
Where's the Beef? Communicating Vegetarianism in Mainstream America

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Introduction

“Engaging in non-mainstream behavior can be challenging to negotiate communicatively, especially when it involves the simple but necessary task of eating, a lifelong activity that is often done in others’ company,” argue researchers Romo and Donovan-Kicken (405). This can be especially true for vegetarians in America. The American view of a good and balanced meal includes a wide array of meats that have become standard on most all of the country's dinner tables. When it comes to eating in American society today, fruits and vegetables come to mind as side dishes or snacks, not the main course.

Vegetarians challenge this expectation of having meat as an essential component of survival by adopting a lifestyle that no longer conforms to the norms of society as a whole. Although vegetarians can be seen as “healthy deviants”—people who violate social norms in relatively healthy ways—they are faced with the burden of stigmatization by those who cannot see past their views of conformity (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 405). This can lead to a continuous battle for vegetarians where they are questioned and scrutinized for their decisions only because they are not the same as many of their peers. The heaviest load that individuals who decide to deviate from the norms of a given society have to carry is attempting to stay true to themselves in a world that forces them to fit in.

Culture, Society, and Food

One of the largest and most complex factors that contribute to food choice is society and the cultures within that society that certain groups of people hold close to them (Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 376). “The food eaten, then, fits the culture; it carries out functions that go beyond the need for nutrition,” based upon the specific goals that a given culture deems to be of high importance in regards to their daily lives (Visser 126). Food also plays a part in family traditions and heritage; vegetarianism can place stress on a family since it can seem to indicate rejection of the family and its values rather than simply omitting a food group (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 407). This can create somewhat of a “social disadvantage” for vegetarians during an occasion or holiday that is focused around food, alienating them even further from the rest of their peers (Boyle 327).

The only constant in life is change, and, with time, cultures and societies fluctuate in terms of not only their value systems and beliefs, but also their overall diet and food choices. The context in which one is brought up within a given society and the timing of these events and experiences play a role in an individual's view of food and what it does for them (Devine 125). This phenomenon can also explain why there is a generation gap when it comes to the types of foods

that are most favored by people of different ages and the reasoning behind their choices. Although the growth of vegetarianism in the United States has only very recently begun growing at a much larger rate, it can be seen that there are differences between generations—and even within the same generation—as to *why* individuals decided to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle. Those who are younger are much more likely to have adopted vegetarianism for ethical and environmental reasons rather than health, which was a much more popular reason among older generations (Pribis, Pencak, and Grajales 530; Haverstock and Forgays 1034).

Identity and Food Choices

When individuals make choices regarding food and diet preferences, these overlap with who they are as a person and become integrated as part of their identity (Fischler 275). However, “most people who follow the dominant foodways of their culture do not deeply examine the connection between food choice and identity” that is present in everyone's lives (Boyle 329). When it comes to vegetarians, an overwhelming majority declared that vegetarianism was a core part of their identity and encompassed not just diet, but also lifestyle and values as a whole (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 410; Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 382; Haverstock and Forgays 1034). This self-identity as a vegetarian is constructed by a conscious decision to assimilate the major principles of vegetarianism into almost every aspect of their daily lives, including not only food, but also clothing, relationships, and language, among many others (Boyle 314; Powell 182).

The strength of one's identity may also play a role in the decisions they make in terms of food and lifestyle. As it can be seen, “lifestyle is a daily individual commitment that constantly confronts the system and reinforces” ideals that one holds as a part of themselves (Powell 171). In order for an individual's vegetarianism to be successful and last, identity and lifestyle must be affected by this adoption; otherwise, the transition back to an omnivorous lifestyle is much easier and demands much less of an adjustment in terms of self-image (Haverstock and Forgays 1034). Even when faced with dissatisfactory social conditions, vegetarians who hold their lifestyle choices very close to their identity as an individual have the resilience to stick to who they are, regardless of the challenges that appear throughout their daily lives (Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 385; Merriman 425).

Communicating Vegetarianism: Dilemmas and Strategies

The study of communication about vegetarianism is a fairly new subject of research. Those who have studied it have come to accept that, because vegetarianism is a non-mainstream lifestyle, it may be complicated for those who adopt it to easily communicate their choices with others (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 405; Jabs, Sobal, and Devine 383). In order to communicate their ideas and beliefs when questioned by those who are omnivorous, “vegetarians must justify or rationalize their behavior [with] vocabularies of motive [which] are justifications presented by those in an attempt to redefine the behavior in question in a positive light” (Boyle 319). When it comes to these types of situations, “an individual's activities, prior to and during an interpersonal influence attempt, may be explained by his or her goals” (Dillard, Segrin, and Hardin 19). When vegetarians engage in communicative discourse with those who are omnivorous, they most commonly have multiple goals in mind that they intertwine in order to make logical decisions about how to approach the conversation (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 412).

The strategies that are used when it comes to communicating a non-mainstream behavior include both verbal and behavioral tactics. Such verbal strategies include “hav[ing] a plan and minimiz[ing] others' discomfort (with subthemes: make vegetarianism a personal choice; tailor disclosure; downplay; stretch the truth; and excuse people for eating meat)” as well as using such accounts as admissions, denials, excuses, and justifications (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 412; Boyle 320). As with behavioral adaptations, the presence of these values and ideals can become known

through the enactment of them within an individual's lifestyle; this in turn can convey rhetorical messages that are no longer verbal and direct, yet just as effective (Powell 172).

Furthering Research

Vegetarianism is a lifestyle that is difficult to communicate between parties of vegetarians and non-vegetarians due to the culture that surrounds America's standards of eating. Both groups must engage in conversation that reflects a negotiation of ideas and beliefs while attempting to stay true to themselves as individuals. Communication strategies may help alleviate these troubles and allow for the situation to become more balanced and well-rounded. I wanted to add to the research conversation by building upon Romo and Donovan-Kicken's study. At the end of their article, they state that "this study only examined communication from a vegetarian perspective" (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 417). In order to counter this flaw, they suggest that "future research could examine the goals and dilemmas both of vegetarians and their interlocutors to establish where their interpretations correspond or diverge" (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 417). Through my research, I analyzed the perspective of not only vegetarians, but of those they face who are non-vegetarians and how both sides view the experience of communicating with the other. This could hopefully serve as a way for vegetarians to learn how those on the other side have approached this communication and for the general public to understand the hurdles that vegetarians must overcome when adopting a different lifestyle.

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The research questions that I based my project around were as follows:

1. How do vegetarians and non-vegetarians negotiate their differences through their communication styles and behavioral choices, and why?
2. What factors—inside and out—play a role in how these conversations are approached or handled?

Methods

In order to find answers to my research questions, I conducted face-to-face as well as online interviews in order to include the most diverse group of people that I could. I interviewed an equal number of vegetarians and non-vegetarians—three of each group—in order to keep the data balanced and to prevent any analysis from skewing in any one direction. The non-vegetarians that were interviewed have had at least one friend or family member become a vegetarian so that their accounts were connected to an actual experience. The face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes in whichever setting was best fit for the interviewee. Most interviews took place in subjects' own homes or workplaces. The conversations were audiotaped with their given consent and transcribed shortly after the interview in order to keep the analysis fresh and as accurate as possible. Interviewees may have been contacted by phone or e-mail after their interviews if any confusion arose during the interview analysis. Once the interview was over, participants were asked to fill out a form that outlined their demographics so that information regarding diversity and patterns could be considered.

During these interviews I asked a wide variety of questions for vegetarians, including but not limited to

- What was the most difficult part of your decision that you had to communicate?
- What were your strategies for alleviating the discomfort in the conversation?

- Did you feel like you had to avoid being true to yourself in order to fit in with your peers?

When interviewing non-vegetarians about their experience knowing someone who chose to be vegetarian, I included questions such as

- Were your relationships impacted due to this choice?
- Did your behavior change at all whenever you were around them?
- What were your concerns that were difficult to vocalize?
- What made it most difficult to see their point-of-view?

I also conducted a survey of the general population on their feelings and viewpoints on vegetarianism. The survey was created through online survey platform, SurveyMonkey, where the data could most easily stay organized and accessible. A number of the questions were pulled from Pribis, Pencak, and Grajales' survey used within their own study, "Beliefs and Attitudes toward Vegetarian Lifestyle across Generations." This survey was posted on social media pages including Facebook, where a large number and diverse group of people were able to respond. I also distributed paper copies to acquire a larger sample. This survey allowed for a more broad view of how the general population feels about this type of deviance. With this came the impact of culture and how certain types of people have either a more accepting or opposing viewpoint. This could then be applied to the overall research on the topic and how society's norms impact communication between the two groups.

Once all of the data was collected, I analyzed it by looking for patterns within the interview transcripts as well as taking a deeper look at the overall types of things that were said and which perspectives were taken. Once the transcripts were analyzed on this level, I next identified the major themes that emerged from both the interviews and the survey results. The interview transcripts were then analyzed side-by-side with the survey results in order to find how the opinions and attitudes of various respondents correlated and discover factors that may have contributed to these opinions and attitudes.

As with any research, a handful of limitations may have affected the pathway to an ideal conclusion on this topic. First of all, only six individuals were interviewed for this project. This does not allow this research to be generalized to the population at large. The interviewees also may not be representative due to the fact that they all reside in the central Florida area and all have been around similar surroundings throughout this process. Also, the survey results may not encompass a balance in terms of age groups, with a majority of the respondents at the age of either 18 or 19. Finally, the potential bias cannot be ignored: I am a vegetarian myself, and that may have an effect on the research. However, this new type of study broadens the horizons for future evaluation of communicating vegetarianism; it takes one step forward, adding to the conversation for others to work together to discover the best methods to approach this growing topic.

Results

The survey conducted received a total number of 100 responses throughout the research process. The survey collected data about sex and age as well as gauging opinions by providing statements and asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with that particular stance. Sex of respondents was split by having 34% male and 66% female respondents. Although the majority of respondents were 18 or 19, there were a variety of ages represented, including up to as old as eighty-one. The following table, Table 1, includes the results from questions that indicated a variety of opinions. It includes the statement that was given, as well as the percentages of respondents who either agreed or disagreed with that said statement.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
A vegetarian lifestyle is healthier than any other lifestyle.	24%	76%
A vegan lifestyle is extreme.	77%	23%
Vegetarians should eat meat like everybody else. We were made to eat meat.	32%	68%
Being a vegetarian is too complicated in today's society.	30%	70%
To be a vegetarian, you must have a strong personality.	35%	65%
Vegetarians should be respected for their choices.	97%	3%

Table 1: Survey statements with percentage of respondents who agree and disagree

When it came to the statement on whether or not vegetarians gain proper nutrients from their diet, the answers were split 50-50, which seemed interesting in terms of how all of the other, socially-driven questions tended to be the ones that varied more in terms of opinion. There was also a question included that asked respondents what would be the most accepted reason for someone being a vegetarian. Surprisingly, over 50% of the respondents selected health as their most accepted reason, even though a majority of them agreed that a vegetarian lifestyle was not considered a top, healthy lifestyle. The following three reasons were about even in terms of their numbers, only varying by a few percentage points each. These were ethical treatment, religious reasons, and environmental reasons.

Case Studies

In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the attitudes and experiences surrounding the topic of vegetarianism, there were three case studies that were conducted by interviewing three vegetarians as well as one of their close relatives or friends who is not vegetarian. This was done to obtain actual accounts in order to analyze how and why these specific occurrences happened and what influenced the levels of acceptance and understanding on both sides. The following section will include background information on all three vegetarians in order to better understand which outside factors may have played a role during this change.

The first vegetarian, Jeff, is a sixty-three year old, Caucasian male. He has a high school degree and currently works as a surveyor. Jeff has been a vegetarian for 45 years and cites health as his reason for this lifestyle. He has not placed a specific label of the type of vegetarian he is, but from what was collected, he only abstains from meat and still eats dairy products such as cheese and milk. He also has a wife who is a vegetarian, just as he is. The social environment was thoroughly different when he became a vegetarian from what it is like today. It was seen, from his accounts, as much more difficult to be a vegetarian back then than it is now. The non-vegetarian who was interviewed, Hannah, is related to Jeff in that she is a co-worker as well as a dear friend.

The second vegetarian, Ariel, is a twenty-three year old, Caucasian female. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and currently works as a teacher in a foreign country. She is currently unmarried. Ariel has been a vegetarian for three years and chose this lifestyle due to her feelings against the ways that animals are raised and killed. She recognizes her specific vegetarian identity as an ovo-lacto vegetarian, meaning that she still eats dairy products and eggs. Due to her more recent adoption of this diet in 2010 while still in college, she was surrounded mostly by other individuals in her age group. Her family had been previously exposed to vegetarianism through Ariel's cousin, which may have influenced how this change affected those who surrounded her. The non-vegetarian who was interviewed is her mother, Elizabeth.

The third vegetarian, Melissa, is a seventeen-year-old, Caucasian female. She is currently a student in her senior year of high school and will have her high school degree within a month. She is currently unmarried. Melissa has been a vegetarian for four months and cites her reasoning as animal cruelty. She identifies herself as a vegetarian who still eats dairy products and eggs, defined specifically as an ovo-lacto vegetarian. Melissa adopted this lifestyle while still in high school,

placing her in a younger environment than the other two vegetarians in terms of the peers around her. When Melissa became a vegetarian, her family had already been exposed to vegetarianism through her mother's sister, whose family is all vegetarians, which was a much closer connection than any of the other vegetarians had. The non-vegetarian who was interviewed was her mother, Joanne.

Discussion

Attitudes towards and Respect for Vegetarians

When looking at the results from the survey as well as analyzing the perspectives of non-vegetarians through the one-on-one interview process, a major theme surfaced that was apparent across all data: respect. The survey showed that although people do not necessarily agree with a vegetarian lifestyle and all of the aspects that go along with it, almost all respondents (97%) said that vegetarians should be respected for their choices. This may represent a slight disconnect between what people think and what they may actually end up saying and doing towards and about vegetarians.

An internal sense of respect for everybody's beliefs and ideals may be overshadowed by individuals' concern and dissatisfaction with the way vegetarians are acting against the dominant culture. This may be due to a sense that their own way of living is being rejected, proving that eating meat is not the only "right" way to live—causing them to be on guard to protect their own beliefs and understanding of the world. Such can be seen through the words of Jeff:

An internal sense of respect for everybody's beliefs and ideals may be overshadowed by individuals' concern and dissatisfaction with the way vegetarians are acting against the dominant culture.

Any time you do something different than someone else, you are going to get questioned. Everyone thinks that their way is "the" best way or they wouldn't be doing it.

This theme of respect was also thoroughly evident within the three interviews with non-vegetarians; the term "respect" was used within eight of their answers and explanations, as well as many other hints that expressed their understanding of individuality and the right to have their own beliefs. Although the non-vegetarians did not necessarily agree with the extremism sometimes associated with vegetarianism and were very straightforward in saying that they would not think of ever adopting the lifestyle for themselves, they felt a level of respect towards vegetarians for making a decision for themselves and believing in their choices. The only exception would be Hannah, who has partially incorporated vegetarianism into her diet patterns

over a period of time. Elizabeth spoke of this in regards to her daughter, Ariel, by saying,

It's something that she felt strongly about and she should be respected for it. She held onto that conviction for a long time. She didn't just decide to be a vegetarian one day and then throw her beliefs aside the next day. She had something strong, she grasped it, and it's something that you should be proud about.

On the other side, Joanne emphasized that, when it came to her daughter Melissa being a vegetarian, she made sure that respect was a two-way street, saying,

I try to be respectful of her beliefs and I don't want to attack her either. You know, it kind of goes both ways. Don't show me pictures and I won't talk about how you must have meat in your diet.

Allowing for that balance in respect plays a big part in how successful one can be when it comes to change within their life, especially if they are moving away from the majority of the

culture. As people become more aware of the growing number of those becoming vegetarians and also are exposed to much more information regarding the lifestyle, respect may be a much larger part of the way that many approach these conversations. Instead of holding this value internally, there may be a much more external emphasis on respecting those who are vegetarians as their numbers continue to grow.

Social Foundations

These attitudes are influenced by a variety of social factors that these individuals are surrounded by, which, in turn, highly affect the level of acceptance that is provided for this non-mainstream lifestyle. Such factors include but are not limited to social environment, family/friends, age, ethnicity, religion, education level, physical attributes, social awareness, and cultural viewpoints, as well as the exposure within that community to vegetarianism and other non-dominant lifestyles. As many people grow through this socialization process called life, the way that they choose to approach a conversation and communicate is influenced; they receive guidance from the major figures of their lives as well as from everything around them that they are exposed to (Devine 125).

Americans make up some of the most diverse people on this planet, and this is seen in part in the wide range of differences found within each and every person's individual social surroundings. From this, any sort of disagreement or conflict tends to be socially bound and stems from these major social aspects that surround everyone's daily lives and the dissimilarities between them. All of these differences come together to create a foundation for this process of change and determine what must be done by vegetarians in order to gain acceptance and understanding from those around them.

Communication Styles

In order to best handle a situation, one must be aware of their surroundings. Although the individuals who were interviewed did not say they were employing any specific communication strategies up front, it became evident through their explanations of events and situations that they were most certainly conscious of those around them. This was seen both through the vegetarian sample as well as those who were non-vegetarian in terms of their decided communication styles towards one another. These surfaced mainly as verbal choices that were made, but there were also subtle behavioral choices that may have had a strong impact on their success.

Verbal Choices

When it came to vegetarians, they engaged in strategies of framing, objectifying their research, preparation, and having a sense of audience awareness—combining them all in order to best handle the situation from all sides (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 412). First, vegetarians approached their conversations by framing their language to encompass their lifestyle choices as a personal choice, so as to place all of their decisions solely on their own shoulders (Romo and Donovan-Kicken 413). This understanding of the differences between them and those who were not vegetarians was key to making sure that their argument and support was balanced on both sides. Melissa expressed how she would approach this, using religion as an analogy for another belief that could have strong roots within the individual:

I feel like it's everybody's decision. I'm not like, "I'm a vegetarian, so you should be a vegetarian, too." I'm kind of like, if that's not your thing, that's not your thing. It's kind of like the same thing with religion, if it's not your thing, it's not your thing. I'm saying, "I feel this way, but you don't have to feel this way."

Another tactic that vegetarians employed was making sure they stayed highly informed through research and factual evidence to support their claims. Instead of approaching conversations with only their opinions and convictions, they made sure to have objective research

by their side, allowing others to be less likely to come back with an argument against them. Ariel cited this as her most common strategy for communicating her beliefs and ideas to others, saying,

I definitely researched it so that I wasn't just going in saying, "I'm a vegetarian," "Why?" "Uhm, because I like animals." I wanted to actually tell them the reasons why so that they wouldn't doubt me as much and they'd be like, "Oh, she really did her research and she's serious about this." And that's really what I do to communicate to people, I tell them the facts.

Preparation also surfaced as another strong foundation for their ability to communicate as effectively as they could to those that they engaged in conversation with. Instead of waiting for the conflict to arise, the vegetarians made sure that they were thoroughly prepared not only through their extensive research, but also through "Vegetarian Start-Up" literature. An interesting find was that both females who recently became vegetarians read the same exact article that listed questions that they could be asked with the most effective answers in case they ever encountered a situation that became uncomfortable. This support guide prepared them for the possibly awkward and uncomfortable questions they could be asked, so as to not only take the shock out of hearing them, but to also provide useful ways to word their answers as so not offend or generate any extra conflict.

Last but certainly not least, vegetarians must have a strong sense of audience awareness. Although they may not have a totally conscious knowledge that they are changing their language based upon the individual they are speaking with, it may be the most important strategy in terms of conflict avoidance. This is used in order for them to tailor their discourse based upon their understanding of that person's personality, viewpoints, beliefs, as well as their relationship to them. Ariel expressed her awareness by stating,

I won't go into the detail with people that I know would be uncomfortable with it. Like some of my friends would be very uncomfortable with me telling them the gruesome details. But other people it wouldn't matter. . . . But my mom, I could not talk to her about that. So, I definitely tailor the reasons.

Melissa was also able to find instances where she would change her wording based upon those she was speaking to:

I think so, because with my family I'll joke around and be like, "Do you know what happened to that?" . . . But with my friends I don't really do that, because I don't want to upset them. But with my family, I poke fun at them all of the time.

With this, they were able to best handle their discourse by determining these factors beforehand.

Non-vegetarians negotiated their ideas in a manner that was straightforward and clear, vocalizing their concerns and problems in a way that expressed exactly how they were feeling. If, however, there was ever an uncomfortable topic or something that they weren't quite ready to address, they would simply avoid talking about it at all. Ariel brought this up when speaking about her mother, Elizabeth, as well as her father in terms of the way they vocalized their concerns for her lifestyle change:

No, they told me straightforward. Like my parents, they told me right away, "I don't think you should do it," or "How are you going to get your protein?" They've told me straightforward.

In terms of uncomfortable topics, Melissa's mother, Joanne, stated that she did not agree with the extremism of PETA and felt discomfort when talking about the "why" aspects of being a

vegetarian and how those two may be connected. She examined certain topics that were difficult to vocalize and decided that it was better to just simply not talk about them, rather than creating a whole debate and making it a bigger issue than it already was. She also found herself internalizing the topic of meat, feeling as if she should avoid speaking of it in order to feel more comfortable with situations. Joanne explained, saying, "Yeah, I find myself not talking about meat and I just kind of avoid that and put it aside. Really, that's it, it's just internalizing it." These vocal strategies were the only two that surfaced through the interview process, which may be due in part to participants only having had to deal with a single individual, rather than everyone around them, as the vegetarians did.

Behavioral Choices

Vegetarians seem to have, across the board, an understanding that they can make a much larger impact and become a much greater influence on those around them through their behavioral choices. All three vegetarians found that by simply leading by example they could allow more people to have a deeper understanding and acceptance of their choices. Instead of simply talking about their beliefs and ideas, living them was the most direct way in sharing their point-of-view with others in the most subtle of ways (Powell 172). Jeff explains that instead of "pushing" his beliefs on others, he finds it more effective to show them:

I try to show them through example that it's a better lifestyle, it's a healthier lifestyle. It's not necessarily better, it's healthier. So people I truly care about, I try to show them through an example, my example of eating what to eat, and in the last few years it has seemed to pay off. People that I truly care about are starting to become more aware and will maybe actually become vegetarians.

Another behavioral strategy is to emphasize the positives of the lifestyle by showing others that it can be easy and actually very enjoyable (Boyle 319). Melissa emphasizes the importance of this approach:

With my friends I just try to make it look like it's not that hard, because it's really not, once you get used to it; it's not hard at all and you enjoy it. But I just try to make it look like it is enjoyable and how it's a healthier way of eating and all of that stuff. And when they ask me about it I bring up all of the positives.

From this, all of the vegetarians had solid goals in mind that they demonstrated through their actions and behavior in front of others. Sometimes, the most effective influence is subtle; yelling in someone's face and telling them what they should and shouldn't do is never the answer.

There seemed to be a consensus between the non-vegetarians that, when it came to behavior, the only changes to their actions were due to their awareness of meat being put in front of those that were vegetarian. There were no major ways in which their behavior was changed in terms of their ways of conversing with them, only in a way that was conscious of what they placed within the vegetarians' line of sight. Elizabeth addressed this:

Well I wasn't going to bring my steak next to her and say, "Hey, look at this juicy steak that you once ate." So, no, I guess we were cautious in a way that, you know, whenever somebody makes a decision, you don't want to disrespect it.

Joanne was also cautious and constantly aware of what was now around her due to this change, stating,

I find myself thinking, "Okay, I shouldn't cook that or I shouldn't buy that." And we won't walk by the meat section, you know, in the grocery store. I mean, we don't not do that, but it's in my head. So I just have a conscious way of trying to avoid putting meat in front of her.

Once Hannah became friends with Jeff and began eating more meals with him, she realized that she might have been making Jeff uncomfortable by eating meat around him. She expresses her first

thoughts: "I assumed in the beginning that I might be creating an uncomfortable dinner experience; however, I quickly learned, that was the furthest from Jeff's mind."

These behavioral choices may not be recognized by the vegetarians, but they are by the non-vegetarians, who make choices based upon what they feel is best for a given situation.

Conclusion

With this research I am able to spread more information regarding vegetarianism and the true struggles that come along with stepping out of what is accepted as normal behavior. This research can help those who are newly becoming vegetarian or those who are thinking of adopting this lifestyle by providing them with a basis for what they will face and how to properly communicate during these situations. It also can give those who are non-vegetarians a new perspective on how much of an uphill battle it is when it comes to deviating from what is thought to be the only "normal" way of behaving. It will give both parties a better understanding of how to negotiate their differences through proper communication that does not judge or demean the other. It may also provide those who have never had immediate contact with a vegetarian a more well-rounded and accepting perspective on the issue by being able to see both sides of the argument side-by-side.

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