoming vegan? Why or why not?

What reasons do you think most vegans cite for choosing that diet?

What would influence you to become vegan? What do you think would influence others?

[HANDOUT] Reaction to Why Vegan and Vegetarian Living brochures – give participants time to flip through.

Perceptions of the animal rights and welfare movements

How do people react when you tell them you're a vegetarian?

What do you think of organizations that try to get people to become vegetarians?

Terms. Vegetarian and vegan. Do you comfortably identify with these terms or are they too much like labels?

What do you think of the term...

"Animal rights?"

"Animal welfare?"

"Animal liberation?"

Which of these terms, if any, best reflects your attitude toward animals?

Ask for final thoughts or comments

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix C: Non-Vegetarian Discussion Guide

Intro

Names
Purpose of Focus Group
Why we are here
Favorite color

Do you eat more or less meat than a year or two ago? Why? What is driving your choices?

Why Not Vegetarian?

So you like meat? What appeals to you about being a meat eater?
Are there drawbacks?

[WRITE DOWN] What are the main reasons for your choice to eat meat?
Do you know any vegetarians?
Why not be a vegetarian?

What would prompt you to become a vegetarian? (Probe with doctor's recommendation, anything read/seen, or friends that are vegetarian)
What hurdles do you face in becoming vegetarian?

Which of the following would convince you to eat less meat?
Medical report published connecting meat consumption to cancer, heart disease, or obesity?
If vegetarian food was considerably less expensive than meat?
If farming processes were demonstrated to be the leading cause of pollution?
Viewing video footage or photos from an actual slaughterhouse?

Reactions to Specific Veg Arguments

Health

What affect does eating meat or being vegetarian have on one's health? Explain why you think this.
What health issues concern you the most – probe with cancer, heart disease, weight gain, etc.

Environment

What affect does eating meat or being vegetarian have on the environment? Explain why you think this.
Do you think the diets we choose have any affect on global hunger and sustainability? What affect?

Animal Cruelty

What is your opinion of current animal breeding and slaughtering processes? Explain.
Do you make any specific dietary choices to try to reduce cruelty? (Probe with free range, organic, etc.).

Which of these three arguments would be most powerful for you? Why? What other arguments would you cite?

[HANDOUT] Here is a list of reasons for being a vegetarian. Add any that are missing. Then rank.

Vegan

How many of you know what a vegan is? Define it.

Do you know any vegans?

Thoughts on vegans whether known or not?

Do you think vegans are healthier than vegetarians? Healthier than those who eat meat?

[HANDOUT] Reaction to Why Vegan and Vegetarian Living brochures – give participants time to flip through.

Perceptions of the animal rights and welfare movements

Since becoming a vegetarian, how has your attitude toward animals changed? How has your perception of other vegetarians, vegans, or animal activists changed, if at all?

Terms

Vegetarian or vegan – do either or both carry negative connotations?

What do you think of the term...

“Animal rights?” Do animals have rights?

“Animal welfare?”

“Animal liberation?”

Do you think about the animals you eat? What do you think about?

Converts

If I wanted to persuade people to become a vegetarian, what should I do or say?

Ask for final thoughts or comments

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix D: Select Verbatim Responses

Animal Treatment

- “I think we as Americans are stuck with the beef industry, the chicken industry, whatever, but the way that we raise our beef and chickens is inherently bad, with the amount of hormones, the force feeding, the way that they’re actually raised.” – Male, 43, non-veg.
- “The way I live my life I [clearly] don’t think the [animals have rights], with the actions I make buying beef or whatever. But when I actually see it or heard about it, I don’t want that to go on.” – Male, 20, non-veg.
- “Didn’t like the idea of killing, so I gave up meat. Then I noticed dairy gave me sinus infections so I gave up dairy. Factory farming issues made me give up eggs.” – Female, 43, veg.
- “I think that some animals are here to feed us – the food chain and all that – I don’t really think about that stuff (animal suffering). I mean, if I was to see it, yeah, but I don’t want to see it and I don’t want to hear about it.” – Female, 22, non-veg.
- “Americans are very detached from the process. If we had to butcher our own meat and pluck our own chickens, there’d be a lot more vegetarians.” – Male, 43, non-veg.

Health

- “If my family wants to choose that (a vegetarian diet) in the future, that would be great, it would be healthier for them, but I didn’t want to force it on them when they were younger because they needed the protein.” – Female, 46, veg.
- “My kids would like to be vegetarians, but they don’t eat enough of the other right things to do that – I still feel they need protein. Until they start eating protein foods, they’re still growing boys and I think they need it.” – Female, 46, veg.
- “Five years ago I had blood work done and my doctor said it was the most perfect he’d ever seen.” – Female, 43, veg.
- “I tried being a vegan for a day and it was a little too healthy for me.” – Female, 18, veg.
- “Although I do think that now with the hormones, (health) is a bigger risk factor that it was – half the reason our kids reach puberty at the age of eight now is all the hormones in the meat and milk...weird...not to mention the antibiotics.” – Female, 43, veg.
- “[I would consume less meat and dairy than I currently do] if I was convinced that I could get the same food value from a veg. diet and if it did not cost me more.” – Male, 60, non-veg.
- “If I had something that said the same thing (as a report on exercise being good for you) – conclusively – about meat consumption, I would follow those guidelines.” – Female, 50, non-veg.
- “I sometimes assume because they’re (store-bought chickens) labeled free range that they don’t have hormones, but I guess that’s not really a safe bet.” – Female, 34, non-veg.
- “Health issues (could get me to stop eating meat). If it came up to ‘you have to stop doing this,’ I would stop on a dime.” – Female, 45, non-veg.
- “The only thing at this point in my life that would do it (adopt a vegetarian diet) would be a directive from my physician saying “you need to stop eating (meat) or you’re going to be dead.” – Female, 38, non-veg.
- “[Health is a concern] especially with families that have a history of heart disease...I don’t eat as much red meat as I used to, because of those ideas.” – Male, 47, non-veg.
- “There are diets out there – I think it’s the Atkins diet to bulk up on protein – my dietician says she likes that because they come back in five years with kidney disease.” – Male, 43, non-veg.
- “[I would persuade people to choose a vegetarian diet by talking about] the hormones they put in it. Mention Creutzfeldt’s and how animals get it. Then the dumb stuff about body odor and how people prefer to kiss veggies.” – Male, 34, veg.
- “[I would object to a vegetarian diet because meat] is a great source of protein.” – Female, 35, non-veg.
- “Health-wise if I was told to cut down on meat and dairy products I would.” Female, 22, non-veg.

Environment

- “[I have chosen a vegetarian diet for myself because of] non-sustainable meat agriculture and hormones, etc. in non-organic meat products.” – Female, 26, veg.
- “[I would consume less meat and dairy than I currently do because of] the advantages of eating lower on the food chain (decreased hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, etc.). Also environmental reasons (increased energy and land resources used in meat farming, water pollution, etc.)” – Female 25, non-veg.
- “I think free-range (non-farmed) fish and eggs are a relatively low environmental impact source of nutrients.” – Male, 51, vegan except when he is served meat.

Accessibility (Cost, Convenience, Variety)

- “There have been many times I haven’t been able to eat, because there hasn’t been anything for me to eat.” – Female, 37, vegan.
- “The food that I buy – Healthy Choice and other TV dinners – the vegetarian ones, which are quite good, they’re three of four bucks some of them. Then you’re looking at Smart Choice for a dollar?” – Female, 50, non-veg.
- “Unless I go to Safeway and just buy some veggies and cook a vegetarian meal, I can’t just go out and pick up a cheap meal quick that’s vegetarian...there’s no vegetarian McDonalds.” – Male, 20, non-veg.
- “You have to decide, do you want to pay a dollar a pound for free-range chicken, where they’re allowed to move around, or 59 cents for the blind ones?” – Male, 60, non-veg.
- “Long term, health-wise it (adopting a vegetarian diet) would be a good choice for me, but I think I would miss the variety.” – Female, 50, non-veg.
- “If I were to lower my meat intake, I need something to help it out, like meat being really expensive.” – Male, 20, non-veg.
- “[I would object to a vegetarian diet because] it is expensive and takes too long to prepare meals. I eat out a lot and there are few fast food places with vegetarian meals.” – Male, 20, non-veg.
- “[I would consume less meat and dairy than I currently do] if there were more places to get vegetarian meals for ‘college student’ prices.” – Male, 20, non-veg.
- “If I had to object to becoming a vegetarian, I think the first objection would be lack of variety.” (participant’s emphasis) – Female, 50, non-veg.
- “[I would object to a vegetarian diet because] it’s hard to eat out or travel or be a guest a friend’s house.” – Female, 34, non-veg.
- “[To promote vegetarianism,] I would develop more vegetarian-friendly products – Gardenburgers and other meat replacements.” – Male, 22, veg.

Methods of Persuasion

- “I think in order to convince someone (to go vegetarian) they have to have some sort of strong feeling about it themselves already, either they have to be repulsed by it or not like what they’re doing to the animals. If someone truly loves to eat meat but doesn’t care about the animals there’s really no incentive for them to...for health-wise they might cut back or switch to chicken or fish or something.” – Female, 46, veg.
- “The number one thing to try to convince someone, I would show them the life of an animal that’s going to be slaughtered.” – Female, 37, vegan.
- “You could win more followers with the health argument.” – Female, 23, veg.
- “They’re not separate issues (vegetarianism and animal rights), but they reach different audiences.” – Female, 26, veg.
- “I like the idea of advertising and making it part of mainstream because vegetarians have been outside of the main population and by putting it out on public airwaves it makes it more acceptable to the average citizen.” – Female, 36, vegan.
- “They (vegetarian advocates) need to educate and engage people in a non-blaming way.” – Female, 26, veg.
- “I think the best protest is funny or fun, not just saying ‘don’t go to the circus.’ It provides alternatives.” – Female, 23, Veg.
- “What would it take for me to stop (eating meat) – what could they do? I find the pictures and the publicity to be quite upsetting – it’s increasing my awareness and I wonder if I need this meat to survive. I don’t know if I do.” – Female, 50, non-veg.

- "I think it's too extreme...their (vegetarian advocates') claim to 'don't eat any meat ever,' because you're going to die earlier...I don't think it was put on this earth for us not to eat it." – Male, 33, non-veg.
- "I think that anytime that somebody is trying to get you to not do something and they show horrible pictures...I don't like that." – Female, 22, non-veg.
- "It (a pro-veg advertisement) doesn't need to be ugly, because there are so many benefits they could show. Life is ugly enough." – Female, 34, non-veg.
- "About positive advertising...I like labeling on products, like free range." – Female, 50, non-veg.
- "What really gets my attention is when they say how good certain foods are for you." – Female, 22, non-veg.
- "If you're too aggressive, most people get turned off by that." – Male, 18, veg.
- "In my experience the most effective thing is to have intimate conversations with people who already know me, to discuss it as friends instead of as someone trying to teach someone else." – Male, 22, vegan.
- "You have to wait until somebody's ready and in the meantime maintain an unbiased, non-judgmental position...people naturally want to stay away from moral issues because it's a breeding ground for conflict." – Male, 28, vegan.
- "What needs to happen more is what made her (ex-partner) go vegetarian...they took her high school class to a slaughterhouse." – Male, 33, vegan.
- "[I would persuade people to choose a vegetarian diet by discussing] different things depending on the person, [including] factory farming, killing in general and what it does to the culture, health, and range land impact on forests and pollution caused by the industry." – Female, 43, veg.
- "[I would persuade people to choose a vegetarian diet using] issues of animal treatment (watch videos) and health." – Female, 26, veg.
- "Most of the time knowledge and pictures do the trick (to convince people to go veg), but there's always the people who say they don't care." – Male, 19, veg.

Vegetarian Living and Veg Starter Kit

Vegetarian Living Guide (Vegan Outreach, shown to all groups)

- "Anyone advocating vegetarianism has to be careful when they put pictures of animals being mistreated in with other kinds of information like nutrition. A lot of other people think of vegetarians as crazy and putting in photographs of something so incredibly repulsive can be harmful because (people discount the value of it) and don't even read the beginning part. It's better to discuss it rather than show it visually. Shock value is not good." – Female, 37, vegan.
- "I agree – I was great until I got to the part with the pictures. I just can't stomach that and I personally just wouldn't read it." – Female, 46, veg.
- "This is good for people interested in animal rights and environmental issues. For someone who is seeking out knowledge and wants to know more this is great, but I don't think this is something you hand some random person on the street...it's too long for one thing, it's depressing. For someone who is not seeking it out, the pictures are too graphic and it's not fun. You need something kind of funny or something more enticing." – Female, 23, veg.
- "The people I've known who have become vegetarians because of a strong impulse, it's because of an emotional reaction to pictures like this." – Female, 26, veg.
- "Not anything I haven't heard or seen before. Doesn't really make me change my mind." – Female, 22, non-veg.
- "I don't see why we have to have pictures of deceased animals when you're talking about vegetarianism – how come we can't have some beautiful fruits and vegetables?" – Female, 45, non-veg.
- "I think it's pretty well done actually, it's very thorough. All of us here kind of know all this, but for those who aren't aware it's good to be aware when you're eating meat." – Female, 25, non-veg.
- "Up until you start seeing the butchered animals and stuff, to me that negates anything that was before it. It's sensationalism is what it is." – Female, 38, non-veg.
- "When I see pictures like these I turn off right away." – Female, 34, non-veg.

- “The whole last half of the booklet is devoted to pictures of mistreated animals, so you really see their agenda for this. If you look at all the reasons we gave for being vegetarians, animal rights was just a small non-important reason for us. So if they really wanted to be persuasive, they would focus on other reasons.” – Female, 25, non-veg.
- “It’s a really nice progression, it starts off with basic information and then you get to chopped up animals at the end.” – Male, 34, veg.
- “It’s good for someone who’s already interested.” – Male, 22, vegan.
- “I’ve seen it all before.” – Male, 47, non-veg.
- “I’m usually not convinced by pamphlets. The pictures they always show are the worst they can find.” – Male, 20, non-veg.

Veg Starter Kit (PETA, Shown only to female vegetarian group)

- “This is more appealing, with the recipes and certain kinds of vegetables – how they’re good for you – and with vitamins, but when you get to the middle...ugh, it’s better to have it be more positive.” – Female, 22, non-veg.
- “Judging by the cover I’d be interested in taking a look, but by the fourth or fifth page you get to slaughtered animals, so I’ll just shut it and not even get to the recipes.” – Female, 38, non-veg.
- “If I’m not going to eat meat, it won’t be because of these pictures. They turn me off visually, but it won’t make me not buy it. It just makes me think of the organization as propaganda.” – Female, 45, non-veg.

Skepticism

- “If I were working for the Beef Council, I could throw out statistics that prove that raising the soy beans to make the bean curd for the tofu takes more water than raising a cow; I’m very skeptical of statistics.” – Female, 38, non-veg.
- “The Beef Administration, the Egg Council, the Dairy Council...they have an agenda. I don’t think they’re lying, but they don’t have my best interest in mind.” – Male, 43, non-veg.

Perceptions

- “Vegetarians in advertisements are very slim people, a stereotype.” – Female, 45, non-veg.
- “There’s definitely a negative connotation (with the term ‘vegetarian’), but I think that’s changing as it becomes more mainstream.” – Female, 25, non-veg.
- “The most vocal element always gets the most attention, so the ALF and PETA become the image for the lifestyle.” – Male, 23, veg. IS THAT A BAD OR GOOD THING? “It segregates the vegetarians and vegans from the rest of society, it creates a war between conflicting ideas.” – Male, 28, vegan.
- “People are separated from organic food; they see it as a hippie thing. You walk by the aisle with the tofu and soy milk and think ‘I’m going to go get real food.’” – Male, 20, non-veg.

Miscellaneous

- “When people get into relationships with non-vegetarians, their good intentions fall to the side.” – Female, 43, veg.
- “I don’t like anything that they try to make look or taste like meat.” – Female, 34, non-veg.
- “There’s no economic benefit for an individual who chooses to live this way. It’s something that affects creatures that don’t have the power to make that decision...there’s no personal reward for it, other than feeling good about yourself.” – Male, 22, vegan.
- “If the taste was the same, the cost was the same, and I was getting the same nutrition out of it, I’d try it.” – Male, 60, non-veg.
- “God gave us animals to eat.” – Male, 43, non-veg.
- “[I would consume less meat and dairy than I currently do] if meat either caused some kind of health risk or if there was some ethical reason which I didn’t agree with.” – Male, 19, non-veg.
- “Meat has never appealed to me. It sickens me to eat the flesh of a once living animal.” – Female, 46, veg.