

University of Vermont

UVM ScholarWorks

Environmental Studies Electronic Thesis
Collection

Undergraduate Theses

2013

The Vegan Journey: An Exploration of Vegan Experiences with Vegans from Burlington, Vermont

Kelsey Steele
Vermont

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/envstheses>

Recommended Citation

Steele, Kelsey, "The Vegan Journey: An Exploration of Vegan Experiences with Vegans from Burlington, Vermont" (2013). *Environmental Studies Electronic Thesis Collection*. 23.
<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/envstheses/23>

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Theses at UVM ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Environmental Studies Electronic Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of UVM ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uvm.edu.

Environmental Studies Thesis

The Vegan Journey

*An Exploration of Vegan Experiences with Vegans from
Burlington, Vermont*

Kelsey Steele

May 1, 2013

University of Vermont Advisors

Kit Anderson, Ph.D.

Tyler Doggett, Ph.D.

Stephanie Kaza, Ph.D.

Abstract

People become vegan for three reasons: environment, health and ethics. Although there are many societal benefits to a vegan lifestyle, only 2% of the U.S. population is currently vegan. Past research has shown that, as a group, vegans' behavior matches their beliefs. This study is based on semi-structured interviews with 17 vegans in Burlington, Vermont. The purpose of the study was to better understand why and how these vegans became and maintained a vegan lifestyle. An analysis of the interviews showed that the participants went through four stages in their vegan journey: Readiness, Spark, Learning and Telling, and Continuing Journey. By examining these stages, this study concludes that by learning about veganism we can better understand how individuals bridge the gap between their values and actions.

Acknowledgments

I am exceedingly grateful to my mom, Deborah Schwartz, for her continuous encouragement and advice. Thank you for being my technical support team and for inspiring me everyday to be my best self and to live a compassionate life.

I would like to thank Kit Anderson for guiding me through the process of writing a thesis and for always being upbeat and optimistic in our Thesis class every Tuesday. Your class always uplifted my spirits even on the rough days.

I would also like to thank Tyler Doggett for his support during this whole process and for his continued excitement about the project. Thank you for helping me to improve my arguments and teaching me how to identify a weak one.

I would like to thank Stephanie Kaza for her constant reassurance throughout this project and for her undying dedication to the Environmental Studies Program. I am eternally grateful for this program that has given me hope for a just and kind world. It has also encouraged me to follow a life that I love. Thank you.

I am truly grateful to the seventeen participants who shared their stories for this project. You taught me about what it means to be a vegan and I am honored that you let me write about your vegan journeys. I am extremely thankful for everything that you do to make the world a kinder and more beautiful place.

I am infinitely grateful for my family and friends who have supported me throughout this project. Thank you for believing in me and helping me to laugh and take a deep breathe even when the road was a bit rough. I could not have done this project without you.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Acknowledgments..... | 3 |
| Contents..... | 4 |
| Table of Figures | 6 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| Why is this important?..... | 8 |
| Literature Review | 9 |
| Definition of Veganism | 9 |
| The History of Veganism | 9 |
| Recent Environmental Implications of a Plant Based Lifestyle..... | 10 |
| Vegans in the United States..... | 10 |
| Reasons for Being Vegan | 11 |
| Ethical vs. Health Vegans..... | 14 |
| Behavior and Ethics..... | 15 |
| Methods | 17 |
| Goal | 17 |
| Overall Strategy..... | 17 |
| Recruiting the Participants | 18 |
| Burlington’s Role | 18 |
| The Interviews | 20 |
| Interview Topics..... | 20 |
| Analysis..... | 24 |
| Participant Demographics | 24 |
| Interview Results | 27 |
| Summary of Results | 46 |
| Discussion | 47 |
| The Stages of the Vegan Journey | 47 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Effects on Non-Vegans..... | 51 |
| Conclusion | 54 |
| Purpose of Research | 54 |
| Limitations and Further Research | 54 |
| Concluding Thoughts | 55 |
| Work Cited..... | 56 |
| Appendix A: Poster for Recruiting Participants | 60 |
| Appendix B: Informed Consent Form..... | 61 |
| Appendix C: Spreadsheet Summary of Interviews | 63 |
| Appendix D: Transcribed Interviews | 73 |

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Participants' Gender25

Figure 2: Average Number of Years Vegan.....25

Figure 3: Initial Reason to Become Vegan.....26

Figure 4: Four Stages of Vegan Journey47

Figure 5: Vegans and Non-Vegans on Vegan Journey53

Introduction

When I first came to Burlington, Vermont as a freshman, I was excited that I was going to be in a place that I thought supported a vegan lifestyle. In my hometown in upstate New York, we don't have many vegan options, but at the university they even had a vegan station! It was pure happiness! The people of Burlington were interested in the same things that I was interested in since becoming a vegan: the environment, health, and the humane treatment of farm animals. There were organic and local foods, which was something that vegans are often also interested in.

As I went through my years living in Burlington, I noticed something: despite the number of vegan options available, there were not many vegans. I knew that vegans were rare; only about 2% of people in the United States are vegan (Newport, 2012). However, I did expect to meet more than the four or five vegans that I got to know throughout my years in Burlington. I also noticed that people on campus and downtown talked about how good local and or organic foods were for the environment, but hardly anyone talked about vegan foods. I am all in favor of organic and local, but I had also read numerous articles and books on how reducing your animal product consumption decreases your carbon footprint even more than if you drove a fuel efficient car. For example, the 2006 United Nations study, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, reported that livestock raised for human production contributed more to climate change than the fossil fuel that is used for transportation purposes (Steinfeld, et al., 2006). Why did so few people talk about that?

When I declared myself an environmental studies major, I was sure that my environmental studies classes would talk about the environmental benefits of a vegan lifestyle. I anticipated that I could learn even more about the environmental impact of daily food choices at UVM in Environmental Studies. I was disappointed again. I loved my environmental studies classes, but only one small section in an introductory class ever mentioned plant-based diets and environmental degradation because of the consumption of animal food. In contrast, whole classes were dedicated to the environmental advantages of organic and local foods. Some classes included numerous lectures on the health benefits of organic foods and how they decreased the risk of cancer. However, I had read *The China Study* by Colin Campbell and I knew there was compelling scientific evidence that a plant-based diet greatly decreased cancer rates even more than eating organic food. Why did no one talk about that? I did not expect everyone to be vegan, but I did think that it was strange were so few and that it was hardly mentioned.

I started my vegan journey for health reasons. My mother was concerned about mad cow disease and after researching diets; she moved the whole family to a vegetarian diet. When I started learning about ethical vegans and the horrible ways animals were tortured and slaughtered unnecessarily, it confirmed my resolution to maintain a plant-based diet. I was particularly horrified to learn how baby calves were taken away from their mothers so cows' milk could be used for human consumption. It was easy to avoid cheese and dairy products whenever I reflected on the process that brought it to the table. Living at home was easy because my family only stocked plant foods. It was more difficult to travel and eat out in restaurants, but I learned how to order and ask questions of the servers. In Burlington, it was easy to be a vegan because most places have at least one vegan option and the servers know what "vegan" means.

When I decided to do a thesis for my capstone project, I knew that I wanted to do it on veganism. I wanted to study how people became and remained vegan. I knew the typical reasons why people become vegan: environmental impact, health concerns, and compassion for animals. However, I did not understand why certain people took these concerns and turned them into a vegan lifestyle, where others

had these same concerns but did not change their diets. I wanted to know if vegans in Vermont also supported local and organic foods. How did they come to information about veganism and how did they decide to make the switch to a 100% plant based diet?

In order to find out how people were led to a vegan lifestyle, I interviewed 17 vegans who currently live in or near Burlington, Vermont. All of the vegans that I interviewed had been vegan for at least one year. I hoped that with the one-year criteria, I would attract vegans who had had significant experience with veganism. The project developed from focusing on vegans in general to finding connections between Burlington and veganism.

Why is this important?

Why is this question important and why would I decide to do this for an environmental studies thesis? According to *The Guardian*, one of the United Kingdom's most popular newspapers, water scientists predicted that the world might be forced to live on a plant-based diet. Currently there are 7 billion people on the planet and this number is expected to increase to 9 billion by the year 2025. Of these 7 billion people, 18 million currently do not have access to enough water. Researchers think this has to do with drought caused by global warming and the consumption of animal products (Vidal, 2012).

A meat-based diet uses up five times more water than a plant-based one (Vidal, 2012). Animals raised for human consumption are responsible for one third of the nitrogen and phosphorus currently polluting the world's clean water sources (Henning, 2011). In addition to water depletion and pollution, animal production has been shown to result in soil erosion, deforestation, and greenhouse gas emissions (Henning, 2011). By choosing veganism, consumers are voting against all of this environmental destruction. Ethically, vegans are also voting against the destruction of the 70 billion animals who are killed worldwide every year for the human consumption of animal meat and animal by-products (Oppenlander, 2012).

We know relatively very little about the people who choose to follow a vegan diet and how they came to eat this way. This study will provide insight into how individuals come to repeatedly behave in ways that reflect their values in terms of ethics, the environment, and their health. It will further our understanding of the individuals' ability to bridge the gap between beliefs and actions.

Literature Review

In order to fully understand the experiences of the vegans portrayed in this study, it is important to understand veganism in general: its definition, its history, and the possible reasons behind an individual becoming and remaining vegan. Since the purpose of this study is to understand how someone comes to behave in ways that reflect their values, it is also important to understand the factors that influence the relationship between values and behavior in an individual. The following section will explain veganism, the research that has been conducted on it and the issues surrounding veganism. The section will conclude with a psychological exploration of the behavior-value relationship.

Definition of Veganism

A vegan is someone who chooses to the best of their ability not to consume cows, chickens, pigs, turkeys, ducks, exotic animals, fish, cheese, eggs, milk, yogurt, and honey. Vegans refrain from using animal products such as leather, wool, fur, silk, and fish scales for clothes, cosmetics, furniture, or for any other human use (Vegan Society, n.d.). Because of the diverse reasons behind someone choosing to become vegan and because of a world that caters primarily towards omnivores (people who eat animal products), many vegans do not adhere to this strict definition, but rather live by a slightly modified version of the original definition of vegan. Examples of modified versions of a vegan lifestyle may be a person including honey in their plant-based diet or a person having a vegan diet, but still wearing animal products such as leather or wool.

The History of Veganism

The term “vegetarian” was collectively created in 1884 by the Vegetarian Society (Spencer, 1992). In 1944, Donald Watson was one of the members of the Vegetarian Society. When Watson was a young boy, he used to spend time at his beloved Uncle George’s farm in Mexborough, South Yorkshire. At the farm, Watson was horrified and stunned to see his uncle take command in the slaughtering of a pig (Obituary: Donald Watson; Times, 2005). From that moment on, Donald Watson refused to eat meat and eventually refused all animal products including dairy, eggs, and honey. He hated the way that calves were taken away from their mothers at a very young age and how the mothers were made to produce more milk than they naturally would (Obituary: Donald Watson; BBC News). As an adult, Watson joined the Vegetarian Society but he was frustrated at the organization’s inclusion of dairy and eggs in their definition of a vegetarian diet (The Vegan Society, n.d.).

Donald Watson proposed that the Vegetarian Society operate a sub-section, which promoted a diet that refrained from all animal products. The Society was hostile towards this proposition and refused to listen to Watson (The Vegan Society, n.d.). During World War II, Watson proclaimed himself to be a conscientious objector and he decided to create his own organization for non-dairy vegetarians. In creating the society, Watson crafted the term “vegan” with his wife, Dorothy, by combining the first and last letters of the term “vegetarian” (The Vegan Society, n.d.). The word reflected Watson’s belief that his newly defined diet was the beginning inspiration and last step in a person’s vegetarian journey (Larsson, Ronnbund, Johansson and Dahlgen, 2001).

Watson ran The Vegan Society from his home in Leicester, England, for two years until he moved to Keswick with his wife to work as a woodworking teacher. Watson’s fellow vegans and friends continued The Vegan Society’s work after he moved. Watson continued to advocate for a vegan diet until he died in 2005 at the age of 95 (The Vegan Society, n.d.). Donald attributed his long life and good health

to his vegan diet, saying that “we may be sure that should anything so much as a pimple ever appear to mar the beauty of our physical form, it will be entirely due in the eyes of the world to our own silly for not eating proper food” (Obituary: Donald Watson: Times, 2005). Watson’s reasons for advocating vegan choices were both health and animal rights related; these are also reasons that many people choose to become vegan today.

Vegetarianism and veganism did not become popular in America until the 1970’s and 80’s. The first pivotal event towards the widespread adaptation of veganism in the United States was Frances Moore Lappé publication of *Diet for a Small Planet* in 1971. Lappé wrote the book when she learned that almost half of the entire world’s grain went to livestock while millions of people on the planet starve and only a small portion of the grain is returned to humans in the form of meat. She sold millions of copies of the book and it inspired people to work towards ending the world’s problems of hunger and land exploitation by adopting a vegetarian diet (Lappé, 1991).

In 1987, John Robbins wrote *Diet for a New America*, which further expanded on the concept of veganism within the United States. Robbins is the son of Irv Robbins, co-founder of the Baskin Robbins franchise. Robbins walked away from his father’s inheritance in order to fulfill his dream of working towards creating a world that respected all of the earth’s creatures (Robbins, 1987). Robbins divided the book into three sections: animal rights, human health, and environment. The book is a collection of research by many scientists and academics. Robbins was one of the first people to combine the research into one volume written for the general public that clearly describes the benefits of a vegan diet from the three different perspectives (Robbins, 1987).

Recent Environmental Implications of a Plant Based Lifestyle

Most recently, veganism and vegetarianism have been surfacing in mainstream media because it has been predicted that if everyone were to go vegetarian or vegan, it would significantly slow down global warming. In 2006, the Food and Agriculture Institute of the United Nations published *Livestocks Long Shadow*. This study was the result of the Livestock, Environment, and Development (LEAD) initiative supported by prestigious institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and other international organizations. This work documented the “very substantial contribution of animal agriculture to climate change and air pollution, to land, soil and water degradation and to the reduction of biodiversity” (Steinfeld, Gerber, Wassenaar, Castel, Rosale, 2006, p. i). Among the most often quoted parts of this report is that a major cause of climate change is the use of livestock for food “responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions measured in CO₂ equivalents. This is a higher share than transport” (Steinfeld et. al, 2006, p. xxi). Other researchers have referred to this finding, such as Harmon (Harmon, 2012). Additional research on the contribution of livestock to greenhouse gas emissions have argued that the LEAD report underestimated the impact of eating animals by humans; the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is not 18% but could range from 30% to 50% (Oppenlander, 2012).

Vegans in the United States

It is estimated that there are 7.5 million vegans and 18 million vegetarians in the United States (Bohnic, 2011). According to one Gallup poll of 1, 014 adults living in the United States and District of Columbia, 7% of the females and 4% of the males described themselves as vegetarians. There was a slight difference in the proportions of vegetarians within the ages. In the age brackets older than 50 years of age, 7% of people said that they were vegetarian. People ages 18-29 came in as 5% vegetarian and the 30-49 year olds were 4% vegetarian. The survey also showed that 2% of the population identified as

vegan (Newport, 2012). Interestingly, another survey by the Vegetarian Resource Group showed that 33% of the people interviewed were interested in vegetarianism and incorporated vegetarian meals into their daily diet (VRG Blog, 2008).

Reasons for Being Vegan

The people who declare themselves vegans are most likely to do so because of animal rights, health, or environmental concerns. These concerns may change or vary over time. Many vegans start out as vegetarians and then slowly wean themselves from animal byproducts such as milk and eggs. Other vegans eliminate all animal products when first changing their diets. The consensus among many vegetarian and vegan leaders is that “being a vegetarian is not a static state; it is a process of ‘becoming’ through shifting personal motivations and increasing degrees of commitment” (Maurer, 2002). As Donald Watson put it, when he invented the term, “veganism is the last step in the journey of vegetarianism” (Obituary: Donald Watson: Times, 2005).

Ethical

One of the primary reasons for someone to adapt a vegan diet is because they do not want to consume an animal because it makes them feel uncomfortable that they are consuming a sentient being. In a study done in 2000 by Barbara McDonald on becoming vegan, most vegans who had not originally been vegan said that they already held compassion for animals before becoming vegan. They said that they used to “compartmentalize” animals; they felt compassion towards companion animals such as dogs and cats while they tried to ignore feelings of compassion for farmed animals, which they consumed.

People who adapt a vegan lifestyle for ethical reasons are often called “ethical vegans”. These vegans are concerned with the exploitation of animals and people. They believe it is unethical to take body parts from animals for food, clothing, or household items. They are against the torture and killing of animals for any reason, including medical research, entertainment, and for products (Jabs et al., 1998; Larson et al., 2003). They are concerned with the impact on humans of the violence and torture that goes on in the factory processing of animals. The controversies around ethical vegans are more complicated. They consider issues around using products that have come from animals. For example, using wool from sheep does not kill the sheep, but ethical vegans believe it is harmful and sometimes painful to sheep to remove the wool. They do not wear leather because it involves killing the animal for its skin. However, some ethical vegans have problems finding comfortable man-made shoes and are conflicted on whether or not leather shoes should be worn (Greenebaum, 2012). They wonder how far to take their ethical beliefs. For example, they may choose not to eat white processed sugar because the sugar is often filtered through animal bones. However, it is difficult to avoid the misuse of animals in processing other products; even organic plants are fertilized with waste products from animals.

An omnivore will often feel repulsed by eating dog meat. Dogs are one of America’s most beloved pets and most Americans feel empathy and compassion towards dogs. However, omnivores may not feel repulsed when they consume beef because they do not perceive cows in the same way as dogs, even though cows and dogs both have similar feelings, consciousness, and preferences (Joy, 2011). This perception is both social and psychological. The perception of a situation will determine how we feel about a situation and then it will affect how we act towards it (Joy, 2011). Beef is not repulsive to most people because their relationship to cows is in the form of food and shoes; they rarely interact with the animal at a personal level. There are only a few animals that Americans actually classify as appropriate to eat because of their perception of them (Joy, 2011).

Emotions such as “grief, sadness, and guilt” can be major catalysts when it comes to someone changing to a vegan lifestyle (McDonald, 2000). One person who McDonald interviewed had said that she had just lost her bird, Chip, when she was learning about animal cruelty. That night while she was cracking an egg, the interviewee was overcome with such grief that she became a vegan (McDonald, 2000). Another interviewer who was watching a video said that “it was like they say, the curtain was pulled back” (McDonald, 2000).

All of the people who were interviewed for McDonald’s study said that reading books about animal cruelty influenced them. They often read the books because they were already vegetarian and curious or because they kept hearing people talk about veganism and factory farming (McDonald, 2000). One interviewee explained the process of becoming vegan as “requiring openness to new information and the potential of a new and challenging lifestyle” (McDonald, 2011).

Information about factory farms is often the catalytic moment for people beginning their vegan journey. Factory farms, also known as Concentrated Animal Feeding Lots (CAFOs) have become the major way animals are grown to become food all around the world. Only about 5% of all U.S. animal operations are in the form of CAFOs, but CAFOs produce 50% of the food animals sold in the United States (Gurian-Sherman, 2008). CAFO enclosures are enormous and hold up to 10,000 hogs or a million chickens in one barn or 100,000 cattle in one feedlot (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2008).

In these farms, animals such as cows, chickens, pigs, turkeys, goats, and sheep are housed together in crowded facilities where they are fed continual doses of antibiotics. Through breeding and hormones, these animals grow so big that they can barely support their own weight and often break their own legs (Robbins, 1987; Joy, 2011; Oppenlander, 2012). These animals are treated as commodities and are often subjected to extreme brutalities such as having their heads bashed against walls, being poked with hot sticks, and getting their throats slit open, all while they are conscious. Baby animals such as calves and chicks are taken away from their mothers, often at birth. Calves are not allowed to drink their mothers’ milk and are often placed in dark little crates if they are male so that they become anemic for the production of consumer-preferred white colored veal (Robbins, 1987).

Some people become vegan because they feel saddened or guilty by the thought of eating a dead animal or a product that comes from a tortured animal. Often this sadness and guilt arises after receiving information about how animals are treated on farms and within the food industry.

Health

People who become vegan for health reasons are often called “health vegans” (Greenebaum, 2012; Freeman, 2013). Health vegans are concerned with their own personal health and believe that plant foods will provide better short and long-term health outcomes. There may be some controversy among health vegans as to what are acceptable plant foods; for example, some health vegans will still eat junk foods such as Oreos, french fries, cola, and processed soy foods. Other health vegans avoid processed foods and oil, and buy organic. (Beardsworth & Keil, 1991, 1992; Fox & Ward, 2008). However, health vegans are not concerned with animal rights and do not think of their food choices as ethical choices.

Many doctors and researchers who have inspired vegans because of health benefits often refrain from using the term “vegan” but rather call it a “whole foods plant-based diet” (Parker-Pope, 2011). Whole foods are plant foods that are close to the form in which they originally grew. Many of these health-oriented herbivores are inspired by Dr. Collin T. Campbell, author of *The China Study*, based on one of the largest nutritional studies ever conducted. Campbell studied 65,000 people in 65 counties of China for 20 years to find out if there were any patterns between lifestyle and disease. His research

showed that people who consumed a traditional Chinese diet of mainly plants avoided diseases such as cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, and heart disease (Campbell, 2005). Other people, such as Dr. John McDougall, who was cited in John Robins' *Diet for a New America*, have been treating patients with chronic diseases by teaching them about a plant-based diet for more than 30 years (McDougall, 2012).

Health-inspired vegans became vegan by researching vegetarian websites where they found scientific evidences suggesting that the diet gives a stronger immune system and people on it are less likely to suffer from chronic diseases such as high blood pressure (Fox & Ward, 2008). In an interview, a health conscious vegan said, "To me-it [a low fat vegan diet] is VERY important. If I eat crappy for even a week...I feel horrible, tired, sluggish, and irritable" (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Health inspired "vegans" can differ from ethically driven vegans in how they present themselves to the public. People have been known to cover up their "veganism" when it is health related. In an interview done by Nick Fox and Katie Ward (2008), a man said, "I tell people that I have food allergies and I have to eat this way for my health. I feel so much healthier when I eat vegan meals." The resistance to being labeled as a "vegan" can be because the word is often associated with a grander goal of changing the world instead of just being healthy. Collin T. Campbell, who wrote *The China Study*, does not use the word "vegan" because he says that people who are labeled that way do so for "ideological reasons." He "wants people to talk about plant-based nutrition and think about these ideas in a very empirical sense and not with an ideological bent to it" (Parker-Pope, 2011). Campbell is focused on the strength of his research and he believes that to intertwine ideals with this research would undermine the validity of the research.

Dr. John McDougall is similar to Campbell in the sense that he does not refer to himself as a "vegan" but as someone who practices a whole foods "starch based diet." In his book, *The Starch Solution* (2012), he compliments vegans saying that they are brave to take that label since they have to constantly be explaining their reasoning behind it. However, he also separates himself from the term by saying that vegans often do not follow his diet of one centered on low fat whole foods. Even though Dr. McDougall does not consume animal products, he still does not refer to himself as a "vegan" because his reasoning lies within the scientific realm and out of the idealized one.

Health-conscious vegans are primarily focused on scientific evidence that shows a plant-based diet decreasing the chance of chronic diseases and increasing the overall health of an individual. They may not always be conscious of the environmental and animal welfare benefits of their food choice, but they are still contributing to the protection of the environment and animals.

Environment

A smaller number of people adapt a vegan lifestyle for environmental reasons, often called "environmental vegans" (Kalof et al., 1999; Oppenlander, 2013). Environmental vegans believe that the use of animals for food is a major reason for environmental degradation in terms of misuse of fresh water, declining biodiversity, global warming, air pollution, and water pollution. For environmental vegans, the ethical discussions get complicated. For example, environmental vegans think about wearing leather shoes, which harms animals or wearing polyvinyl chloride (PVC) shoes because they do not last as long as leather and the PVC production process adversely affects water and air (Greenebaum, 2012).

In one study conducted at the University of Sheffield, researchers found that most vegans started out being vegan for health and animal rights reasons and then later on added environmental ethics as reasons for keeping their diet vegan (Fox & Ward, 2008). They also found that people who became vegan were often already environmentally conscious and continued to do things to lower their personal impact

on the environment such as recycling, composting, buying organic and biking instead of driving to work (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Vegans refuse to consume animal products for environmental reasons because animal production results in mass depletion of water, deforestation, and an increase in global warming. In a study sponsored by National Geographic in 2011, scientists discovered that it takes

- 1,799 gallons of water to produce one pound of beef,
- 576 gallons of water to produce one pound of pork,
- 468 gallons of water to produce one pound of chicken, and
- 216 gallons of water to produce one pound of soybeans (Henning, 2011).

It is a huge amount of water being used to produce animal food, especially considering that 64% of the world's population lives in places that do not supply enough clean water (Henning, 2011). As John Robbins noted, in the United States people often install low volume showerheads to conserve water. Yet, they are unaware that they could shower every day for six months on the amount of water it takes to produce one pound of beef (Robbins, 1987).

The animals produced for food are now found in compact feedlots where they produce large amounts of methane gas, one of the world's most noxious greenhouse gasses. Methane comes from animals' waste and emission of gas (Oppenlander, 2012). The increase in the consumption of animal products around the world has contributed to doubling the world's concentration of methane in the last two decades. The production of one kilogram of beef contributes the same amount of greenhouse gasses as 6.2 gallons of gasoline or someone driving 160 miles in an average sized American car (Henning, 2011).

These feedlots require huge amounts of land and are the reason for 70% of the deforested land in the Amazon (Henning, 2011). Deforested land kills off millions of plants and animals. Trees that are helpful in reducing global warming and preventing against soil erosion are disappearing along with plants that could have medicinal properties. Many vegans and scientists agree with the philosopher Peter Singer who said, "We are literally gambling with the future of millions of forms of life on earth for the sake of hamburgers" (Henning, 2011).

Ethical vs. Health Vegans

Studies have shown that ethical vegans are more likely to maintain their lifestyle and are stricter in their use of animal products than health vegans (Hoffman et al., 2013; Fox and Ward, 2008). A qualitative study by Hoffman et al (2013) with 292 participants used a conviction instrument to assess the strength of their convictions. In this study, 58 self-identified as health vegans and 234 self-identified as ethical vegans. Hoffman et al, said, "*The results suggest that ethical vegetarians could experience stronger feelings of conviction and consume fewer animal products than health vegetarians, and may remain vegan longer*" (Hoffman et al, 2013, 139). Fox and Ward's 2008 study found that many of their participants added reasons for remaining a vegetarian as they went along their vegetarian journey. The most common additional reason for remaining a vegetarian was environmental concerns.

Greenebaum (2012) found that her participants "*wanted veganism to be recognized as an ethic encompassing an entire lifestyle. In fact as ethical vegans, they question the motivations and sincerity of health vegans... It was easy to give up the foods they once loved because the abuse of animals violated a*

core value that they held.” Ethical vegans tended to look down on health vegans who they considered selfish in their reasons for being vegan. As Greenbaum said ethical vegans are concerned with animal rights and welfare and concerned with issues beyond themselves, they consider themselves to be more compassionate and humane. They felt that this lifestyle reflected their core values and it was not something they would give up if they wanted to live with integrity.

Ethical vegans are concerned with constructing an authentic identity so that their actions follow their values. According to Greenbaum (2012), ethical vegans have to “*negotiate the use of non-vegan products. This is not a unique phenomenon as the Vegan Society’s definition includes the phrases ‘tries’ and ‘avoid’ which implies that it is difficult to eliminate completely products that include animal products or that have been tested on animals. Veganism is an ethic, a philosophy, a means to decrease the suffering and oppression of animals, not just a list of ingredients to be avoided.*”

Ethical and environmental vegans make their choices in line with their core values. They want to live in alignment with their beliefs. This is similar to pacifists who do not join the armed services because that is not aligned with their beliefs. Pacifists’ behaviors follow from their core convictions. Ethical and environmental vegans’ behaviors also follow from their core beliefs of compassion, kindness, and respect for the environment.

The interview responses provided insight into how seventeen members of the Burlington community bridge what Carrington, Neville and Whitewell (2012) who study veganism call the intention behavior gap. This gap is created when consumers believe in purchasing products and foods that honor their values of remaining healthy, causing little harm to animals, and protecting the environment, yet they do not pay for foods and products that support these values. Vegans are individuals who practice bridging this gap.

Behavior and Ethics

Psychologists call the gap between what an individual believes and the actions they perform as dissonance (Festinger, 1985; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991; Cohen, 1964). This dissonance can be applied to other forms of belief and behavioral practices besides consuming non-vegan foods, such as smoking when you value your health or not recycling when you care about the environment.

Festinger (1985) proposed that this dissonance continues because the person finds reasons for rationalizing their actions even though they are aware that it goes against their values. The individual may rationalize that he enjoys the action and he or she need to do it or it is most convenient and therefore worth going against his or her values (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). The person may also think that they cannot avoid or practice every moral behavior, so they should not even bother changing some of their habits (Festinger, 1985). In addition to an individual rationalizing his or her dissonance, the social relationships and groups of the individual may result in the individual to continue dissonance.

Festinger (1985) wrote that the individual finding others who agree or disagree with the action could reinforce the dissonance. The community in which the individual lives, where they define what is “*constant*” could also reinforce the dissonance since through psychological findings, individuals often avoid change and straying from what is accepted by their society. The last social finding of Festinger (1985) was that dissonance could arise because of the individuals’ past experiences. For example, an individual may reject veganism because they associate eating meat with their mother’s homemade roast beef and to get rid of meat may result in the individual feeling as if they cannot relive that memory because they can no longer consume roast beef.

Alternatively, psychologists have found that social relationships can also reduce dissonance (Festinger, 1985; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991; Cohen, 1964). This is particularly true when the person or group presenting the idea of reducing dissonances is important or attractive to the individual currently practicing dissonance (Festinger, 1985, Cohen, 1964). If the individual wishes to maintain the habit of acting in a way, which honors their values, they will often seek out social support for the habit they wish to obtain, just as people seeking to maintain their dissonance also seek out social support (Festinger, 1985).

Individuals who have decided to reduce dissonance may also expose themselves to further information, which reinforces their new value-driven behavior (Cohen, 1964). Cohen (1964) wrote, “... *through selective exposure a person can maintain his current attitudes and protect his beliefs, values, and self-image.*” This repeated exposure may be helpful in reinforcing a new behavior because the more we are exposed to an object, practice, or idea “*the more we are apt to like it*” (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Psychologists, Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) explained that there are three factors, which contribute to a strong attitude-behavior relationship: 1) knowledge about the behavior, 2) clarity about why the individual would practice the behavior, and 3) direct experience with the attitude behavior. Even if an individual wanted to change their behavior, they may not be able to do so without these three factors: “*The values may lead to good behavioral intentions, but not to meaningful actions*” (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991).

Psychologists have studied how individuals create dissonance and how they overcome it through gaining knowledge and surrounding themselves with like-minded people (Festinger, 1985; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991; Cohen, 1964). Dissonance is when an individual’s behavior is inconsistent with their values and belief systems. Veganism is one example of a way in which people align their values with their actions.

Methods

Goal

As discussed in the previous section, dissonance is when people do not behave in a way that reflects their values. Vegans are individuals who have reduced their dissonance because the act of not consuming animals or their by-products reflects their values of protecting the environment, their health, and not harming animals.

Many of the people I have met in the Burlington area are deeply concerned with the environment, their health, and treatment of farm animals. These concerns are the same ones associated with veganism, however most members of the Burlington community are not vegan. I have spoken with people working and visiting farmers' markets that have these concerns and many of my peers have also expressed an interest in decreasing environmental destruction and helping farm animals live better lives.

For this study, I wanted to know how individuals in Burlington reduced their dissonance through the vegan journey. How did they become and remain vegan? I wanted to find out how their experiences might be different from individuals who do not behave in ways that honor their values in terms of environment, health, and ethics. This study is about veganism and the results may be most typical to veganism. However, some of the findings in this study also provide insight into any value driven behavior. The findings in this study aim to further understand the relationship between values and actions.

Overall Strategy

I chose interviewing as my method of acquiring information because the answer to my question involves people's emotions, values, and stories. I know from my own experience as a vegan that my veganism was a brought about by numerous stories, people, and experiences. The kind of depth and emotion that I received for my collection of data was best done through conducting interviews (Denscombe, 2010).

I used Martyn Denscombe's model of a semi-structured interview from *The Good Research Guide* (2010). I had originally planned to use Denscombe's unstructured interview strategy, but this proved to be a challenge because I could not compare my participants' interview responses when they did not have the same questions asked to them, since an unstructured interview has almost no consistency among each interview.

As a semi-structured interviewer, I developed a clear list of questions and topics that I made sure to cover in each of the interviews. Unlike, a structured methodology, the semi-structured method gave me room for flexibility (Denscombe, 2010, Nagy et al., 2006). I rearranged, reworded, added, and excluded questions based upon the interviewee's responses during the interview (Lodico, et al., 2010). This flexibility was especially helpful because the participants came from all different backgrounds, so the same words or questions meant different things to different people (Barribal et al., 1994).

The topics and questions for each interview helped give me the ability to compare the results of each interview, but because the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to find new questions to ask from the interviewee's responses to my original questions. Some of the new questions were repeatedly brought up and I added them to the list of questions, which I asked all of the participants. In an analysis of semi-structured interviews, Wengrof (2001) wrote that semi-structured interviews require that the interviewer improvise for fifty to eighty percent of the interview. I found this to be true for my own

interviews, most of the time this was beneficial to my research since I did find topics and ideas about veganism that I had not considered before. I also chose to do one-to-one interviews because then I knew which ideas came from which specific participant (Denscombe, 2010). I also wanted to make sure that the participants did not affect each other's answers to the questions.

Recruiting the Participants

I interviewed seventeen self-proclaimed vegans who lived in or near Burlington, Vermont. Each participant had been a vegan for at least one year. This one-year criterion comes from a previous study done on veganism by Barbara McDonald (McDonald, 2010). With my one-year time limit, I only attracted committed vegans who have had substantial experience with veganism.

I recruited most of my participants through posters that I put up around the city of Burlington, Vermont. I chose to advertise in places that I knew had vegan food and/or drink options. I advertised at two tea and coffee places, a bakery, and two health food stores. Eleven of my participants had contacted me from the posters. I contacted one of the participants through another participant. Two were suggested from an advisor. Three were members of the Green Mountain Animal Defenders (GMAD)' organization, two of which I had met at GMAD events. One had responded to a Facebook post asking for interviewees posted by the Volunteer and Intern Coordinator.

The participants were self-selected in that they responded to my initiatives. I avoided interviewing vegans that I personally knew because this could have also been showing only people of a similar perspective as my own. I also wanted to avoid only interviewing college students because I know that college students can have a different perspective than the majority of vegans who are experiencing life outside of a college setting. In my interviews, only one participant was a vegan college student.

Burlington's Role

All of my participants lived in or around Burlington, Vermont. The most distant participant was one hour's drive away from the city. I had originally intended this study to be about the vegan community in general, but as I interviewed the participants it became more apparent that Burlington played a bigger role in the participant's veganism than I had originally anticipated. I also found that the majority of Burlington is not like other places in other parts of the United States because it tends to attract people who are environmentally conscious and aware of their food choices. Information about food is more readily available in Vermont than other parts of the country. People in Burlington usually have knowledge of the issues surrounding food choices, yet still only a few of them actually choose to be vegan because of this knowledge. The question then develops further from being "how do vegans become and remain vegan?" to "How do some food conscious people turn their food awareness into a vegan lifestyle whereas others do not?"

Burlington's Locavore Emphasis

Studies have shown that these reasons health vegan choose their lifestyle are similar to those that drive people to choose organic and local foods. A 2010 report done by the United States Department of Agriculture found that the reasons behind consumers purchasing local food included knowing how the product was raised and those methods' effect on the environment (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, & Newman, 2012).

A qualitative study conducted at the University of Reading in the UK studied the reasons that 40 parents with four to twelve year olds gave to buy organic foods. Researchers found the most frequent

reasons to be the same as the reasons for people to go vegan: health, animal welfare, and environmental concerns (Makatouni, 2002). If these concerns are the same for many people in Burlington, Vermont, then how is it that only a few of the members of Burlington decide to live a vegan lifestyle because of these concerns?

Nick Fox and Katie Ward at the University of Sheffield, who also interviewed vegans, found that vegans practiced other environmentally conscious habits in addition to their plant-based lifestyle. One of their participants said that he had increased his environmental action after becoming vegan, even though he had still been concerned about the environment before adopting a plant-based lifestyle. Several participants in that study practiced recycling, eating locally and organically, cutting down on waste, bicycling instead of driving, and choosing glass containers instead of plastic ones (Fox and Ward, 2008).

Fox and Ward found that vegans participate in many activities that are also common in Burlington, such as supporting local and organic foods. The downtown grocery store, City Market, has an emphasis on local and organic foods. These organic and local foods are also sold at the weekly farmers' market throughout the year in downtown Burlington. Many of these foods come from The Interval, which is a 700-acre plot of land dedicated to growing organic agriculture. Currently, the program shares food with more than 500 household members (Macias, 2008) through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project.

In addition to local and organic food movements, Burlington has supported other modes of reducing greenhouse gasses and plastic waste. The city has been working to improve and maintain their sidewalks and bike paths to encourage less carbon intensive modes of transportation. Burlington currently contains 150.2 miles of sidewalk and 194 bike parking spaces (Sustainable Legacy, 2012). The University of Vermont has become the first public university in the country to ban plastic water bottles. They recently celebrated their ban with an arch created from 2,000 plastic water bottles (University of Vermont, 2012).

Burlington supports several of the same movements that other vegans have been shown to support in other studies. Burlington set a stage for my research in which I could interview vegans who turned food knowledge into an animal-product free lifestyle. In contrast, the majority of Burlington residents had access to the same knowledge but continued to consume animal products. My interview participants could provide insights into why they made this lifestyle choice and what particular influences helped them maintain this choice.

I chose to interview residents of Burlington, Vermont because Burlington supports alternative ways of eating, particularly organic and local foods. People who consume local and organic foods often do so because of similar reasons to those of a person who chooses to go vegan: concern with their health, and not wanting to contribute to environmental destruction and the abuse of animals. Members of the Burlington community often have similar interests and political thinking yet there is only a small population in Burlington who are vegan.

Burlington's Locavore Ranking

The Stroll Heifer Locavore Index is a ranking of states based on their commitment to local foods. The survey creates the index through combining information from the U.S. Census and United States Department of Agriculture. In the 2012 Stroll Heifer Index, Vermont ranked number one in terms of the number of local foods and CSA's available. Rendering to the Heifer index, the State of Vermont has 99 farmers markets and 164 CSA's (2012 Locavore Index, 2012). Burlington, Vermont is home to a weekly Farmer's Market. Restaurants, such as The Skinny Pancake, American Flatbread, etc. use ingredients

from local and organic framers. Burlington is home to The Intervale, a 700-acre plot of land located on the northern edge of Burlington. It is dedicated to organic agriculture production (Marcias, 2008). Many of the farmers that use the Intervale sell their food products at the Farmers' Market.

Compared to the local food movement, there is less support for vegan foods in Vermont. According to HappyCow.net, one of the most popular vegetarian food search engines, the state of Vermont only has three vegetarian restaurants, two of which are Café's. There are no all-vegan restaurants. Burlington, Vermont has only eight restaurants that have intentionally vegan food options ("Happy cow" 2013).

The Interviews

Eleven of the seventeen interviews took place at the Public Fletcher Free Library, two at the participants' home, one at Dobra Tea, one at Starbucks, and two through Skype. The interviews were roughly one hour long. I used an audio-recorder to tape the interviews and then I transcribed the interviews into Microsoft Word documents. As I transcribed the interviews, I filled in an Excel spreadsheet, which gave me an overview of the responses of each of the participants. The interviews took place over the course of six weeks from January 14, 2013 to February 23, 2013.

Interview Topics

I organized the questions into six different topics:

1. Introduction,
2. Initial process of becoming a vegan,
3. Vegan movement,
4. Social aspects of being vegan,
5. Obstacles,
6. Everyday life as a vegan,

Within each topic, I had sub-topics, depending on the participants' responses the six major questions. The rationale for each topic is discussed below.

Topic 1: Introduction

This topic uncovered demographic information about the participants including age, gender, number of years' vegan, and strictness in adhering to plant-based diet. It was developed in order to have an idea of the demographic of the participants. This was important because the group of participants was young to middle age adults and one of the barriers in this research project is that it only focused on the lives of only 17 vegans and is therefore a limited representation of all of the vegans in Burlington, Vermont and all other vegans in the world. I was better able to understand this limitation by understanding who my participants were. It also gives a better understanding of my results to other individuals wishing to learn from this study. With only 17 participants, I could not make any statistical correlations among demographic factors, such as the differences between male and female vegans. However, I could see if any overall patterns emerged. The demographic information gives a better understanding of the interview results from people wishing to learn from this study. I asked each participant the same set of demographic questions and recorded their responses in my summary Excel spreadsheet.

Questions included:

- Can you give some general information about yourself: age, occupation, and number of years' vegan?
- How would you describe yourself as a vegan?
- In terms of food, what do you exclude from your diet and why?
- How does being vegan influence other aspects of your life?

The last three questions have to do with the participant's definition of the term "vegan." The word may have meant different things to different participants. For example the consumption of honey is avoided by some vegans but is not of concern to others who are more concerned about animals than insects. Some vegans limit their dietary choices only, while others avoid all animal products in clothing and household items. The criterion of the study was that each of my participants had to be a self-proclaimed vegan but they did not have to fit a specific definition of vegan.

Topic 2: Initial Process of Becoming Vegan

The next topic uncovered the reasons the participants started their journey to becoming vegan. This was one of the main objectives of the study: to determine why the participants became vegan. I was hoping to find a pattern among the seventeen interviews.

Questions included:

- What led you to become a vegan?
- Was it an event, someone else who suggested it, something you read?
- Can you describe the steps that led to this decision? Was it gradual or sudden?
- What changes did you experience in their life as a result of becoming vegan?
- How did you figure out how to adhere to a vegan lifestyle?

Topic 3: Vegan Movement

Once someone makes the lifestyle change of avoiding eating animals for health, environmental, or human reasons, they often start researching of the other implications of using animals in products. Some can become quite committed to changing the world based on their increased knowledge. This section explored whether the participants got involved in any organized activities, protests, and activism surrounding their vegan lifestyle choice. I was curious to better understand the vegan movement in Vermont and if being part of other vegan activist organizations affected a participant's veganism in terms of becoming and staying vegan.

Questions included:

- Do you participate in vegan-related events or organizations and if so, how?
- Do you participate in any other movements and do you think your values as a vegan has affected this?

Topic 4: Social aspects of being vegan

Eating habits change dramatically when someone becomes a vegan and eating is often a social activity involving family and friends. I wanted to know how veganism affected the participants' social lives and if it strained or strengthened any relationships.

Questions included:

- How did your friends and family react when you first became vegan?
- How do they react now that you have been vegan for more than one year?
- How does veganism affect your relationships and interactions with people?
- Do you know any other vegans? Do you have any vegan support systems?
- If at all, does veganism play a role in your work place? And if so, how?
- If they have children, do they also live a vegan lifestyle?

Topic 5: Obstacles

Becoming vegan can be a difficult process, especially given the small number of people who actually maintain a vegan lifestyle. The obstacles the participants faced and how they overcame them could be helpful in understanding the reasons behind someone not wanting to try veganism. It could show how someone continued with veganism despite these obstacles.

Questions included:

- What are the biggest obstacles to being vegan?
- How do you overcome these obstacles?
- How do you deal with traveling away from home?

Topic 6: Everyday life as a vegan

This section was developed in order to find out what it is like for the participants being vegan while living in Burlington. I also wanted to find out if they did support other food movements that are popularly practiced within Burlington. Because most Americans are not vegan and eating happens at least three times a day, I explored how the decision to make this lifestyle change affected their day-to-day life. Vegans must choose what food to eat both at home, at work, traveling, and in public eating places. Sometimes, the choices are limited and there is a decision whether to maintain values or go hungry for a while until plant food becomes available.

Questions included:

- How difficult is it being a vegan in Burlington?
- Have you come to support other food movements as well (ex, local, organic, fair trade, etc.)?
- What do you eat in a typical day?
- How difficult is it to be vegan when you travel?
- How, if at all, has your definition of a vegan changed over time?

- What are some pre-conceived notions about vegans that changed for you?

The last question about preconceived notions developed as I was interviewing participants. I did not ask the first three participants this question. However, it became significant because several of the participants talked about their own pre-conceived notions about veganism and the pre-conceived notions about vegans from non-vegans.

Analysis

During the six week-time period, in which I conducted the interviews, I transcribed each of the interviews from an audio-file onto a Microsoft Word document. I then created an Excel spreadsheet in which I entered and compared the basic answers to each question in a few words. This was helpful in determining the average age, number of years vegan, and reason for being vegan: health, environment, or animals. It was also helpful in determining which questions produced the most significant findings. After I conducted the Interviews and studied the transcriptions, I was better able to see the interview questions that were of interest to the participants. I analyzed the six questions that had the most responses from the participants.

The results were organized by six questions:

1. How did you become vegan?
2. How did your friends and family react to you being vegan?
3. What are some of the most significant obstacles in becoming and being vegan?
4. Do you support any other food movements in addition to the vegan movement?
5. How is being vegan in Burlington?
6. What are some preconceived notions about vegans?

I then created a color code schema in which I designated one highlighter color to each question. I went through each of the seventeen interviews and colored in their answers to the questions. Some of the answers to these questions were responses to the actual questions and some questions they had answered or continued answering under different questions that I had asked.

Once all of the interviews were highlighted, I laid all of them out and compared them question-by-question. I grouped the answers with similar responses, and came up with an answer statement that categorized the similar responses. Many of the participants' answers fit under multiple answer statements. I listed the statements in order from the statement that was most supported by to the statements that were least supported.

The semi-structured interview strategy helped in the creation of the six primary questions and it allowed for more consistency in the interviews. Because I used a semi-structured interview strategy, it did allow for some inconsistency in the results since participants could have interpreted the questions different ways depending on how I asked them. Another limitation in my methods is that there were only seventeen participants in this study, and that can only represent the Burlington vegan community so far.

After the interviews were transcribed, I looked for common factors among participants and categorized these into different questions. These questions and the participant responses are described below. The most common response to the question among the participants is listed first.

Participant Demographics

There were seventeen vegans who participated in this study. Three of the participants were referred to me by personal contacts and the other fourteen participants contacted me through public advertisements posted on public places within the City of Burlington, Vermont. All of the participants currently live in or near Burlington, Vermont.

Other research about vegans found that the majority of vegans were female (Greenebaum, 2012; Freeman, 2012; Beardsworth and Keil, 1991, 1993). However, in this study, there were only slightly more females than males with seven male participants and ten female participants.

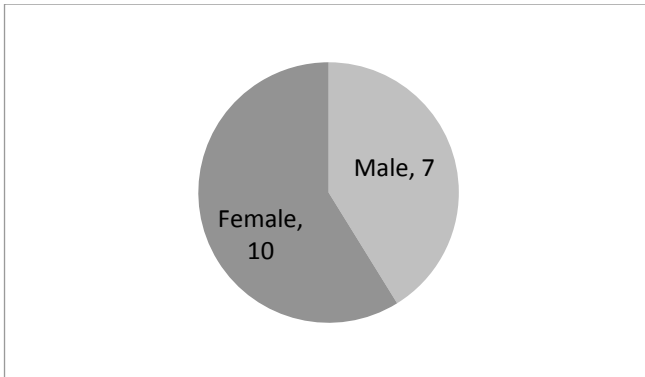


Figure 1: Participants' Gender

The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 54 with an average age of 33. The average amount of time that the participants had been self-identified as a vegan was eight years, ranging from 1.5 to 23 years vegan. The distribution of the time the participants self-identified as vegan are shown below.

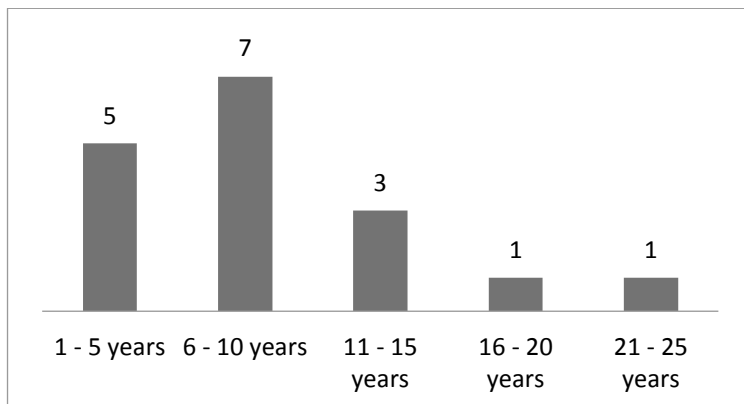


Figure 2: Average Number of Years Vegan

Initial Reason for Becoming Vegan

One of the goals of this study was to determine what influenced the participants to become vegan. The major reasons the 17 participants became vegan is shown on the table below.

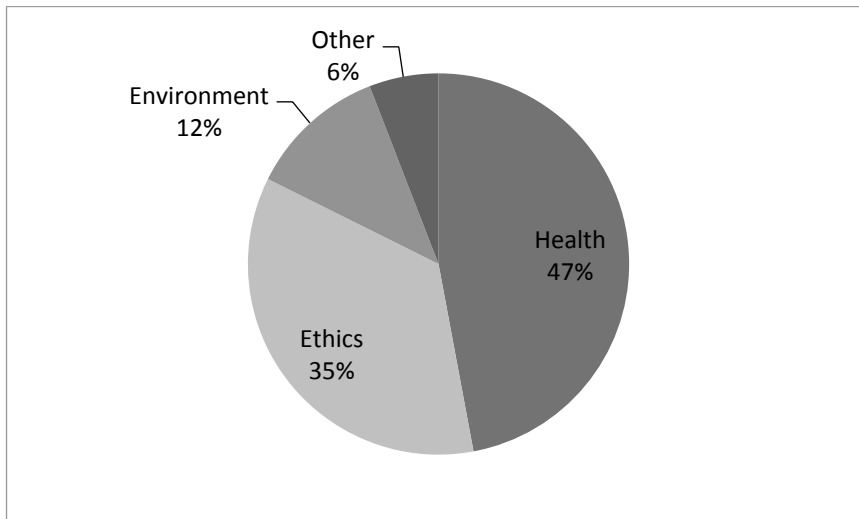


Figure 3: Initial Reason to Become Vegan

Eight of the participants first became vegan because of health considerations. However, as the health vegans researched this lifestyle, the ethical and environmental reasons also became important to them. Alternatively, the participants who became vegan because of ethical (six participants) or environmental (two participants) reasons also developed an appreciation for the health reasons. The one participant who is listed as “other” became vegan because her spouse became vegan.

Supporting the major reason for becoming vegan were other influences that solidified the decision to make this lifestyle choice. The top six influences in the participant’s decision to go vegan were:

- Conversations and relationships with other vegans;
- Media such as documentaries and books;
- Health concern(s);
- Challenge of making such a large lifestyle change;
- PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) events and propaganda; and
- An allergic reaction to dairy.

Fifteen of the seventeen participants had more than one influence in their decision to go vegan. Fifteen of the participants were vegetarian before going vegan. Twelve of the participants viewed their transition to veganism as a journey which started by eliminating using animals for food, then eliminating animal excretions such as milk and eggs, and finally eliminating all animal products from their life, including clothing and household goods.

Four participants noted that eliminating all animal products and all products that use animal products in their production is a continuous challenge. For example white sugar is often filtered through animal bones. These few questioned if they should eliminate sugar because it used animal products when being processed. However, these few recognized it is practically impossible in our society to get rid of all animal products involved in production processes and even in household products. Many animal components are disguised when listed on labels, if these components are even specified on the labels.

The participants realized that the complete avoidance of all animal products was practically impossible to achieve, but they continued to make gradual adjustments in their purchasing choices as they learned more. All of the participants were very strict on the foods they ate. They often chose to go hungry rather than consume animal products. The only exception was one participant who traveled to Cambodia and was sometimes offered buffalo milk in social situations with native Cambodians. She recognized that this was a generous offer on the part of her hosts. This participant thought about her reaction and decided it was more important in this specific situation to be sensitive to her hosts' generous offering, choosing human kindness over animal kindness. She would consume a small amount of the buffalo milk in deference to her hosts.

Interview Results

After the interviews were transcribed, I looked for common factors among participants and categorized these into different questions. These questions and the participant responses are described below.

How did you become vegan?

Response 1: A friend or partner influenced me to go vegan or decided to become vegan when I did. (8 participants)

Friends and partners were the most common factors in terms of what influenced the participants to go vegan. One participant said that she had gone vegan because of her boyfriend, now her husband, who was vegan when they met. She did not know much about health, environmental, and animal issues surrounding veganism until after she became vegan. She said, *“He (husband) is a chef and he would cook for me. Then three months went by and I had not eaten anything not vegan. Everything was good and I learned about vegan ice cream and vegan cheese. I used to drink milk and I decided after three months, I should drink milk. So I tried a glass of milk and it tasted like poison to me.”*

Another participant also went vegan because of her partner; her reasons for being vegan did not change over time. She remained a vegan because of her partner. She did not remain or become vegan because of anything to do with health, environment, or animals. This participant stated, *“He became vegan when we moved in together and it was just easier to just buy all vegan stuff.”*

Other participants became vegan when they saw their friends or people around them being vegan. One participant said that he had been thinking about going vegan because he did not want to contribute to animal suffering, but he did not make the transition until he saw other people living a vegan lifestyle. He said, *“Once I met other vegans and it seemed possible to me, then I went vegan.”*

It is possible that social aspects are the primary cause for any lifestyle change, particularly changes having to do with food. It is possible that the reason that so many people are in support of organic and local foods in Burlington is not because of the food itself, but because the people around them are in support of local and organic foods.

Response 2: I was influenced to become vegan because I saw or read a documentary or book about the production of raising and killing animals. (7 participants)

Many of the participants who were influenced by a documentary or book had originally been somewhat aware of animal abuse before watching or reading the documentary or book.

One of the participants had said she had been an animal activist before becoming vegan. She did not wear leather and she also worked at Whole Foods where there were many other vegans and vegan options. She said, *“The one thing that made me become vegan was the documentary Earthlings...I watched the whole thing, balling my eyes out. At the end, I said ‘that’s it. I’m done.’ The day after I saw it, I went to whole foods, got a vegan lunch, came home, piled all my leather into one pile and sold it on EBay. I took all the money and gave it to support animals ... I did a whole overhaul of my life and got rid of all my cosmetics and product with animal products.”*

The participant who watched *Earthlings* also has a social support system with her partner who went vegan with her and her co-workers at Whole Foods. An interesting point about those affected by documentaries and books was that several of them were pointed toward that direction by a vegan or friend who thought that the participant would be interested in the documentary or book.

Another participant who had been vegetarian for a long time and part of animal rights groups as a child did not go vegan as an adult until her friend gave her an influential book. She said, *“I then read the book Skinny Bitch. Those women are super annoying. They are like x-models and they are really obnoxious, but they have all the points in there. I remember reading about milk and how the metal milkers create pus. I didn’t know that stuff. I read it because of Danielle (friend). She had it and I read it. I was vegan ever since then with a few mess-ups here and there.”*

Similar results were found with a participant who was interested in the environmental impact of the production of food. She said, *“I wanted to offset the carbon footprint thing and started reading about how being vegan could send a message about factory farming.”*

What is interesting to me was that books and documentaries cited by vegans like *Skinny Bitch* and *Earthlings* are also read and watched by people who do not choose to go and remain vegan. These kinds of books and movies will motivate people who are already somewhat ready to take the leap into veganism, but they are probably not the primary factor in one’s decision to become and remain vegan. In McDonald’s research, one of her participants said that the journey of veganism requires *“openness to new information and the potential of a new and challenging lifestyle”* (McDonald, 2011).

The research that I have collected suggests that the people in a person’s family and community are the ones that affect this openness. The participant who read *Skinny Bitch* had been a vegetarian as a child with vegetarian parents and had grown up playing with the neighbor’s goats; she also had a friend who was vegan. The collection of these factors may be what led the participant to have openness to the information given in *Skinny Bitch*. *Skinny Bitch* may have just been the final step in the participant’s journey toward veganism.

Response 3: I became vegan because I had a specific health issue or wanted to be healthier. (5 participants)

Several of the participants were influenced to go vegan by a disease or health issue that they wanted to resolve.

One participant went on an Ayurveda cleanse in which she ate only beans and rice. After the cleanse, she started reacting strongly to foods such as dairy and sugar. She said, *“After seven days you can’t just go back to what you were eating before. So you have to really think about what you are putting back into your body and your body really reacts strongly to things that it doesn’t like.”* This participant turned to veganism after realizing that she had a strong reaction to dairy. She had been vegetarian for several years before the cleanse, but not immediately before doing the cleanse.

Another participant was a raw vegan, which means that she does not eat any cooked foods. She also avoids caffeine, sugar, and gluten. She became vegan because she wanted to cure herself of multiple sclerosis. She said, *“I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2008. I went through a yearlong healing process experimenting with my diet ... I did a juice fast and ever since the juice fast I’ve been a raw vegan. The juice fast was super healing to my body; I was on it for two or three weeks. My symptoms were gone and I researched what people do after a juice fast.”*

She said that if she had not changed her life style, it would have been very likely that she would have ended up in a wheel chair.

Another participant said, *“Both my parents had two different types of cancer. I recently read another article that confirmed there are lower of that in people who follow a plant-based diet. I didn’t read too many of those, but I was convinced of the value of having lower cholesterol and that a plant-based diet would help that. My family is very pre-disposed to high blood pressure and high cholesterol and I felt that eating dairy and animals was contributing to that.”*

Many of the health-driven vegans were attracted to veganism because of the health benefits that were discussed by Dr. John McDougall in his book, *The Starch Solution*: lower cholesterol, fewer heart problems and chronic diseases. Many of these participants were also directed towards this information by other influences. The participant who did the Ayurveda cleanse and the raw vegan were part of yoga communities who supported plant-based diets. The participant who was concerned about high blood pressure also had a partner who was vegan.

Response 4: I became vegan because I wanted to try it as a challenge to see what would happen. (5 Participants)

Several participants had researched animal foods and then decided to make it a commitment to become vegan. Many of them had been thinking about going vegan or had been reading about it before actually starting their vegan journey.

Several of the participants decided to go vegan as a challenge to do with their partner. However, the challenge was usually spurred on by in interest in not contributing to a practice that kills animals and for environmental reasons. For example, one participant’s girlfriend was interested in the animal aspect of veganism. He said, *“I experimented; my girlfriend was like ‘I’m going to go vegan.’ And I was like ‘oh whatever, I’ll try it for a month.’ And I did and it just felt like a natural choice.”*

Another participant also decided to try veganism with his partner because he had been thinking about veganism since moving to Boston, where there was a community of vegans. They lived right next to Whole Foods, which had a variety of vegan foods. He said, *“We decided okay we are going to be vegan and we’ve never intentionally stopped being vegan since. It was kind of an experiment; let’s see what happens. Are we going to get sick?”*

Another participant was an extreme meat lover until; she started reading books about farm animal production. After being vegetarian for a few months, she went vegan. She said, *“I started experimenting with veganism and vegan food so after about a month (of being vegetarian) I was like for sure I’m going vegan in the New Year. So I was vegan in the new year 2011.”*

One participant, who came from Kentucky, tried veganism purely out of the desire for a challenge. However, she had been interested in food related issues before the challenge. Her father had been involved with the local foods movement in her hometown. She said, *“Last winter break I was really bored. I wanted to do a challenge, something that was really weird and different, so I decided to become*

vegan. I always thought it would be something different especially in Kentucky where it is very difficult to cut something out.”

The aspect of an experiment seemed to appeal to some participants as a way to begin their vegan journey, but the desire for a beginning was brought about by other factors such as where they lived, whom they were with, and what they had read or heard about veganism.

Response 5: I became vegan because I went to a PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) event or table with vegan literature. (3 Participants)

Only three of the participants said that they were influenced by a PETA event, two of which were at punk-rock concerts. It may also be of significance to note that these three participants were male. Although this is too small of a sample to make any sort of conclusion from, it might be a place to continue research in the future.

PETA was the only cited influence in the three participant’s decision to go vegan. However, all of them had been vegetarian or close to vegetarian before watching the PETA video or reading the PETA leaflets. One of these participants said, *“The thing that drove me to be vegan wasn’t food, it was the image of vivisection, of testing on animals, particularly of chimps. That just knocked my socks off. I just remember crying; this was the most horrible thing that I had ever seen...and it was that day...I’ve never looked back ever since, it wasn’t even an issue.”*

Another of these participants said, *“It was at a music festival. I was talking to them about it, the PETA 2 (a young adult’s animal activist group) people and explaining that I still eat fish. They gave me a DVD, a free copy. I watched it in my bedroom and thought that is it. I’m done. I don’t want to eat something from an animal that was suffering.”*

Continuing with the punk rock influence, another participant said, *“I started to become vegetarian before I liked punk and hard core shows. I had already made the choice to become vegetarian before I went to the shows. I realized the ties between egg and dairy after going to the shows.”*

All of the participants had been affected by the graphic images of animal abuse that were published by PETA. I do not know if these graphic images would have the same effect of leading someone to veganism if they had not been vegetarian beforehand or if they did not have any previous knowledge about animal abuse towards animals.

Response 6: I was influenced by a physical reaction to dairy. (3 participants)

A few of the participants listed having an allergy to dairy as being one of the influences that led them to a vegan lifestyle. The people who listed dairy said that it led them to other reasons to being vegan, such as not contributing to animal abuse and environmental destruction.

One of the participants who lived in Boston had been allergic to dairy. He said that Boston had many vegan restaurants and it was easier for him to eat there than at non-vegan restaurants. He said, *“I would go to these vegan restaurants and it was like ‘Holy crap, I can eat everything on this menu!’ It was so exciting. I started going there all the time and it was like ‘this vegan thing is really interesting.’ And I started reading about it.”*

After reading about the vegan diet, this participant decided to go vegan with his partner for environmental reasons. Two other participants also went vegan because of a strong physical reaction to dairy. One of these said, *“Overtime, I was not feeling good. I was overweight and feeling sick. I started eliminating foods that were making me sick and I felt better. I got rid of dairy first. Then I started getting rid of honey and stuff like that when I wanted a system that made sense.”*

The participant who went on the Ayurveda cleanse found out that her body was allergic to dairy after going on a beans and rice diet. She said, *“And then when I reacted to the dairy; that’s when I thought ‘oh veganism and maybe I should try this and see if it works.’”*

Some of the participants had an adverse reaction to dairy and this was often the thing that led them to look into veganism as a lifestyle. This was often accompanied by other influences such as an interest in causing as little harm as possible to animals or doing a yogi cleanse or having a partner who was also interested in veganism.

More than half of the participants cited having a vegan friend or partner as an influence in their decision to become vegan. Many of the couples actually decided to go vegan together. Although knowing a vegan or soon to be vegan was the most popular influence, most participants had more than one influence in their decision to become vegan. The only participants who had only one influence were those who had been affected by PETA propaganda or event. Another main influence was books and documentaries. Several participants overlapped this influence with knowing a vegan because the vegan they knew had directed them to the book or movie that led them to make the decision of becoming vegan.

How did your friends and family react to you being vegan?

There were six different responses to this question, however the primary response was that family and friends were very supportive.

Response 1: Family is supportive of me being vegan. (10 participants)

Participants with supportive families were grateful for the support, even if sometimes the family members were not vegan themselves. Support included preparing vegan meals and no hostility toward the participant for choosing a different lifestyle. While vegans and non-vegans together in a family could make for some interesting conversations, the ten participants who had supportive families thought that it made visiting families pleasurable because there was no conflict over food served.

Among the participants with a supportive family, one stated, *“When we visit my partner’s family, her mom always caters to us; she loves experimenting. She loves finding new recipes...It’s very easy, very self-contained because we don’t have to worry about anything.”*

The only participant who was a college student was from Kentucky. She said that Kentucky did not have many vegans or support for vegans, but her family played a big role in her continuation of veganism. She stated *“Yeah, I’ve been really lucky because my family has been really open to that kind of thing. My mom is a red meat vegetarian. My dad is really supportive of local economy. Dad is on the board of the farmer’s market. We’re really not the typical Kentucky family.”* Here family played a significant role in someone’s decision to become vegan.

Another participant explained how her husband helped her in supporting her decision to label herself as vegan by not being critical of her eating decisions as she learned how to be vegan. *“I spoke with my husband about it. He said ‘You don’t have to answer to anyone if you decide to have a hamburger, no one can complain about that.’ I appreciated that because we all have strange rules about*

what we eat and what we don't eat...I think they (children) are really proud of me. I know they mention it now and then."

Because ten out of the seventeen participants said that their family was supportive of their decision to be vegan, I think it is safe to say that family support is a significant factor when someone decides to become and remain vegan.

Response 2: Friends support my decision to be vegan. (8 participants)

Eating is such a social function and the reaction of friends to this lifestyle change can be supportive or negative. When friends supported the decision, it made it easier to share food and engage in social activities.

One of the participants said that the openness and vegan-friendly attitude of the punk rock community helped him feel supported and understood as a vegan, *"When I became vegan, many of my friends were part of the punk rock community. Even if they weren't vegan, they got it. Even if my friends ate meat, they had no problems visiting and eating a tofu stir fry."*

A participant also said that being vegan among her friends was not difficult because they already cared about her. She also said that her friends became more use to her being vegan after a while. *"For people who love me and respect me it was fine. A lot of my friends now are more open and understanding and we go to places that have options for both of us."*

The one college students that I interviewed explained how her friends were very supportive of her and were often the ones to tell her about the latest vegan food or news. She also said that they helped her veganism by not taking it too seriously, *"When I'm with my friends and we see something with a lot of meat or animal products in it we say 'Umm, is this vegetarian?' Not to the waiter, but to each other. It's turned into a kind of joke. Most people that I am friends with turn it into a joke which is better than someone who is like 'oh god! She's vegan. We can't go vegan.'"*

Just as family was helpful in supporting the participants along in their vegan journey, so was the relationship among friends. This support was particularly important for the participant when they were out eating in restaurants or at someone's house.

Response 3: My family and friends were confused as to what to cook or what I would eat. (5 participants)

All of the participants indicated at least one part of their family or friend circle who supported their decision to be vegan. However of a few of them faced challenges with the fact that friends and family members did not always understand what it meant to follow a vegan lifestyle.

One of the participants expressed the social challenges that occurred when she had friends that did not understand or support the decision to avoid animal foods, *"Sometimes my group of friends in California would all go out to some restaurant together and not invite me and sometimes I think it's because 'oh well she probably won't be able to anything there anyway.'"*

Another participant had a father who did not understand the decision to avoid animal foods. For this participant, the way around his family misunderstandings was to simply cook for himself. He said, *"My dad was doing most of the cooking and said this is what I am making for dinner tonight. If you don't want that, you can make your own food. I had a job then and some money and I would make my own protein for the meal."*

Not all of the confused family members and friends were unsupportive of a vegan lifestyle; sometimes even if they were supportive they simply did not understand what made a meal vegan. *“I think my dad had a little bit of difficulty figuring out what I would and wouldn’t eat. He just wouldn’t remember things at times. Like he would make this all vegan dish and then cover it in cheese or something. And he would say ‘well there’s no meat, dairy, or eggs.’”*

Friends and family members from five of the participants were confused about what veganism actually meant. Some of this confusion caused negative attitudes and possibly feelings of annoyance in the family members or acquaintances like the father who did not want to cook an extra vegan meal from his family or in friends who did not want to choose a different place to eat in order to accommodate their friend. Others may have been confused, but did give veganism a try in order to honor the participant’s decision.

Response 4: My family and friends were offended when they found out that I was going vegan. (4 participants)

Some participants had to cope with family and friends who were hostile to their decision to avoid animal products. While these participants recognized that the tradition among family and friends was to consume animal products, they were disappointed in the negative reactions to this change.

One participant thought that her mom had negative feelings towards her vegan food choices because her mom assumed she was thinking negatively about her because she was not a vegan, *“My mom actually reacted more negatively than I thought she would. They aren’t vegetarian anymore...She grew up on a farm and her relationship with animals was way different than factory farming and all that. There are a lot of different points of views out there and I see her point of view but I think she felt a little judged.”*

Some family members of the participants felt offended at having their food turned down, thinking that it was a personal rejection of their cooking rather than an animal rights, environmental, or health related issue. *“My mother does a lot of cooking and a meal was meat. She didn’t really understand me rejecting her food and she was offended...having close friends and family who are not vegan has been a challenge because I don’t want them to feel I am rejecting their food.”*

The one participant who experienced losing relationships because of her food choices was the one who only eat raw vegan foods. She explained that her family was neutral towards the idea but *“With my friends it was much more hostile which was interesting. It was a lot of anger and I think maybe they felt a loss with someone participating with them in that way (bonding over cheese pizza and beer)...some friends I don’t have any more unfortunately.”*

The participant usually offended friends and family members when they rejected their food and the participant did not understand that it was because of environmental, health, or animal related reasons. Participants also explained that they thought their family members and friends felt negatively judged by them for not being vegan, even though these participants also talked about making it a point not to make it seem as if they wanted their family members and friends to go vegan.

Response 5: My family members have been experimenting with veganism. (4 participants)

Five of the participants said that their family members have either gone vegan or adopted a more plant-based diet since the participant became vegan. Several of the participants said that their family

members changed their diet because of health reasons. *“My dad went vegan for a year, he didn’t keep it up but now he likes vegan cheese like Daiya. That was a good experience for him. He dropped his numbers down.”*

The participants did not expect their parents to adopt a vegan diet with them, but a few of them saw a change in their parents’ diet because of them being vegan around them. One participant said, *“My parents are not vegan, but they eat a low meat diet for health reasons. They’ve thanked me for training them towards that.”*

The parents of one of the participants had fully adopted a plant-based diet *“Ironically enough, both my parents have adapted a vegan diet just now for health reasons. Dad is hoping to undo the two heart attacks he had.”* A few of the participants have influenced their family members to either become vegan or to add more vegan meals to their daily meal routine for health reasons. None of the participant’s family members adopted a vegan diet or more plant-based diet because of animal or environmental reasons. This was usually a result of the participant being around their family members as a vegan who was a vegan for health and animals or environmental reasons.

Response 6: My family and friends support me, but they also don’t understand it and think it’s weird. (3 participants)

Only three participants gave this response. Their families were tolerant of their decision to be vegan, but they knew that their family and friends thought it was radical or unusual to adapt a plant-based diet. They also did not make an effort to understand the participant’s reasoning behind their decision to be vegan.

One these participants acknowledged the genuine tolerance of his family, but also pointed out how they did not understand his veganism. This lack of understanding and sympathy plus his strong convictions about veganism resulted in the participant forgoing meat-centered holidays. He explained, *“They are really tolerant of it by but yet they don’t understand it. They didn’t really understand vegetarianism and they definitely don’t understand veganism. I don’t even do Thanksgiving anymore with my family ’cause it’s not really my kind of holiday.”*

Another participant expressed the idea that his family thought vegan was weird because he was doing it and he had done other atypical things in his life such as grow a Mohawk and abstain from alcohol. *“I don’t think my friends cared. My brother doesn’t care and my mom doesn’t care. They think ‘John’s John and he’s a weirdo’.”*

Overall, vegans found their families and friends to be supportive or at least tolerant of their decision to become and remain vegan. It could be said that this support may be a factor in a person’s continued drive in identifying as a vegan. It could also play a role in someone’s decision to become vegan in the first place.

What are some of the most significant obstacles in becoming and being vegan?

Being vegan means you are in the minority of people eating out and shopping for food. The non-vegan population often has difficulty imagining what vegans eat. At restaurants, participants often had issues describing to servers what they could not eat. At grocery stores, participants agreed that while vegan food is becoming more available, they have to carefully read labels. Vegans learned to plan their food needs ahead so they would not be in a position where there was no food that they could eat.

Response 1: Difficulty finding vegan food at restaurants. (8 participants)

Eating out was difficult for most participants. Often, menus do not list all the ingredients in dishes. The serving staff is often unfamiliar with the term “vegan” and participants have learned to make it simple with phrases such as “no meat, fish, chicken, dairy, or eggs”. Despite these obstacles a participant said that veganism is becoming slightly easier, *“Finding food is tough. You often have to give up food because there is nothing available. It is easier than when my parents were vegan, when the choices were tofu and sprouts.”*

Other participants commented that they had trouble finding food when going out to a restaurant with friends. Even if they could find food on the menu, they were usually stuck with the same thing every time they went out to eat. Several participants said they consumed a lot of salad and baked potatoes or fries when going out to eat. One participant said that this was especially true when he was just learning how to be vegan, *“The hardest part in the beginning was going out to restaurants with friends. It was hard to find vegan options and not be stuck with salad all the time.”*

Another participant also found it difficult to go out to eat when he started his vegan journey. This participant not only struggled with finding food, but of also being the one to stand out among his group of friends. He explained that his obstacles were *“Finding food that I liked that was quick food. When you are out at Burger King or someplace fun with friends, you are the guy that has to change the plan to do something different. I didn’t have systems in place.”*

One of the major obstacles that the participants came across was finding vegan food on the menu. This was often an obstacle tied with social obstacles because their friends who were not vegan would frequently go to restaurants where there were limited vegan options.

Response 2: Having to explain my identity as a vegan to new people. (6 participants)

One tricky situation for participants was describing their eating habits to people they just met. Although, for the most part, the participants did not usually announce their identity as vegan, the issue came up whenever food was served at social events.

One participant who had been vegan for eight years expressed her frustration at having to be labeled as vegan by new people because then it becomes her only identity. She said, *“Meeting new people is sometimes frustrating. I have to explain it to everyone...If I meet new people, it is often the first thing that comes up, but I don’t like that it is often the first thing that comes up. It is a big part of who I am, but I don’t like that it is often the only thing that defines me.”*

Another participant was uncomfortable bringing up the fact that she was a vegan because it would mean she would have to explain her reasons for food choices and it took extra time to order something. She said, *“The waitress was giving me funny looks because I couldn’t decide what to eat. That was the hardest part, eating out and having to explain myself to friends all the time about my reasons for being vegan. The same participant also struggled with not being around people who were also vegan, “I had to learn not to judge people who didn’t know that shredded cheese was an animal product and they put it on my salad.”*

Another identity issue with that the participants did not want to conform to pre-conceived notions of veganism, which in my participants’ view was usually negative. One participant who was particularly

strong about the vegan stereotype said, *“I don’t advertise it. I don’t want to be what I thought vegans were. I don’t want to be preachy, I don’t want to be difficult or anything like that, especially having been a waitress.”* This participant had not labeled herself as vegan at the start of her vegan journey because she did not want people to assume that she was preachy and obnoxious.

The identity obstacle is another socially based issue that vegans had within this study. The participants struggled with identifying themselves as vegan because the label is not common to people and this may bring up pre-conceived notions of veganism or curiosity of veganism which the participant may not wish to have to explain.

Response 3: Eliminating animal based products. (3 participants)

Once a participant decides to become vegan, they were challenged to eliminate animal-based products from their diets, clothing, and houses. For some participants it was difficult to find vegan products, especially substitutes for leather shoes.

Even though fashion was sometimes a sacrifice for vegans, the participants considered their values as more important than their want of fashion. One of the participants stated *“Clothing choices can be challenging. It would be great to be able to buy Frye boots. But I am not going to sacrifice for that. I don’t wear silk or wool or leather. Sometimes I have to refuse things I would really like to have, but I don’t buy it because of my beliefs around it.”*

The food that was mentioned as an obstacle to give up was cheese, but again values ranked higher than needs for cheese one participant said, *“I missed cheese. That was the one hard thing, but it was one part of the industry that I disliked the most. I think dairy is the worst in terms of what they do to the animals.”*

Another participant also said that giving up foods was a challenge, but discovering new vegan foods made that challenge do-able. He said *“When I first went vegan, it feels like you are creating a big list of ‘I can no longer eat these things.’ But, I had also not been exposed to tempeh or seitan. I just didn’t know about many of the companies that exist that make vegan products.”*

Abstinence from non-vegan foods was not a major problem for most of the participants. The hardest part of giving up foods tended to happen early on in the vegan journey, but no one said that it was a current problem. The one participant who mentioned clothing said that it was sometimes a challenge to say “no” to fashionable shoes, but it wasn’t enough to sacrifice her values.

Response 4: Difficulty finding food while traveling. (2 participants)

Traveling and the difficulties of finding food in unfamiliar places was a continuing obstacle faced by two participants. One of the participants commented, *“It is really hard to eat in airports. I don’t do well with soy, so tofu is hard for me and you can only eat so many peanuts on a plane. I pack my lunch a lot. I take food with me.”*

Another participant also expressed his frustration at veganism limiting his ability to try different cuisines. He said, *“One thing is that when I travel, I don’t get to try the local whatever, like ‘this town is famous for their sausage and dumplings’... thanks”*

All of the participants had mentioned the challenge of not always finding vegan food while traveling when I asked about their traveling experiences. However, only these two participants listed it as a primary obstacle within their experience of being vegan.

Response 5: Being a vegan among numerous omnivores. (1 participant)

When you are a vegan, you are often the anomaly. One participant said, *“The thing that’s hard for me now is that there is so few of us and there are so many omnivores and it’s very alienating sometimes. I went to the gym yesterday and I was with two friends and I was like “I have kale in my car!” and he said “You don’t have bacon in your car?” ... And then we started talking about how they eat everything and they don’t care. It made me feel very sad and alone.”*

One participant listed being a vegan among omnivores as a challenge. This surprised me because I have found this to be a challenge within my own vegan journey. Even though this obstacle was not very common, I find that it is subtly present within the two main obstacles: finding vegan food in restaurants and having to explain one’s identity as a vegan. Both of these obstacles are brought about by the absence of a large vegan population, which would drive the demand for vegan food in restaurants and surface vegan knowledge.

Finding food outside of the home and grocery stores was a major obstacle in being vegan for the participants. Many of these obstacles revolved around social situations. When the participants were out at a restaurant with friends, it was difficult for them to find food. And six of the eight participant disliked bringing up the fact that they were vegan.

The discomfort in identity may come from the fifth obstacle, which was that vegans are the minority. This is interesting, considering that the participants were from Burlington, Vermont where there is support for many other alternative eating habits. Another pattern was that the three participants, who said that eliminating animal products was difficult, backed it up with a comment demonstrating that they did not mind the sacrifice because of their beliefs or because of vegan alternatives.

Do you support any other food movements in addition to the vegan movement?

This question was important because in Burlington, Vermont, there is support for local and organic food movements, but not so much support for vegan. I wondered if the values behind being vegan were similar to those of supporting local, organic or any other food movement.

Response 1: I buy mostly or some organic foods. (13 participants)

Thirteen of the seventeen participants only consumed organic vegan food or aimed to consume as much organic food as was financially possible. One of the participants whose whole family was vegan, explained that they were very dedicated to supporting organic foods, she said *“We buy 100% organic produce unless I really need something for a recipe and they do not have organic...we are more likely to purchase crackers or chips that are organic over other types. We buy organic Triscuits over conventional.”*

Another participant also stated that he supported organic foods. Surprisingly this arose from reading a book by Peter Singer, who primarily writes about how animals are raised on farms. He said, *“Organic definitely! In fact Peter Singer’s book...that convinced me that buying organic food is really important even if it’s not a perfect certification.”*

Organic was also more appealing to one participant who was disgusted at the idea of consuming foods that were heavily laden with chemicals. When asked about whether or not she supported other food movements she said, *“Yeah definitely, and I was probably always into that. Where I grew up, we had a garden so it was naturally organic...I get grossed out when I eat non-organic foods. The gross out factor*

works a lot for me.” This participant also went on to say that this feeling of disgust also made it easier for her to be vegan, since the idea of consuming animals and animal products were unpleasant to her.

The support of the organic movement went along with the participants’ consciousness surrounding food. Twelve of the thirteen participants said that they chose organic because of health reasons and only one said that he chose organic for environmental reasons. All of the participants who said that they purchased organic foods had said that books and movies had led them to continue and start their vegan journey. It is possible that these same books also gave the vegan participants a reason to support organic foods, just as Peter Singers’ book did for one of the participants.

Response 2: I buy local foods when I can. (10 participants)

The participants were aware of the local movement and were certainly supportive of the idea. Participants tended to be less strict about buying local foods as they were about supporting organic foods and a vegan lifestyle. One of the participants talked about having a vegan family and wanting to have foods that could not be grown locally in Vermont. She said, *“We try for local. As a one-income family, our biggest cost is our food. We are vegan and love our coconut milk and avocados. That can’t be local.”*

Another participant explained how it was difficult to be vegan in Vermont because Vermont’s local industry has such a huge emphasis on meat and dairy. She explained, *“It is hard to eat local and be a vegan around here. The farmer’s market has so much local meat and cheese. In the winter, it is tough because root vegetables only go so far. There is a local seitan company but it is a little harder trying to eat local as a vegan than if I ate meat and dairy.”* The participant who was from Kentucky thought differently; she said, *“Food systems have always been an interest of mine...I think it is local foods and supporting local economies. I’ve grown up around it oddly enough in Kentucky. In Vermont local foods is huge. It’s so refreshing to be in a place where people actually care.”*

Only one of the participants did not say that she consumed or purchased local or organic foods. None of the participants said that they only purchased and consumed organic and local foods, as they did for vegan meals and ingredients, yet sixteen of the seventeen supported the local and organic movement. The interviews do not show whether or not support for local foods came from the participants being vegan or from the fact that they lived in Burlington, where local food is often advertised in grocery stores and farmers’ markets.

Response 3: I support the raw food movement. (5 participants)

When experimenting with diets, participants were careful to avoid animal products in their food. Some had also tried raw vegan diets, where they did not eat anything that was cooked. All of the participants who had supported raw food at one time or another along their vegan journey said that it was for health reasons. A participant who had weight issues in the past explained that he went raw in the summer because it was easier to find foods that he could eat raw. He said, *“I will probably go vegan raw this summer again because there is a huge difference in how you feel. It is good in the summer. Everything is cooling; you are dropping weight, it feels good.”*

There was one participant who only ate raw vegan foods. I asked her which was more important to her, being raw or vegan and she said, *“I think raw food is good just by default because there’s not a lot of wiggle room for bad choices because you can’t cook them, you just can’t eat them. If somebody is experiencing extreme health conditions like I was, I would suggest they go 100% raw to clear the illness and then move back to 75% or 50% whatever they want to do.”* This participant had been a complete raw

food eater during her entire experience as a vegan because of attending a yoga conference where they were expected to eat only raw vegan foods.

The other four participants had been vegan first before experimenting with raw foods. One of these four participants said that *“I am now a proponent of raw foods, but I don’t think it is a lasting diet choice for me, but I think I feel really good doing it. Eating more healthfully is a lifestyle choice for being vegan.”* This participant also said that she wanted to remain healthy as a vegan because she felt as if she was a representative of the vegan lifestyle and wanted others to know that someone can be healthy and a vegan at the same time.

Most of the participants did off-and-on experimenting with raw foods. These raw food supporting participants had originally gone vegan for environmental or animal related reasons and they evolved to including health in their decision to remain vegan. The one participant, who had gone completely raw, had been vegan for health reasons, although she incorporated animal and environmental reasons as she continued her vegan journey.

Response 4: I support fair trade. (2 participants)

Fair trade protects workers. When products are labeled “fair trade,” it means that no slave labor was used in the production. Fair trade is particularly common for products such as coffee and chocolate. It is a social issue; making sure humans are treated fairly and respectfully. I had expected fair trade to be more supported than it was with the participants. To me, this certification is the most important because when I consume fair trade products I do not feel guilty that I am eating something that came from a misused human. That compliments my feelings that when I eat vegan foods they have not come from a misused animal. I was surprised that only two participants also claimed to actively support fair trade foods.

In explaining what kind of food movements he supported, one participant said, *“Anything that is fair to anti-exploitation should be in check. People should realize that it is not cool. Chocolate slavery; I am down with fair trade. Any agricultural evil-doing and bad practices are bad.”* Similarly the other participant explained, *“If I had to choose between the socially responsible and the environmentally conscious, even though they usually are the same, hypothetically I would opt for the socially responsible product ... I tried to do some socially responsible investing. I think that people are important.”*

Only one out of the seventeen participants did not state another food-consciousness practice in addition to their veganism. This seems significant, but it is hard to draw a conclusion from this small sample. I do not know if the interest in food systems comes from the type of people who are drawn into the Burlington area or from the type of people who are drawn to a vegan lifestyle. This study indicates that being vegan may result in someone also being interested in organic and local foods, but it does not show that being interested in organic and local foods leads someone to be concerned about vegan choices.

The participants generally supported the local and organic movements within Burlington because of health or environmental reasons; these are the same reasons that the participants also gave for being vegan. Only two participants supported fair trade because they did not want to support foods that exploited humans. Five participants supported the raw food movement, which is a food choice within veganism and in this study the raw food choice was made for health reasons. A caveat for this portion of the study analysis was that the participants all lived in Burlington where local and organic foods were present and advertised frequently within grocery stores and farmers’ markets.

What is it like being vegan in Burlington?

There were a variety of responses to the question of the difficulty of being vegan in Burlington. The way that people responded to the ease of being vegan in Burlington could be attributed to where the participants lived prior to Burlington. Nine out of the twelve participants who said that it was easy to be vegan in Burlington in terms of finding food had lived in rural areas before settling in Burlington, where specialty processed vegan foods and vegan restaurants are not found in abundance. The five participants who said that it was difficult to find food in Burlington were from metropolitan areas such as Boston or Northern California.

Response 1: It is really easy because there are a lot of places here that serve vegan food (in restaurants and in terms of specialty vegan items in grocery stores). (11 participants)

The participant who was from Kentucky, where according to her there are hardly any vegan options said, *“Vermont is really really good about supporting vegan and gluten free options. It’s definitely a lot easier here.”* Another participant complimented the grocery stores in Burlington for their support of a vegan lifestyle. She explained, *“It is really easy. If anyone wants to go vegan, they should move to Burlington with the Co-op and Healthy Living. The chain grocery stores are okay too. If I can’t make it to Healthy Living, I can go to Schazz right near my house.”*

One of these participants explained how even though Burlington did not have many vegan inhabitants; *“There are always places to go, like Asian places are always great places to go. Stone Soup is a great place to go. And so we have our rituals and our patterns, places we know we can go and where we know what we can get.”* The participant who was a raw food vegan said that despite the lack of a vegan community, *“Burlington’s awareness of raw is much higher than New Hampshire which was interesting. Most people know what it is when I bring it up. I don’t have to do quite as much education as I did in New Hampshire. In New Hampshire it was a lot of convincing people over and over again, like “why?” and here people kind of know whether or not they are participating.”*

These eleven participants agreed that Burlington did not have a huge vegan population, however they did support the vegan life-style. They found that the restaurants in Burlington contained vegan options and grocery stores held a variety of produce and vegan specialty items that they could consume at home. Three of these participants also said that omnivores in Burlington tended to understand the definition of veganism or raw veganism, which I suspect made the participants feel more welcome within the Burlington community as vegans as opposed to locations where the people were not as knowledgeable about veganism.

Response 2: Burlington does not have specifically vegan restaurants. (9 participants)

The one major critique of Burlington by the participants was that there are no specifically vegan restaurants and only a few places with vegan options. This was primarily a concern with those Burlington residents who were coming from places that had many vegan restaurants or vegetarian restaurants, which tend to be vegan friendly. One of the participants said, *“In California, there were a lot of vegetarian restaurants and quite a few vegan only restaurants ... here not so much. We haven’t really gone out so much. I have found two or three restaurants that say that they have two or three vegan options on their menu. But there are definitely not any vegetarian or vegan restaurants that I know of.”* One of the participants who had lived in New York City also criticized Burlington for not being as vegan friendly as it could be. She explained, *“What I need to do is not live in Burlington anymore. I just need to not have to*

cook all of the time. Like, we go to Duino Duende all of the time. They have really good vegan options, they have meat too but they care a lot more than other local places like the farmhouse. That's the other thing, it's either gluten free or vegan, yeah I would like to be able to eat out again. That is something I need as support to continue one."

Other participants in this study agreed that Burlington offered vegan food, but they would like to see some all vegan restaurants within Burlington. A participant said, *"The Asian restaurants have vegan food; there is no vegan or vegetarian store here. They have vegan options, but few places have good vegan options. I think things with hummus and chickpeas don't really count; those things just happen to be vegan."* Another participant said, *"I think Vermont is an interesting place. There are certainly a lot of options around and we don't have trouble eating. The Co-op is awesome and healthy living is awesome for buying things but there are no vegan restaurants in the state and there are only maybe three vegetarian restaurants...."*

The participants who were most critical of Burlington for not having vegan restaurants had been living in Burlington for one year or less. The participants who had been in Burlington for five years or more expressed a desire for an all vegan restaurant, but also said that there was plenty of places where they could eat. Only one of these participants said that Burlington might affect her continuation of veganism by not having a vegan or vegetarian restaurant.

Response 3: Burlington is not as supportive of a vegan lifestyle as one would think. (7 participants)

Seven of the seventeen participants said that Burlington and Vermont in general are not as vegan friendly as they had originally thought they would be. Two of these participants explained that they thought the price of vegan foods in Burlington is higher than it should be. A participant said, *"Vermont is surprisingly not easy to be vegan. It is getting a little easier; Hannaford and Shaw's are now starting to have a few vegan items, but they are not the cheapest places to buy food."* Another participant who recently moved into Burlington said, *"Here it's mostly the availability of stuff. I need to cook food. I'm having a lot of trouble finding some things ... now I have a membership at Costco because the alternative is City Market. We've visited there several times before and spent \$200/\$300 on one week's worth of groceries and I can't do that."* This participant specifically mentioned having trouble finding foods in bulk such as for nutritional yeast and quinoa at a price that she could afford for herself, partner and two small children.

Other participants were surprised that such a progressive state as Vermont would not have a larger vegan community. One of the participants said, *"I feel like Vermont is very progressive but it is slightly more difficult to find more vegans because it's a dairy state. But they are out there and it's just a matter of finding them. I've met a few here and there. That helped a little bit."* Another participant did not like Vermont because he thought that Vermont was pretending to be something that it is not. He explained, *"I hate it living in Vermont because it just makes me angrier. It's a big hunting and meat state. I've met a lot of younger seemingly progressive people but I see big amounts of meat and dairy and I don't think that's very progressive."*

Other participants brought up the observation that people in Burlington are far more interested in local foods than vegan foods, One of the participants, who had been a co-owner of New Ethic, an all vegan restaurant in Burlington said, *"Burlington is progressive, but because we are the land of happy cows and local meat, we are also locavores. There is an anti-vegan community here or maybe it is just there are so few vegetarians."* Another participant explained that he was surprised that there were so few

vegetarian and vegan restaurants, he said, *“It seemed to me that people are very health conscious and very alternative thinking here, just like they were in Boston. But the focus in Vermont seems to be much more on local stuff, not that there wasn’t that movement in Boston also, but there was also a place for vegan as well.”*

The responses of the participants for question had been similar to my own. Even though Vermont is progressive and the participants consider veganism progressive, members of the Burlington community seem to not support veganism within their collection of progressive movements alongside support for organic and local foods.

More than half of the participants said that they found Burlington to be an easy place to be a vegan. At the same time a significant number of participants said that Burlington did not have any vegetarian or vegan restaurants. They also said that although Vermont supported local and Organic movements, they seemed to be slacking in the vegan movement. Three participants attributed this to the fact that Vermont is a dairy state.

What are some perceptions about vegans?

One of the topics that came up unexpectedly was the preconceived notion of vegans. There were a significant number of participants who had had preconceived notions about what a vegan was or knew people who had preconceived notions of other people. Even though there was not a pattern for a specific preconceived notion of vegans they may give a small hint as to why veganism is not as popular as other food movements. The participants expressed five different stereotypes about vegans.

Response 1: Vegans are judgmental towards omnivores, in your face, and preachy and they want to convert everyone to veganism. (7 participants)

The participants expressed that vegans could be adamant about their beliefs, and if they met these kinds of vegans, it could be off-putting. Four of these participants also said that they had been preachy towards omnivores when they first became vegan. This stereotype also gives vegans a bad reputation and can often make omnivores feel negatively judged or guilty for not being a vegan. One of the participants, who admitted to being a strong lover of consuming meat and animal products, said, *“As a former crazy omnivore. I thought they were preachy and in your face. I thought they were judging me for who I was. I thought they were all crazy and had B12 deficiencies and that’s what made them crazy.”* Another participant also explained how he had originally thought that vegans tried to make omnivores feel guilty by commenting on their food choices. He said, *“Before I was a vegan, it seemed like a radical political thing. I don’t think it is, but I have friends who can object and tell people they are disgusted by some types of food. I encountered that quite a bit, especially when I was younger and that was my image of it. I met people who were less militant and I realized I had a choice. I did not have to be like that. I had to learn systems for communicating carefully ... some people can be obsessive and hostile and that was my image of vegans for a long time.”*

This participant and another participant explained that they were careful in not trying to make omnivores feel guilty about not being vegan. Both of them did not want to be the preachy vegan that they had assumed of all vegans. The participant said, *“I always thought that vegans were really annoying and preachy. Most vegans that I’d met were really obnoxious and judgmental, so I didn’t really want to be part of it. And then against my better judgment I started thinking okay this makes sense.”* This participant had a strong dislike of vegans who were preachy even though she agreed with the heart of what they were saying that it was a good decision to vote for not harming animals by not consuming them.

Four of the participants admitted to being the preachy vegan whom everyone wanted to avoid, all of them said that this happened at the beginning of their vegan journey. One of the participants said, *“When I first went vegan, I was talking to everyone and being really annoying. I can’t believe that I was so annoying and people didn’t ostracize me completely. I really toned it down and then I was like I’m just going to live as an example and not try to convert other people who know (about issues surrounding veganism, but are not vegan).”* Another participant also explained that when he first went vegan he used to be confrontational with omnivores. He would often try to get into arguments with people at his work place and in his family about why they eat meat and were not a vegan. As he continued on his vegan journey, he also decided to be less confrontational. He said, *“One aunt asked, ‘don’t you believe in the food chain?’ I said, ‘the food chain where we eat everything?’ I was being facetious. I got some snide remarks...I stopped saying I am vegan; I don’t volunteer it right away.”*

The raw food vegan participant also had a similar experience of first being militant towards others about food choices and then more understanding. She said, *“When I first started out with raw I was very ‘Everyone should go raw!’ I thought everyone should be raw and it’s the best experience. I had really strong beliefs in that way. Since then it’s shifted to be more compassionate towards where people are psychologically and emotionally about food...”*

Three of the seven participants who supported the idea that there was a militant stereotype about vegans said that they did not like that there were vegans that were so aggressive towards non-vegans because it gave vegans a bad representation. Four other participants supported this stereotype saying that they had been confrontational towards non-vegans when they first became vegans; they actively tried to be non-confrontational at the time of the interview. These two different ways of showing the existence of a militant vegan stereotype may mean that the militant vegans are the vegans that are just beginning their vegan journey. It could be a phase of being a vegan and it could be one of the reasons that some people are not deciding to become vegan.

Response 6: Overcame their preconceived notions of vegans by meeting other vegans who didn’t fit the stereotype. (3 participants)

There were five different stereotypes listed for what the participants had thought vegans were like and what the participants thought omnivores still perceive of vegans. Three of the participants that I interviewed said that they got over their stereotypes of vegans by meeting other vegans. One of the participants said that one friend helped her to want to continue to be vegan, despite the negative stereotypes that vegans tended to collect. She said, *“Danielle, the friend I mentioned, is the one that helps me because she’s so into it but she is so non-judgmental, she’s the nicest person. She kind of preaches but...for her it’s the absolute answer to everything. She helps remind me [why I am vegan]...”*

Another participant had a similar friend who helped him to come to realize he had to make veganism seem more normal if he wanted to make it accepted in mainstream society. He said, *“I have a friend who looks normal and acts normal and has been vegan for longer than I have been. He lives in town. His name is Ed. He introduced me to the idea of being a normal vegan. The more normal you can be as a vegan, the more people can accept that veganism is not an extreme phase or fad or an extreme movement. They look at me or someone with tattoos and think veganism is just another way of being extreme.”* The last participant for this response also said that knowing other vegans, made veganism less strange. When explaining how he came to veganism he said, *“There was also the Boston Vegetarian Food Festival which is all vegan and that was a big event and that was fun to go to and learn about new things like vegan cheese and stuff. So the cookbooks and the festival were a big part of our transition. I think because they made it comfortable, you know it wasn’t strange. There were all these other vegans or*

people who were at least interested in veganism, if not vegan themselves. And the recipes we were cooking were really good, so why would we cook something else?"

The biggest factor in people accepting veganism and not becoming attached to the stereotype of weird, extreme, and militant vegans was meeting other vegans. These three participants also said that meeting vegans who broke the previously mentioned stereotypes helped them to become vegan and to remain vegan among people who were not vegan.

Response 2: Vegans are hippies who do everything naturally. (4 participants)

Four of the participants said that there was the vegan stereotype that all of them were hippies, peace loving and decidedly unconventional. Two of these participants had thought these stereotypes to be true and two of them noticed this stereotype coming from onlookers of vegans. Before she was vegan, one of the participants said, *"When I thought of vegans, I thought hippy, natural, whole foods because I was raised in that community. Any vegans I knew were friends of my parents and hippies. As I got older vegans I knew were these gun owning, hard-core, militant males. It was so different from what I thought. Owen (husband) is 6'2" with muscles and into guns. It is the antithesis of what I thought. My idea about vegans was shattered."* This participant overcame this stereotype by meeting different kinds of vegans in her adult life. Another participant found this stereotype to be untrue because of her own journey into and within veganism. She said, *"It is just the image of vegans with hemp clothes...I dye my hair. I am not an au natural person at all. I just booked a facial for Valentine's Day. I don't feel the pressure to be real consistent. It is something I am doing just for myself."*

One of these participants liked that vegans tended to be interested in the same things, but he also acknowledged that vegans and hippies/unconventional thinkers were two different groups even though vegans may overlap the unconventional thinkers. He said, *"I always thought that veganism was just the diet. I recognized that vegans often have a lot of stuff in common and it tends to be stuff I like liberal politics and creativity and a bohemian feel, and I really like that stuff. But I definitely always separated out the two."*

Another participant acknowledged that the hippie stereotype of veganism was very much alive; it is something that turned people away from veganism. He criticized City Market, Burlington's downtown super market, for re-confirming people's stereotypes about veganism. He explained, *"I laugh at City Market because it was a very small Co-op and I think to prove to people that it's not just a fluffy fruity place...to make people understand that it's not only a vegetarian/vegan place, they put meat specials on the front door...And there is the cooler where there's lots of tofu and stuff. It's called the hippie cooler and it's doing an injustice by doing that."*

Participants expressed the idea that veganism could be off-putting because of the hippie stereotype that surrounded the people who often identify as vegan. None of the participants identified themselves as hippies and some said that they and vegans they knew were not even close to being identified as a hippie.

Response 3: Veganism is an extreme diet. (3 participants)

Three of the participants also claimed that before they were vegan, they had thought the diet was extreme in the sense that it is being too particular about food. They thought they would not be able to keep up the diet in a society that centered its meals on meat and dairy. The participant who was a raw food vegan said, *"Raw is the extreme of the extreme to people and some people ask me about that and*

think it's crazy which I understand because I think it's crazy too." She also said this after explaining that she no longer tried convincing people to go raw. One of the reasons that people may not go vegan is because they do not want to adhere to a diet that they have to think about all of the time. Another participant agreed that veganism was extreme and said that veganism was accepted although still considered crazy. She said, *"Around here, it's is just 'Okay, that is one of the choices' because so many people here are vegetarian or gluten-free. I think some people think of me as a crazy extremist. I am reminded that it is a small percentage of people who are vegan."*

Another participant said that she had also thought the diet was extreme before becoming vegan herself. She explained, *"Before I was vegan, I thought 'What does that mean?' That is a really severe diet. I did more research and realized it is not severe; open heart surgery is severe."* I understood this participant to be saying that the idea of veganism sounds "severe" or "extreme" because it is not a common practice among the people of Burlington or even in the United States. However the participants in this study did not think that the diet was severe or extreme while they were identifying as vegan.

Response 4: Veganism is only about the animals. (2 participants)

As we have seen, people become vegan for health, environmental and animal welfare reasons. Two of the participants said that they thought the feelings of guilt towards eating and harming animals was overly emphasized and did not accurately portray their experience with veganism. One of these participants said, *"I still struggle with veganism being so focused on animal welfare. PETA is about animal welfare. I think being vegan is about non-violence and that is in all areas, not just animal welfare. I totally agree with the animal welfare piece, but other aspects are not considered as much. Such as people who work in slaughter houses, work in factory farms, political systems and food, food justice, effect on the environment."*

The other participant who brought up this topic explained that before she was vegan she was not interested in veganism because she wasn't interested in supporting the animal rights movement, which she thought was the major focus of vegans. After going vegan for health reasons, the participant incorporated animal reasons into her other reasons for going vegan. She explained, *"I thought I wasn't so passionate about the animal piece so much. I don't think I'd say that's a predominant piece for me. I was looking at veganism from an animal perspective and not cutting it out for other reasons. I think because it is a part of it, I kind of embraced it and was more open to thinking about that part of it and where I stood with that. I think I have kept it as that same thing. I respect that individuals can have their own thing. I don't think that every vegan should be an animal activist."*

Both of these participants agreed that veganism was often promoted as a stand for promoting animal rights and not harming animals. They also both said that that is not painting the whole picture of veganism since this life style also has to do with other issues as well such as the environment, health, and human rights. Since some of these participants thought veganism was often portrayed as only an animal rights issue, it may be that other people who have not read up on veganism continue to see veganism as only an animal rights issue and that could be why participants who are interested in health and the environment do not look into veganism.

Response 5: People, who are vegan do not do it for long-term or for ethical or health reasons. (2 participants)

Two of the participants that I interviewed did not think of vegans as having genuine reasons for being vegan. This stereotype was brought about by vegans or vegetarians that they had met before becoming vegan themselves. One of them said, *"I dated someone who was vegetarian and I figured that I*

would do it to be supportive of him, but then I found out that he was doing it for a bet. When I first met my husband I wasn't convinced that he was really vegetarian because of morals.” This participant did not remain vegan because of moral reasons, but to support her husband in his practice of veganism. The other participant said, *“I had had this hatred towards vegans because of the stigma. I knew so many of those vegan punks who were straight edge vegan punks. And I'm like “Why are you doing this?” I had met people in Portland who went vegan and then three months later they were eating lobster and steak. It was a fad and a trend. I've come to realize that it can be a really simple earthy movement if it's the right thing for you. I think a lot of people don't want to become that and that's why it doesn't stick.* This participant explained that he avoided being part of the “modern vegan movement” because he did not want to be contributing to veganism as a fad.

Both of these participants were influenced by their partners to become vegan. It is possible that they overcame this stereotype when they saw their partner wanting to become vegan whom they did not think fit their stereotype of a vegan.

Summary of Results

Overall the participants were a diverse group of individuals who offered detailed accounts of the experience of becoming and remaining vegan. The results indicated that social factors such as friends, family members, partners, and community members were the most significant factors in a person deciding to become and remain vegan. Participants were often influenced to become vegan by another person. They usually would have had some knowledge of veganism and the issues surrounding it before interacting with the influential person. The biggest obstacles, such as ordering foods in restaurants were often framed by social situations. For example, it was difficult going to restaurants with friends and the waitress not understanding what vegan meant. There were also several socially accepted stereotypes of veganism, which the participants had held themselves and felt projected onto them by non-vegans.

The interviews also showed that the participants were interested in other food movements such as the local and organic movement. Generally the participants also found Burlington to have vegan options, but lacking in a community of vegans.

Discussion

There are important benefits to society when people adapt a vegan lifestyle. Many researchers have shown reduced environmental degradation, positive health benefits and reduced medical costs, and less animal and human suffering from consuming less livestock. Despite these benefits, a very small percentage of people choose this lifestyle. If we understand how vegans come to live by their values then we can better understand how people in general come to live in ways that honor their values. This information may prove to be helpful toward anyone wishing to adopt or encourage any ethically, environmentally, or health conscious lifestyle choice.

The purpose of this study was to determine how members of the Burlington community become and remained vegan. I wanted to explore the vegan journey, which Donald Watson said was the last step in someone’s vegetarian journey (Larsson, Ronnbund, Johansson & Dahlgen, 2001). I wanted to better understand the act of bridging the gap between what one believes and what one does.

The Stages of the Vegan Journey

In order to form a picture of how the vegan journey took place among the participants I interviewed, I stepped back from the detailed responses portrayed in the previous section in order to form a bigger picture of the vegan journey. After reflecting on the responses, I noticed there was a common pattern among the participants. They went through four stages on their vegan journey: Readiness, Spark, Learning & Telling, and the Continuing Journey stage. This is shown in the figure below.



Figure 4: Four Stages of Vegan Journey

According to these participants, each of these four stages influenced the non-vegan community as well. These stages are important to understand because they may give us insight into how people turn their values into practiced behaviors and how these people influence those who have not turned their values into actions.

Fox and Ward (Health, ethics, and the environment, 2008) wrote about a trajectory although they did not specify the steps that took place along the trajectory. My research now defines the specific steps in the vegan journey based upon the interview responses from the seventeen participants from Burlington.

Stage 1: Readiness

The Readiness Stage is when participants are introduced to the idea of veganism or vegetarianism. It ultimately prepares the participant for their decision to become vegan. This stage happens gradually and involves any combination of influential people, documentaries, books, events, and health issues.

In this stage, the participant often thinks about the prospect of becoming vegan or vegetarian or they may decide to be vegetarian or mostly vegetarian. This stage usually involves the person being around vegans and/or vegetarians. For example, one participant said that before she decided to become vegan, she worked at a Whole Foods. There she met vegans and tried vegan foods that she had never had before. Another participant had a friend in high school that was a vegetarian and made the practice of a plant-based diet look do-able. This stage often involves a person becoming aware of the option to refrain from eating animal products.

The participants may also learn some information in this stage about the health, environmental, and ethical reasons of becoming vegan. The person may also see some part of their values or lifestyles that resonate with the vegan philosophy or lifestyle. As an example, one of the participants was allergic to dairy and found that he could eat everything at vegan restaurants. Other examples are people who love animals, such as the participant who was raised with goats as a child and who learned about the vegetarian and vegan-life style because she liked the idea of not eating animals who could be friends. This repeated exposure to an idea or behavior and its effect on a person's behavior was also explored by psychologists Zimbardo and Leippe (1991). They found that the more someone was exposed to an idea, the more they liked and accepted it. This was the case with the participants in the readiness stage of my study about veganism.

The Readiness Stage is when the person is thinking about veganism/vegetarianism, but has not yet made the plunge into veganism. This stage prepares the individual for the spark stage, which is when the individual decides to practice a vegan lifestyle.

Stage 2: The Spark

The Spark is a single event that also involves influential people, documentaries, books, events, and health issues. The main difference between the Spark Stage and the Readiness Stage is that the Spark Stage stimulates a change in behavior. The sparks were ignited in different ways, depending on the reasons for which the participant was drawn to veganism in the readiness stage. The reasons are ethical, health, and/or environmental.

Among the participants in this study, some spark events included:

- People: Partner decides to go vegan, friend who is vegan
- Books: *Skinny Bitch*, *The Face on Your Plate*, *Why We Eat What We Eat*
- Documentaries: *Earthlings*, *Food Inc.*
- Events: PETA event on vivisection, PETA table at Punk rock concerts, Yoga cleanse
- Health Issue: Family member has heart problem, Participant diagnosed with multiple sclerosis

Several of the sparks for the ethical vegans produced strong emotions of sadness and guilt, particularly the film *Earthlings*, the PETA event on vivisection, *The Face on Your Plate* and *Skinny Bitch*. After the participants experienced these events and emotions, they decided to practice a vegan lifestyle. Strong emotions were also shown to influence people into veganism in McDonald's study on veganism in 2000.

The health vegans in this study had been looking for a solution to their health concerns, which were part of their Readiness Stage. The spark came from the participant actively looking for a solution to their health concerns. In contrast, the ethical vegans had simply come across the spark through friends' suggestions, or browsing the library, or attending some event.

One of the health vegan participants had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and another had been concerned about heart disease because several members of her family had experienced heart problems. The participant who had multiple sclerosis found her spark at a yoga convention where everyone was practicing a raw vegan diet and talking about how it could help with chronic diseases. The participant concerned about heart problems gained her spark through reading books about how a healthy vegan diet could help reduce the risks of heart disease after her father had a heart attack.

Environmental vegans often found their sparks in a similar way to health vegans because they were also searching for ways to help the environment. One of the participants explained how she had wanted to reduce her carbon footprint because she drove an SUV a long distance to work each day (Readiness Stage). After searching for information about how to reduce her carbon footprint, she read *Why We Eat What We Eat*, which was the spark that led her to decide to become vegan.

Among all of the types of vegans that I interviewed, ethical, environmental, and health vegans, I found that the most common spark was actually not the strong emotions speculated upon by McDonald's 2000 study for the ethical vegans or the books and events involved with the health and environmental vegans. The most common spark for the participants was the people surrounding the individual at the time that they became vegan.

Friends, partners, and community groups often inspired the participant to begin veganism. Many of the participants decided to become vegan with their partner after going through the Readiness Stage even though they had not yet fully developed their strong ethical, environmental, or health reasons to be vegan at the time. This finding is supportive of Feininger's (1985) findings that people are more likely to bridge the gap between their behavior and belief if the person supporting the behavior is important or attractive to them.

Some of the participants did not start their vegan journey with their partner, but were influenced by their partner who was already vegan or vegetarian when they started dating. Many of the participants' sparks were brought about by people in the Readiness Stage, vegan friends gave them books that were sparks or they had met vegans in their community who helped them to look for information that contained a spark.

The participants became vegan directly after experiencing their spark. Once the spark ignited the participant's decision to become vegan, the participant entered the Learning and Telling phase.

Stage 3: Learning and Telling

All of the stages within the vegan journey involve the participants learning something about veganism and the ethical, environmental, and health reasons for following the vegan journey. However, in this stage the participant actively seeks out as much information as they can about how to be vegan. The participants read books, explored web sites, watched documentaries, and had long conversations with other vegans. The participants go through a period of learning as much as they can about the reasons and science behind a vegan lifestyle. This learning involves both theoretical knowledge, such as scientific studies, and pragmatic knowledge, such as how to prepare meals with no animal products. The learning stage supports psychologist Cohen's (1964) discoveries that once people decide to behave in a way that supports their values, they will often "*expose themselves to further information which is likely to justify the decision taken.*"

In this stage, the participant is also learning how to be comfortable in their new identity as a vegan within a society that is primarily omnivores. It often involved the participant exploring other reasons to become vegan and sharing their newly found information with omnivores.

Sixteen out of the seventeen participants who had started out being vegan for one specific reason mentioned that they had evolved to incorporate at least one of the other three reasons to be vegan. For example, health vegans learned about the ethical and environmental reasons for this lifestyle; ethical vegans learned about the health and environmental reasons. In the Learning and Telling Stage, this research into other aspects of veganism reinforced the initial reason for adopting this lifestyle and added additional compelling reasons. This finding is significant because it may indicate that in order for the lifestyle to stick, it is helpful for the vegan to have more than one reason for practicing a vegan lifestyle.

During this stage, the participants learned how to make vegan meals. The participants said that they looked at numerous vegan cookbooks and often used the information listed at the beginning of the cookbooks to learn how to make everything they eat vegan. They also said that they learned where they could eat in restaurants and where to go and how to handle social situations as a vegan.

The participants struggled with interacting with non-vegans in this stage. Some of the participants said that they were self-conscious in restaurants and at friends' houses because they had to bring up the fact that they were vegan when first starting out. One of the participants said that she originally felt awkward in restaurants at taking so long to decide what to order because there was nothing on the menu that was vegan.

The telling part of this stage comes from the participants who said that they felt they had obnoxiously preached to non-vegans about veganism when they had first become vegan. These participants said that they had originally tried to convert omnivores to veganism when they started the vegan journey. Several of these participants mentioned feeling frustrated at those who had the same values as them and agreed with the vegan philosophies, but remained omnivores. Other participants mentioned losing friendships and causing bad feelings among family members as they tried to "convert" their friends and families to veganism. As the participants moved beyond this stage, they learned to better manage their relationships with non-vegans and only spoke about their lifestyle decisions when directly questioned.

One of the participants, in particular, mentioned feeling angry that he was so aware of the suffering that eating animals represented while the people around him remained unaware and did not seem to care. He said that he learned to be okay with his anger and felt that other vegans also had to learn this as well.

The Learning and Telling Stage of veganism is when the participants were learning how to be vegan among non-vegans and in places that did not necessarily cater towards vegans. The participants learned how to prepare vegan foods, how to order food in restaurants and how to shop in grocery stores. They learned how to handle common problematic situations, such as traveling or participating in work events when all the served food contained animal foods. The participants also learned about all of the reasons that one would become vegans and most all of the participants made all of those reasons their own. For a few of the participants, one reason stood out more than the other two, but they still had knowledge of the other reasons.

Stage 4: Continuing Journey

The final stage in the vegan journey is the Continuing Journey Stage. This happens when the participant feels comfortable with and grounded in their identity as a vegan. The participant continues to learn about veganism, but not in the deliberate, energizing and going-out-of-their-way methods as in the Learning and Telling Stage. The participants have developed their rituals of what to cook and where to go out to eat. They know how to handle social situations and no longer wish to convert non-vegans into being vegan. Veganism is a part of the participants' identities but it is not the participants' only identity.

All of the participants said that they no longer brought up the fact that they were vegan until they were asked. The participants who had said they had been militant when they first started being vegan said that they felt that it was more effective for them to inspire others towards a vegan lifestyle by simply being vegan than by telling everyone that they should be vegan.

Fifteen of the seventeen participants expressed that they continued to be vegan because it was the right thing to do. They were also glad to be practicing veganism because it aligned with their values of compassion, justice, protecting the environment, and taking care of their own health.

Although Greenebaum (2012) did not talk about the Continuing Journey Stage, she wrote that ethical vegans found it easy to match their behavior to their values because they wanted to live with integrity and this lifestyle reflected their core values.

Effects on Non-Vegans

From the participants' responses to the interview questions, I had gathered information about how the participants' thought non-vegans responded and thought about vegans. I found that each of the stages of the vegan journey had an influence on the non-vegans around the vegan participants.

Readiness and Spark Stages

Non-vegans may be in the Readiness Stage. They may agree with the participants who are vegan, but they have not yet found a spark that makes them decide to become vegan. Non-vegans may also receive a spark in the form of a book or documentary and they may be vegan for a week or several weeks and then stop. One of the participants mentioned this happened to her father; he tried a vegan diet for health reasons and then abandoned the initiative. It never became a part of his value system.

I have witnessed this with friends in my own life. I speculate that participants who experience a spark (an emotional event that causes them to question their eating habits), but do not continue with a vegan lifestyle has either not developed the Readiness Stage far enough or they do not have sufficient social support systems. Non-vegans who experience a spark may need more of support system in order to maintain a vegan lifestyle in the long term, since ten of the participants in my study had at least one person who supported their vegan lifestyle. Psychologists have also repeatedly found that an individual will adopt a behavior when someone or some people who support or disagree with the behavior surround him or her. This support may help an individual live by their own values or it may deter the individual from pursuing and maintaining a behavior that is in line with their own values (Festinger, 1985; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991; Cohen, 1964).

There are also those non-vegans who have no-knowledge at all about anything to do with veganism. Several of the participants in my study expressed this frustration when traveling or when they visited their immediate family. One of the participants talked about his family not understanding why he

was vegan and not making any effort to understand. I have also met people who do not know the word “vegan.” This may also be a result of the media depicting meat and dairy as essential to the human diet.

Learning and Telling

The most common stereotype that participants had felt about vegans before becoming vegan was that vegans were militant and wanted to convert everyone to their lifestyle. In support of this stereotype, I found that several of the participants that I interviewed had thought they were preachy and militant when they first became vegan. The participants who said this even marveled at the fact that they still had friends after this Learning and Telling Stage. These findings lead me to think that the Learning and Telling Stage of veganism may actually be counter-productive. Omnivores resist even trying to learn about veganism because they feel like they are being attacked for their non-vegan food choices.

One of the participants explained how when she was first becoming vegan, she had met many vegans who were unpleasant and even obnoxious towards omnivores and some vegans for not strictly following a vegan lifestyle. She had not wanted to label herself as vegan because she did not want people to think that she was in the same group as these militant vegans. The Learning and Telling stage for vegans may result in confusion for non-vegans, who do not understand why the person is deciding to exclude animal products from their diet. They may then form stereotypes such as all vegans were hippies, obnoxious, and preachy. This stage suggests that preaching about veganism is not the most effective way to convey the ideas of veganism to non-vegans.

Continuing Journey

The participants in this stage of the vegan journey said that they did not try to preach about veganism. They are well informed about the three reasons of veganism and only bring up their veganism when food is around or when someone specifically asks about their eating habits. In this stage, the non-vegan may ask questions of their vegan friend or acquaintances about veganism. They may even offer to make a vegan dish for their friend, which some of the participants had said their non-vegans often did. The interactions between vegans and non-vegans in this stage have the potential to bring the non-vegan into the Readiness Stage and the non-vegan becomes more prepared for the Spark Stage. The vegan cycle then continues and the vegan movement and its societal benefits expand.

The Continuing Journey stage is when the participant identified as having a strong attitude-behavior relationship. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) explained this relationship when they said that in order to achieve this strong relationship the individual must have knowledge, clarity, and direct experience with the attitude objective. Fifteen of the seventeen participants demonstrated a vast knowledge of veganism and the three reasons for being a vegan (health, environment, and ethics), they were also clear in their own reasons for being vegan, and had a great number of experiences as a vegan among a primarily non-vegan population.

The chart below depicts the four stages of the vegan journey and its influences on vegans and non-vegans. The column to the left depicts what occurs at each stage for a vegan that allows them to continue to behave in ways that reflect their values. The column to the right shows how non-vegans are affected by each stage and which stages encourage them to continue or reduce their dissonance between behavior and values:

| Vegans | Non-Vegans |
|--|---|
| <p>Readiness (influences him/her towards the spark stage) The person is exposed to the idea of veganism. This readiness develops from childhood experiences, previous readings, personal relationships with vegans and vegetarians, or surrounding community.</p> | <p>Non-vegans do not have any social support in this lifestyle. In general they do not have many personal relationships with vegans.</p> |
| <p>Spark Results in emotional impact: sadness, grief, anger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movies: <i>Earthlings, Food inc.</i> • Books: <i>Skinny Bitch, Mad Cowboy, China Study, Why We Eat What We Eat</i> • Events: Punk Rock Concerts, PETA event <p>May also be brought about by a strong social relationship such as partners who decide to go vegan together or someone who is in a close personal relationship with a vegan.</p> | <p>These omnivores are often not exposed to these events or media because they are not popular or in the mainstream media.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p>These event have not as strong an impact on the participant because they are not ready to change their habits because they have not developed strong enough reasons for giving up animal products. Their social relationships do not support a vegan lifestyle. They have also been told by the mainstream media that consuming animals and animal products are important for their health.</p> |
| <p>Learning (& Telling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out more: read, explore vegan websites, explore about one or two of the three reasons for veganism (health, environment, animals) • Spread the word about veganism to everyone they meet (may be vehement) • Learn how to shop, cook, and order at restaurants as a vegan | <p>Non-vegans often have negative feelings towards vegans in the Learning & Telling phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel disparaged by vegans • Confused • Form stereotypes about vegans: hippies, don't wear shoes, obnoxious and preachy |
| <p>Steady Journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veganism is simply a part of "who I am" • Well informed about the three reasons to be vegan: health, animals, and environment • Have systems in place for coping in a non-vegan world • Do not mention veganism unless someone else asks | <p>Occasionally asks questions of vegan friend or acquaintance about veganism. This has the potential to prepare him or her towards the readiness and spark stages</p> |

Figure 5: Vegans and Non-Vegans on Vegan Journey

Conclusion

Purpose of Research

Many people have dissonance when it comes to their behaviors and values. This can be seen through people who value their health but still smoke or people who cherish the environment but refuse to bike to work (Festinger, 1985; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991; Cohen, 1964). This study focuses on the phenomenon of people reducing their dissonance when it comes to food choices, particularly when the values are health, environment, and ethics. Veganism is one choice in which individuals behave in ways that honor their values. Research has shown that veganism greatly reduces environmental degradation, protects ones' health, and avoids the unnecessarily harming animals (Robbins, 1987). However only a very small minority of people, estimated at around 2% of the U.S. population, is currently vegan (Newport, 2012).

This study shows how individuals continually bridge their behavior and value gap by practicing veganism. Similarly to Fox and Ward's (2008) research, sixteen of the seventeen participants in this study followed a trajectory in which they added reasons for remaining vegan to the original ones that they held at first becoming vegan. This study took Fox and Ward's study further by formulating the specific stages that the participants went through when following their vegan journey: Readiness, Spark, Learning & Telling, and Continuing Journey.

The results of this study tended to support the findings by Festinger (1985) that the social support of someone who is important to a person could encourage the person to adopt a behavior that decreases dissonance. In this research, eight of the participants were influenced by a partner or friend to go and remain vegan. Surprisingly, only one of the participants stated that they wanted to find more vegans, which contradicts Cohen (1964) and Zimbardo & Leippe's (1991) statements that people will often seek out social support when confronted with the option to decrease dissonance.

Fifteen of the participants came to support at least partially some of all of the three reasons for remaining vegan; health, environment, and ethical, even though more than half of the participants had originally gone vegan for primarily health reasons. This finding appears to support Hoffman's 2013 findings, which indicate that people remain vegan primarily for ethical reasons in which the idea eating an animal produces strong feelings of guilt and sadness.

The vegan journey is a slow ever-changing process, which involves the individual collecting information and meeting or learning about other vegans. The vegan experiences in this study demonstrate how an individual can align their values with their behavior in terms of eating. These experiences may provide insight for others seeking to create a strong value and behavior relationship in themselves, or in others whether it is for veganism or for other value driven acts.

Limitations and Further Research

This study is limited to being applied to all vegans because of the small sample size of only seventeen participants. It is also limited because all of the vegans were from Burlington, which may attract a certain type of individual. If this research were to be continued, I would suggest a larger sample size of participants and a sample size that included participants from different parts of the United States. In understanding the vegan journey in its entirety, it would be helpful to interview people who had stopped becoming vegan. This study is only the beginning in understanding veganism.

Concluding Thoughts

The vegan journey often begins with readiness to accept new information, the possibility of changing one's current lifestyle, and strong feelings of sadness and inspiration. The journey continues with an acute awareness towards daily choices and an understanding of ones' identity and values. The vegan journey may affect non-vegans and their perception of vegans, in both good and bad ways. I hope that the good ways continues to grow and that veganism becomes as normal in Burlington as are the movements for supporting local and organic foods. It is well established that the environmental, health, and ethical benefits from a vegan lifestyle greatly exceed the benefits from local and organic foods. It was inspiring to hear the stories of the seventeen participants in this study. I hope that these findings inspire others to find ways in which they can help the environment, the animals, and their health.

Work Cited

- 2012 *locavore index*. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.strollingoftheheifers.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Locavore-Index-2012.pdf>
- Barriball, L., While, A. (1994), *Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: A discussion paper*. Journal of Advanced Nursing (19): 328-335.
- Beardsworth, A. and Keil, T. (1991). *Health-related Beliefs and Dietary Practices among Vegetarians and Vegans: A Qualitative Study*. Health Education Journal 50(1): 38-42.
- Beardsworth, A. and Keil, T. (1992). *The vegetarian option: Varieties, Conversions, Motives and Careers* in Sociological Review 40(2): 253-293.
- Bohanec, H. (2011, December 14). [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://www.idablog.org/u-s-vegan-population-doubles-in-only-two-years/>
- Carrington, M.J., Neville, B.A., Whitewell, G.J., (2012, October 5). Lost in Translation: Exploring the ethical consumer intention behavior gap. *Journal of Business*. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296312002597>
- Cohen, A. R. (1964). *Attitude change and social influence*. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Cunningham, W.P., Cunningham, M. (2008) *Environmental science: A global concern* (11th edition). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide*. (4th edition.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Donald Watson; Obituary. *Times* [London, England] (8 Dec. 2005). 67. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 13 Oct. 2012.
- Festinger, L. (1985). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fox, N., & Ward, K. (2008). Health, ethics, and environment. *Appetite*, 50(2-3), 422-426. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666307003686>
- Fox, N., & Ward, K. J. (2008). You are what you eat? Vegetarianism, health, and identity. *Science & Medicine*, 66(12), 2585-2595. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027795360800097X>
- Freeman, Carrie Packwood, (2012, January). *Stepping Up to the Veggie Plats: Framing Veganism as Living Your Values* from *The Selected Works of Carrie Packwood Freeman*.
- Greenbaum, J. (2012, March). Veganism, identity, and the quest for authenticity. *Food, culture, and society*. 15(1). 129-144. Retrieved from <http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/bloomsbury/15528014/v15n1/s8.pdf?expires=1366229169&id=73824870&titleid=75000119&accname=University+of+Vermont&checksum=34698AD5548FB83C0ADF8307CE5B1AD3>
- Guarian-Sherman, D. (2008). *CAFOs uncovered: The untold costs of confined animal feeding operations*. (p. 2). Cambridge, MA: Union of Concerned Scientists. Retrieved from http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/cafos-uncovered.pdf

- Happy cow, the Healthy Eating Guide*. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.happycow.net/gmaps/searchmap.php>
- Harmon, A. (2012, July 25). Retracting a plug for meatless Mondays. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/26/us/usda-newsletter-retracts-a-meatless-mondays-plug.html?_r=1&
- Heighner, R. S., McDonagh, P., Pratheo, A., Shultz, C. J., & Stanton, J. (2007). Who are organic food consumers? a compilation and review of why people purchase organic food. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 6, 94-110. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1002/cb.210/asset/210_ftp.pdf?v=1&t=hevkn0s&s=e21c9db8daed2336bf03f7ab8ee0ea0883f2f30a
- Henning, B. (2011). Standing in livestock's long shadow: The ethics of eating meat on a small planet. *Ethics and the environment*, 16(2), 63. Retrieved from http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=DA-SORT&inPS=true&prodId=AONE&userGroupName=vol_b92b&tabID=T002&searchId=R1&resultType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=1&contentSet=GALE|A271975593&&docId=GALE|A271975593&docType=GALE&role
 ≡
- Hoffman, S.R., Stallings, S.F., Bessinger, R.C., & Brooks, G.T. (2013). Differences between health and ethical vegetarians: Strengths by conviction, nutrition knowledge, dietary restriction, and duration of adherence. *Appetite*, 65, 139-144. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666313000676>
- Jabs, J., Devine, C., Sobal, J. (1998). *Model of the Process of Adopting Vegetarian Diets: Health Vegetarians and Ethical Vegetarians* in the *Journal of Nutrition Education* 30(4): 196-202.
- Joy, M. (2011). *Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows*. San Francisco, CA: Conari Press.
- Kalof, L., Dietz, T., Stern, P. and Guagnano, G. 1999. *Social Psychological and Structural Influences on Vegetarian Beliefs* in *Rural Sociology* 64(3): 500-511.
- Larson, C., Klock, K., Nrdrehaug Astrom, A. Haugejorden, O., Johansson, G. (2002). *Lifestyle-related Characteristics of Young Low-Meat Consumers and Omnivores in Sweden and Norway* in *Journal of Adolescent Health* 31: 190-198.
- Larsson, C. L., Ronnbund, U., Johansson, G., & Dahlgen, L. (2001). Veganism as a status passage: the process of becoming vegan among youths in Sweden. *Appetite*, 41(1), 61-67. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019566630300045X>
- Macias, T. (2008). Working toward a just, equitable, and local food system: The social impact of community-based agriculture. *Social science quarterly*, 89(5), 1086-1101. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00566.x/pdf>
- Makatouni, A. (2002). What motivates consumers to buy organic food in the uk? results from a qualitative study. *British Food Journal*, 104(4-12), 345-352. doi: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?>
- Martinez, S., Hand, M., Da Pra, M., Pollack, S., Ralston, K., Smith, T., Vogel, S., Clark, S., Lohr, L., Low, S., Newman, C. (2010) *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts and Issues*. *Economic*

- research report. United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/122868/err97_1_.pdf
- Maurer, D. (2002). *Vegetarianism: Movement or moment*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.
- McDonald, B. (2000). Once you know something, you can't not know it: An empirical look at becoming vegan. *Society and Animals*, 8(1), 1. Retrieved from [http://sfx.uvm.edu/UVM?sid=google&aunit=B&aulast=McDonald&atitle="Once You KnowSomething, You Can't Not Know It" An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan&id=doi:10.1163/156853000X00011&title=Society &animals&volume=8&issue=1&date=2000&spage=1&issn=1063-1119](http://sfx.uvm.edu/UVM?sid=google&aunit=B&aulast=McDonald&atitle=)
- McDougall, J., McDougall, M. (2012). *The starch solution*. New York, NY: Rodale, Inc.
- Lodico, M.G., Spaulding, D.T., Voegtle, K. H. (2010, April 7). *Methods in Educational Research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from http://books.google.com/books?id=J-aNet5eEFoC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Newport, F. (2012, July 26). *In U.S., 5% consider themselves vegetarian*. Retrieved from [http://www.gallup.com/poll/156215/Consider-Themselves-Vegetarians.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=syndication&utm_content=morelink&utm_term=USA – Wellbeing](http://www.gallup.com/poll/156215/Consider-Themselves-Vegetarians.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=syndication&utm_content=morelink&utm_term=USA%20-%20Wellbeing)
- Oppenlander, R., (2012). *Comfortably Unaware: what we choose to eat is killing us and our planet*, Beaufort Books, NYC.
- Obituary: Donald Watson. (2005, November 18). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4450376.stm>
- Parker-Pope, T. (2011, January 7). Nutrition advice from *The china study*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/nutrition-advice-from-the-china-study/>
- Robbins, J. (1987). *Diet for a new America*. Tiburon, California: Still Point Publishing.
- Steinfeld, Henning, Pierre Gerber, Tom Wassenaar, Vincent Castel, Mauricio Rosales, Cees de Haan (2006, December). *Livestock's long shadow: Environmental issues and options*, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN.
- Sustainable Legacy (2012). *Walk and bike in Burlington*. Retrieved from City of Burlington, Vermont website: <http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Transportation/Bicycling-and-Walking/Walk---Bike-In-Burlington/>
- Tasic, D. (2005). *Deb Tasic stops multiple sclerosis*. Retrieved from <http://www.drmcDougall.com/stars/050812tasic.html>
- The Vegan Society (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.vegansociety.com/caterers/vcfa/definition.aspx>
- The Vegan Society. (n.d.). *Donald Watson, 1910-2005*. Retrieved from <http://www.vegansociety.com/about/hall-of-fame/donald-watson.aspx>
- University of Vermont celebrates bottled water ban. (2012, December 6). *Brattleboro Reformer*. Retrieved from http://www.reformer.com/newenglandnews/ci_22134713/university-vermont-celebrates-bottled-water-ban

- VRG Blog. (2011, December 5). *How many adults are vegan in the U.S.?*. Retrieved from <http://www.vrg.org/blog/2011/12/05/how-many-adults-are-vegan-in-the-u-s/>
- Wengrof, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAG Publications LTD.
Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=c2b6jQ8g3sAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR15&dq=semi-structured+interview+methodology&ots=pDqOQvCA3F&sig=DP-4QOyT0cb4NWrqrmg6ttoLGIM#v=onepage&q=semi-structured%20interview%20methodology&f=false>
- Zimbardo, P. G., & Leippe, M. R. (1991). *The psychology of attitude change and social influence*. Philadelphia, PE: Temple University Press.

Appendix A: Poster for Recruiting Participants

VEGANS WANTED

**Have you been a vegan for one year or more?
Do you want to share your vegan story?**

Be a part of a Study being conducted at the University of Vermont by sharing your vegan story in an hour-long interview.

The goal of the study is to find out how people become and remain vegan. If interested please contact K. Steele at

kasteele@uvm.edu



Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Vegans wanted for an

interview : Contact

kasteele@uvm.edu

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: The Vegan Journey: An Exploration of Vegan Experiences

Principal Investigator: Kelsey Steele

Faculty Sponsor: Katharine Anderson

Sponsor: University of Vermont, Department of Environmental Studies

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you currently live in Burlington, Vermont and are a self-proclaimed vegan who has been vegan for at least one year. This study is being conducted by a student in the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont.

We encourage you to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss the study with anybody you think can help you make this decision.

Why is This Research Study Being Conducted?

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of becoming and remaining vegan in Burlington, Vermont.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

Approximately 18 people will take part in this study.

What Is Involved In The Study?

You are being asked to take part in an interview. The interview consists of a few questions regarding your experience of becoming and being vegan. The interview session should take about sixty minutes. You will be asked to be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. You may refuse to be audio-recorded or interviewed at anytime during or before the interview.

What Are The Risks Of The Study?

The information being collected will be coded to protect your identity and the potential risk for an accidental breach of confidentiality.

What Are The Benefits of Participating In The Study?

There may be no direct benefit to you for your participation. However, others may benefit by gaining deeper insight into their experience as a vegan.

What Other Options Are There?

The only other option is not to participate.

Are There Any Costs?

There is no cost to you other than your time.

What Is the Compensation?

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Can You Withdraw From This Study?

You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time. If the participation is discontinued, the information received prior to the discontinuation will not be used in the study and the recording will be destroyed.

What About Confidentiality?

All research information will be kept in a confidential form at the Bittersweet building at the University of Vermont. Kelsey Steele. The results of this study may eventually be published will maintain the security of your information but your confidentiality will be maintained. The audio recordings will be destroyed after the completion of the project.

Contact Information

You may contact Kelsey Steele the Investigator in charge of this study, *at (845) 549-6038 for more information about this study.* If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project you should contact Nancy Stalnaker, the Director of the Research Protections Office, at the University of Vermont at 802-656-5040.

Statement of Consent

You have been given and have read or have had read to you a summary of this research study. Should you have any further questions about the research, you may contact the person conducting the study at the address and telephone number given below. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

If you agree to participate in this study, then please state "yes, I agree to participate". This will be considered your verbal consent to take part in this research study.

Name of Principal Investigator: Kelsey Steele

Address: 633 Main Street, Burlington, VT 15405

Telephone Number: (845) 549-6038

Name of Faculty Sponsor: Kit Anderson

Address: 153 S. Prospect St, Burlington, VT 05401

Telephone Number:(802) 656-8015

Appendix C: Spreadsheet Summary of Interviews

| Interview Questions | Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 | Participant 4 | Participant 5 | Participant 6 |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| Date | | | | | | |
| Location | Fletcher Public Library | Fletcher Public Library | Skype | Fletcher Public Library | Magliano's Café | Amy's house |
| Sex | M | M | F | M | F | F |
| Age | 26 | 39 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 35 |
| Occupation | Tattoo artist | Computer technician | Holistic health | Manager at Dobra Tea | Photographer and Arts Teacher | Speech language pathologist |
| Years vegan | 12 | 23 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 11 |
| Self description as vegan | | | Got rid of all clothing and products with animals in them | | | No animal products in food or clothing |
| Vegetarian before vegan | yes | Anything from animals | All animal products | Anything from animals | Anything from animals | Minimize processed food, even vegan processed |
| Vegan influences other aspects | Stay low key; everyone makes own food choices | | Movies, living near farms, Facebook | | Playing with goats as a small child. | Partner was vegan; read about animal cruelty and health implications |
| Current home | Burlington | Burlington | Vermont | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington |
| Previous home | Ontario | Boulder, CO; Northern PA | Northern California | Boston, MA | New York City, Minnesota, Chicago, IL | Boston |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Initial Process | | | | | | |
| Major reason | Animals | Health | Animals | Environment | Health | Health |
| Led you to become vegan | Compassion to animals | Health | Compassion for animals | Health and environment | Health and Compassion for animals | Health |
| Event, person, reading | Online reading, PETA pamphlets | Feeling unhealthy | Facebook, Babe, Earthlings, Forks Over Knives, Food, Inc. | Fiance/girlfriend, living in Boston with other vegans, Peter Singer, Vegan Cookbooks. | Parents, Friend Danielle, Skinny Bitch | Father had heart issues; mother and father faced cancer |
| Steps leading to decision | Read about ties with dairy and eggs and factory farming | Simpler to have rule of no animal products | As 11 year old, watching movie Babe changed her to vegetarian; Earthlings made her vegan | Cut out dairy because it upset stomach. And then found could eat anything at vegan restaurants. Decided to go | Raised vegetarian as a child and friends with goats. Friend Danielle gave her the book Skinny Bitch and was vegan ever since. | Reading about health benefits of plant-based diet. |
| Gradual or sudden | Sudden | Gradual | Sudden | Gradual | Sudden | Sudden |
| Changes in your life as result | Not much; personal choice | Have a system of mindfulness about food; be prepared | Feel true to my values | Feels like being vegan is such a moral obligation now. | Accepts veganism as being the right thing. Stopped being as annoyed by the preachy stereotype. | It is who I am |
| Figure how to adhere to vegan | | Simple | Web sites, conversations with co-workers at Whole Foods, Facebook, current events | Friend taught him how to cook, having vegan friends, cookbooks | Cookbooks | Reading about health benefits of plant-based diet. |
| Other | At camp, realized animal died for this meal | | | | Wanted to avoid being a "preachy" vegan. | |
| Movements | | | | | | |
| Vegan organizations | | At first, thought vegans were hostile; PETA rallies too militant | Facebook contacts | one of the Founders of Boston Vegan society, Boston Vegetarian Festival. | Doing a photography project with Vine Animal Sanctuary in Vermont | No. In Boston, went to some Vegetarian Society events. |
| How participate | Low key | | Keep up with current events | Cook people delicious vegan food. | Doing photography for Vine Animal Sanctuary. | |
| Other movements | Buy local | | | Organic foods | Organic Foods, get grossed out when eating non-organic foods. | Support local and organic. |
| Vegan values affect other movements | Concerned about health, so local/organic | Choice between organic and local difficult | Have become more humanist, concerned about gay rights, environment, compassion for all things | Concerned about environment, so organic. | Organic and vegetarian because of living in an agricultural community. | Try offshoots: no processed food, locally grown, organic food only. Dabbled with raw food. |
| Other | | | | Glad that others are more outspoken, but shyness prevents from being out there more. | Likes getting people to be more veg, but doesn't preach. | |

| Interview Questions | Participant 7 | Participant 8 | Participant 9 | Participant 10 | Participant 11 | Participant 12 |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| Date | | | | | | |
| Location | Fletcher Public Library | | Skype | Fletcher Library | Bailey Howe Library | Starbucks |
| Sex | F | F | F | M | F | F |
| Age | 40 | 54 | 24 | 29 | 32 | 29 |
| Occupation | Artist, worked at the Flynn | UVM Foundation, Fitness trainer | Nurse and nursing student | Receiver at City Market | | Stay at home mom |
| Years vegan | 1.5 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 8.5 |
| Self description as vegan | Just vegan food, but occasionally has non-vegan food when traveling | No animal food. Does wear leather and down. | No animal products | Very strict; follows British Vegan Society definition. | | All vegan foods and no wool or leather |
| Vegetarian before vegan | All animal products except occasionally when traveling | Animal food | All animal products | Animal food | Animal food | Animal Foods |
| Vegan influences other aspects | Did 7 day ayurvedic cleanse | Minimize carbon footprint; drives SUV and wants to offset | Accidentally read <i>The Face on Your Plate</i> | Did not like the taste and smell of dairy. Saw Meet your Meat and got rid of animal products. | | Boyfriend/now husband became vegan |
| Current home | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington |
| Previous home | | New Jersey | California, Massachusetts | | India, Thailand | California |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Initial Process | | | | | | |
| Major reason | Health | Environment | Health | Animals | Health | Other |
| Led you to become vegan | Health | Environment | Animal Emotions | Film at a music festival | Health | Husband |
| Event, person, reading | 7 day ayurvedic cleanse | <i>Why we eat what we eat; No impact man; Raw Food Revolution; the Science of Overeating</i> | The Face on your plate , New Year's Resolution | Alec Baldwin narrating Meet Your Meat and pictures of animal suffering. | Engine 2 Diet, Skinny Bitch, web sites | Husband |
| Steps leading to decision | Cleanse of only beans and rice, strong reaction to sugar and dairy after the cleanse. | Impact on the environment of food choices | Read <i>The Face on your plate</i> while searching for Free Range stuff. Groused out by Steak, vegan new years' resolution. | Once knew about suffering, could not eat animal food. | Interested in social justice and non-violence life style. Felt healthier on vegan diet. | boyfriend became vegan and it was easier to have all vegan household. |
| Gradual or sudden | Sudden | Sudden | Sudden | Gradual | Gradual | Sudden (although initially dropped cheese first b/c thought it would be hardest) |
| Changes in your life as result | Feel less fatigued and stronger, softened personality | It is the way I make a contribution to the world to minimize my resource use. | Felt better in my heart. Stopped getting period cramps. | Zero tolerance for exceptions; integrity in living by the rules. Beauty in minimalism. | Feel better. Living my values of non-violence to all creatures. | Harder to go out with friends. |
| Figure how to adhere to vegan | Talked with other vegans and naturopaths | Reading, especially cookbooks | Read VegNews and looked up recipes online | | Reading, experimenting with cookbook recipes. | |
| Other | | Food is more attractive and delicious on vegan diet. | | | Fun challenge to make vegan versions of food she enjoys | |
| Movements | | | | | | |
| Vegan organizations | No | No | No | Went to a protest on vivisection and did not like it. | Does not like sexualization of PETA; thin line to violence against women | World Veg Feast in CA, Tried to start Veg family meet ups, but was bust |
| How participate | Feels the need to give back by answering questions online | Blogs; Facebook This Lemon Snail | Posts videos on Facebook. Makes suggestions if others' say want to be vegan, advocate for vegetarians at work. | | Register on web sites and get emails. | Meet ups for food |
| Other movements | Supports local and organic | | Interested in Raw food | Supports things that fair to anti-exploration: fair trade, chocolate, coffee; not as strict on these things. | Aware of what is put in food. | Whole foods b/c of husband |
| Vegan values affect other movements | Quality and taste | Vegan movement will grow because of increasing frugality and limited resources. | Raw and vegan for health reasons, sights the China Study | Environmental, health, exploitation of animals make you aware of other food issues. | | |
| Other | | Food industry motivated by profit; if more people are vegan, more vegan products. | | | Likes Alicia Silverstone and uses her as mental support. Started after reading <i>Skinny Bitch</i> . | Hard to find Vegan meet ups that center around families, most are for young couples |

| Interview Questions | Participant 13 | Participant 14 | Participant 15 | Participant 16 | Participant 17 |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| Date | | | | | |
| Location | Fletcher Library | Dobra Tea | House/Preschool | Math Professor and Grad | Davis Center |
| Sex | M | F | M | M | F |
| Age | 36 | 31 | 40 | 35 | 20 |
| Occupation | Barista at Mr.Crepe and Musician | Raw Vegan Chef, Ragge Dancer, Yoga instructor, and Social Worker | Teacher, runs in-home preschool | Math Graduate school teacher at UVM | Anthropology major and food systems minor at UVM |
| Years vegan | 6 | 4 | 16 | 14 | 1.5 |
| Self description as vegan | All vegan foods and tries to avoid animal products other places | Very strict, also raw, excludes caffeine, sugar, gluten, animal products, and alcohol | Strict, Vegan home | Doesn't eat sugar because of bone chard, doesn't care about bugs | Doesn't eat animal products |
| Vegetarian before vegan | yes | No | Yes | yes | yes |
| Vegan influences other aspects | Girlfriend suggested going vegan first | Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, interested in yoga and that led to raw food | Peta Video on Vivisection. | had a roommate who was vegan and dating a girl who was vegan | Interested in Local and organic foods and that influenced decision to become vegan |
| Current home | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington | Burlington |
| Previous home | Austin, Texas and Portland, Oregon | New Hampshire, Maryland | Hanover, New Hampshire | Boston, Massachusetts | Kentucky |
| Other | | Went to a Yoga school in California | Went to college at St. Mikes | | |
| Initial Process | | | | | |
| Major reason | Animals | Health | Animals | Animals | Health |
| Led you to become vegan | Girlfriend | Multiple Sclerosis | Animals | Animals | hormones and antibiotics |
| Event, person, reading | Girlfriend, <i>The Angry Cowboy</i> | Diagnosed with M.S., | Peta event, | high school friend and old girlfriend vegan, met vegans and saw that it was doable | Food, Inc |
| Steps leading to decision | Animal lover, Started as just something to do with girlfriend, read <i>The Angry Cowboy</i> | Went through a year healing process with diet, three week yoga training camp, juice fast after camp for two to three | Cut out meat because of love of animal products, saw video, made house vegan right away, described as smack in the face | Saw it was doable and cut out more and more stuff that had animal products in it | Cut out red meat first, then vegetarian, then vegan over last spring break to see if she could |
| Gradual or sudden | Sudden | Gradual | Sudden | Gradual | Sudden |
| Changes in your life as result | Things are simpler | Feels generally happier, calmer, lost weight, lost some friends | Just became part of who he is, not for health reasons and didn't experience any health benefits, but felt emotionally better. | | Not as lethargic, have a lot more energy |
| Figure how to adhere to vegan | Read the <i>Angry Cowboy</i> and then trial and error with cooking. | experimentation and yoga camp | Straight forward, if it does have animal products, don't use it. Also read a lot of books on the subject. | By watching and talking to other vegetarians/vegans | Used vegan cookbooks and information written at beginning of cookbook. |
| Other | Emphasized simpleness and feeling like this was the natural thing to do | | | | |
| Movements | | | | | |
| Vegan organizations | Vegan potlucks with friends | Vegan Support Group for MeatOut Day | Attended Peta Event, but currently not part of Vegan organization | Vegetarian Super Club in Boston, but mainly went to get the food, a few anti-fur marches, Visited Peace Abbey | None, but involved with local food movement in town |
| How participate | just being vegan, tries to avoid the modern vegan movement and looks to simple vegan times that existed in the past. | Talks at UVM, MeatOut Day at Uni Church, business of being a raw food chef and wellness advisor | Having a vegan family and household | Personal choice mostly, feels like lives in a geographically vegan friendly area, but doesn't feel like he does vegan stuff. | Consumes a vegan diet |
| Other movements | local and organic, but depends on price and sometimes things it's just hype | Raw foods, GMO labeling, and organic foods, started learning about premaclature | Supports organic food, but mainly because of wife, Amy (also interviewed) | Fair trade, recycling, supports socially responsible over organic or local | Local movement |
| Vegan values affect other movements | Sustainability | Raw led to veganism and then veganism led to premaclature and organic foods | None | Responsibility to do no harm, doesn't know where that comes from possibly boy scouts or religious upbringing | Interest in local foods led to decision to become vegan |
| Other | | | Used to be more radical and wanting people to become vegan, but now just what family does | | |

| <i>Interview Questions</i> | <i>Participant 1</i> | <i>Participant 2</i> | <i>Participant 3</i> | <i>Participant 4</i> | <i>Participant 5</i> | <i>Participant 6</i> |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Social Aspects | | | | | | |
| Friends' reactions | Accepting | Starts conversations | Friends are more open and respect her decision | Accepting | Supportive | Respectful |
| Birth family reactions | Family said make your own vegan food | Mother offended he did not eat her food | Supportive; bought vegetarian products | Supportive, at first dad didn't really understand what to make. | Supportive, Dad more supportive than mom. Mom might have felt judge. They were both originally vegetarian | Embrace choices, although don't follow themselves |
| Adult family reactions | Wife is not vegetarian | Son knows that is what his dad does; son can buy his own animal food | Partner was vegan until he felt he needed more protein | Fiance Vegan | Fiance vegan, was vegetarian and originally made fun of her, but now more into it than she | Partner is vegan and they make decisions together. |
| Vegan affect other relationships | Respects others food choices | Do not want to make people feel he is rejecting their food | Used to be advocate, now try to have calm conversations | Doesn't try to bring it up very much, but does have conversations with non-vegans. | Restaurant people are not supportive, but arts people are, does not advertise being vegan. | Try not to judge and make a big deal about it |
| Know other vegans | Many vegan friends in Punk Rock world | No | At Whole Foods in CA, many vegans. None in VT. | Yes, friends from Boston and other people from Dobra tea. | Yes, but not many in VT except for a few GMAD people. Friends from NYC vegan | No |
| Vegan support systems | Knows many vegans | | Facebook | Vegan friends | Danielle, vegan friend | Just family |
| Vegan at work | Uses vegan ink; does not publicize. | Handling meetings with no vegan food; not going to lunch with co-workers and loss of relationships | Recommend plant-based diet, but employer slaughters animals | Had to loosen morals a little bit to work at Dobra tea, but wouldn't work there if it wasn't vegetarian. As a computer person, had trouble finding stuff to eat at corporate meetings. | When working at a restaurant if it wasn't a vegan chef, they would give her a hard time about it. Didn't like vegans at Vegan café because too preachy, Now arts community supportive. | Must plan ahead to have food to eat. Try not to draw attention to it. |
| Children vegan | Daughter eats wife's chicken; plans to take daughter hunting to explore entire process | One son who is not vegan, but eats vegan with Dad. | No children | No Children | No Children | Child is vegan and they talk about not eating cute animals. |
| Other | Parents now vegan for health reasons | Tell people up front that he is vegan | | Cooked vegan thanksgiving for family for four years and made a vegan cookbook for family with girlfriend | Dad went vegan for a year and health numbers dropped | Plan ahead. Bring food to share at non-vegan events. |
| Obstacles | | | | | | |
| Biggest obstacles | Initially, big list of "can't eat". | Socializing | Missed cheese. Socializing and traveling difficult, | Traveling is sometimes difficult | Doesn't want to fit into the preachy vegan stereotype. | Learning what to eat; buying clothing. |
| Overcame obstacles | Learned more about seitan, tempeh | Bring own food so there is something to eat | Plan ahead and bring own food. | Bring vegan Passport from the Vegan Society if going to another country. | Thinks of veganism as just the right thing to do and doesn't advertise being vegan. | Clothing choices when fashionable clothes are leather. Sticks with beliefs. |
| Traveling away from home | | Try not to be offensive to others who eat animals | Difficult going cross country. Plan ahead. | Vegan Passport | Looks up vegan restaurants beforehand | Travel to vegan-friendly places. Says "allergic" to dairy in fast food restaurants. |
| Other | Surprised at how many food have dairy (potato chips) | Big cities easier than rural areas for vegans | | Became better at reading labels in other languages for non-vegan stuff. | Makes a list of where to eat before traveling. | |
| Vegan Everyday | | | | | | |
| Strictness | No animal foods | No animal foods | No animal foods | No animal foods | No Animal Foods | No animal foods |
| Non-vegan consumption | Occasional animal clothing: belt, wallet | May have to make exception when traveling | Got rid of all animal clothing and products. Difficult to read cosmetic labels. | vegan in all aspects. | Vegan in all aspects | Plan ahead or refrain from eating non-vegan food. |
| Food for a day | | Simple things; soy, vegetables, wraps | Raw food, smoothies, burritos, fruit, veggies | Greens and a protein like tofu or seitan. Have favorites now, less adventures than before. | Kale, also stuff that is gluten free because gluten intolerant | Smoothies, leftovers from dinner, cook and eat as a family each night. Eats nuts and raw vegetables and fruits as snacks. |

| Interview Questions | Participant 7 | Participant 8 | Participant 9 | Participant 10 | Participant 11 | Participant 12 |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Social Aspects | | | | | | |
| Friends' reactions | | Respectful; not many people know. | Fairly supportive although sometimes make jokes and she feels sad and lonely sometimes. | | Some are sarcastic and ignorant; others are more respectful. | Fine, although sometimes don't ask out to dinner because assume can't eat anything |
| Birth family reactions | | Mother thinks it is just a phase. Birth family likes food and cooking. | Surprised, but supportive. But they do get offended when they talk about vegan issues. | Thought he was weird, but they thought he was weird anyway. | Were open to idea. Started cooking vegan food for them and it was delicious. Mother wishes she was not so strict. | Supportive, worried originally when pregnant. |
| Adult family reactions | Supportive although not vegan themselves. Kids' ask questions about it. | Husband is omnivore runner who wants protein from meat. | Used to have a vegan boyfriend, says she felt spoiled for that. | | | Supportive since husband vegan. |
| Vegan affect other relationships | | Does not judge and make a big deal about it | Friends supportive, made a vegan option for her at Thanksgiving. | Dating is complicated because socializing is about food. Eating and cooking together can be a problem. Less judgemental now. | Now, more compassionate towards people who have questions and don't share values. | Hard to go out sometimes because people assume can't eat out if not "vegetarian" restaurant |
| Know other vegans | Yes, but now from Burlington. They do provide a support system; swap recipes and give advice. | No | A few, but not in Vermont. | | | In California, but not in VT and not very close to any of the ones she knows |
| Vegan support systems | Vegan friends outside of Burlington | None | Trying to find more support in VT, uses Facebook a lot. | A few girlfriends were vegan. Now, just part of who he is and does not actively seek support. | Web sites and blogs, Facebook | Husband |
| Vegan at work | Co-workers will ask questions. Inspired one male co-worker to eat healthier. | Low key and plan ahead. Difficult when for treats, colleagues want steak dinners in restaurants. | Doesn't like feeding patients non-vegan food. Makes sure to help patients | Not a problem but some co-workers don't like the restrictions on handling food. | In India, made choice to break strict vegan diet to show compassion toward impoverished people offering gift | cooks all vegan foods for kids |
| Children vegan | Four children who are not vegan, but open to trying vegan things. Raised children at an early age vegetarian | One son is vegetarian and made decision on his own after college. | No children | | | 2 yr old vegan, 5 yr old vegetarian since starting kindergarten (originally vegan) |
| Other | Husband was vegetarian for awhile but stopped for convenience. Cooks non-vegan for family. | Private matter. Does not judge others. | Thinking about going into Naturopathy. | Tries to be normal in other areas, although does not look normal. | Learned to bake vegan cakes and shared with family. | Husband more strict, lectures 5 yr old |
| Obstacles | | | | | | |
| Biggest obstacles | Traveling and at first felt like she was eating all of the time. | Traveling, especially in airports, is difficult. | So few vegans and it can be very alienating sometimes. | Finding food and dating relationships. | Finding food when eating out. Explaining what she can eat and cannot eat. | Eating out with friends and finding vegan food in VT |
| Overcome obstacles | Not as picky at remaining vegan when traveling. Tries to look up places to eat before travel and not as picky when traveling. | Packs own food to travel | Trying to get online and connect with more people. | Plan and seek vegan restaurants. Have had some unsatisfying meals of lettuce alone. | | Packs a cliff bar in bag, started |
| Traveling away from home | look up places beforehand and not as strict on vegan diet when traveling; will eat claim chowder and a bit of cheese. | Packs own food to travel | Order side dishes and salad. | Exciting to try new vegan restaurants. Difficult in rural areas and convenience stores. | Easy to be vegan in Thailand and India; more difficult to be vegan in South USA. Lived on baked potatoes when driving from FL | Fast food places like Taco Bell, makes a list of googled veg friendly places, sometimes uses Happy Cow website |
| Other | | | | Was raw for 4 months and may do it again this summer. | | |
| Vegan Everyday | | | | | | |
| Strictness | No animal foods except when traveling. | No animal foods | No animal foods | No animal foods. | No animal foods | No animal foods |
| Non-vegan consumption | when traveling | | None | Balance calorie dense foods with vegetables. | | None |
| Food for a day | Smoothies, stir fries, vegetables, vegan cheese, vegetables, | Bread, peanut butter, hummus, cole slaw, bean burger. | Beans and rice, wraps and raw food | Sandwiches with tempeh, vegetables. Likes chocolate peanut butter chunks. Gets angel food from work. | Experiment with cooking especially baking. | Tofu loaf, lots of vegetables, baked goods like cookies and puddings |

| <i>Interview Questions</i> | Participant 13 | Participant 14 | Participant 15 | Participant 16 | Participant 17 |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Social Aspects | | | | | |
| Friends' reactions | Supportive, some of them were vegan or vegan friendly | Surprised at hostility of friend, lost some friends and gained others, most hostile still friends | Friends usually very open to it, when first became vegan friends said he was overly vociferous about it | Many friends vegetarian already and many very supportive, says that was really important | Friends supportive, now try vegan foods and often joke about it |
| Birth family reactions | Supportive, but they don't understand it. Now share a commonality with wine and olives, used to be cheese when vegetarian | Grandmother always forgets and didn't really understand. Brother tried green smoothies, but usually doesn't ask about it. | fairly supportive, though still bring things when staying over | Parents supportive, Dad thought it would be a fad. Parents now on low meat diet | Mom hesitant, Dad supportive but sometimes ask "when will you eat normally again?" |
| Adult family reactions | Girlfriend also vegan | Had a boyfriend who was vegetarian, but eat more vegan with her | Wife and son vegan | Wife reads labels, was almost vegan for a week | N/A |
| Vegan affect other relationships | Sometimes gets grief from co-workers about being vegan. Doesn't really like going out to eat since working in food industry | Doesn't really go out to restaurants very much, and waits for others to bring it up first. | Not really, most people seem fine with it and they often go to veg friendly restaurants. Now, doesn't try so hard to change people and that helps with relationships | Hard to reject animal foods in places like Mexico, where they don't have much to begin with and they don't really understand excluding other foods | Gotten better at not feeling awkward to ask if something is vegan. Most confrontation was with big guys working at a farm over the summer. |
| Know other vegans | Some vegan friends | Vegan acquaintances, one friend who is a vegan, but condises her not very healthy since she eats mainly pasta and tofu. | Doesn't know any other vegans in the area, has a vegan friend who lives in San Francisco | Knows vegetarians, but not vegans | No, but knows a few vegetarians. Some friends from high school don't know what it is, so they aren't critical of it. |
| Vegan support systems | Vegan friends and vegan friendly friends have potlucks together | Not really, says she is the kind of person who does something no matter what anyone else thinks. | Family | wife helps, but now doesn't really need a support system, doesn't think there is enough to build a community around. | Dad cooks vegan foods with her, friends are supportive and point out vegan info/foods even if they are not vegan. |
| Vegan at work | Chef at Mr.Crepe not tolerant of vegans and doesn't understand. As a musician some instruments are not vegan, but hand-me-downs | Health consultaion with people who are experiencing illness, and a raw chef. Tries not to push people into doing something if they are not ready | Preschool is all vegan because it is in their house, doesn't think people mind | Hard when Math Department orders pizza and can't have any. | At school, really happy when teacher brought in vegan chocolate covered raisins |
| Children vegan | No children | No children | Son who is seven has been vegan since birth and still is. | No children | None |
| Other | Cooks all the food at current home. | Makes most all of own food. | Homeschool Ottis and talk with him about why they are vegan in the simplist terms. He seems to understand and want to continue. | | Enjoys cooking with Dad, doesn't mind cooking meat |
| Obstacles | | | | | |
| Biggest obstacles | Eating out at restaurants and visiting friends who are not vegan | Convinience in finding things to eat and eating out at someone else's house | Presented obstacles for self when trying to change everyone | Traveling and not getting to try local cuisine or offending locals | Going over to a non-vegan's house |
| Overcome obstacles | Find falafels or a baguette somewhere | Usually makes own food and brings it to other's house or go to someone's house who knows how to make raw vegan food. | Seemed to change perspective on veganism with family and age, much more calm and simply about being vegan because it's right for self | Tell them that he doesn't eat animals before they serve. | Hopes that the friend she is with will tell her/his family in advance. |
| Traveling away from home | Got used to having salad and french fries | Goes to central America where there is a lot of fruit around. Often goes to grocery stores or checks out if raw restaurant or event going on. | Look up vegan friendly restaurants, Wife's house they make things vegan, own family bring food | Doesn't have a problem in big cities, smaller towns it is harder. | In Germany, it wasn't that hard with host family to be vegetarian, but doesn't think she could do vegan |
| Other | | | | | |
| Vegan Everyday | | | | | |
| Strictness | No animal foods | Extremely strict, also cuts out sugar, gluten, caffeine, and alcohol | No black and white areas, always vegan | Always vegan | fairly strict |
| Non-vegan consumption | None | None | None | None, though maybe some by accident in Korea | none |
| Food for a day | Simple foods, beans, rice, spices, and vegetables, soups, and mexican food | Smoothies, juices, salads, raw crackers, kale chips, and salads, raw lasagnia on special occasions | Shops in bulk and produce section, likes vegan treats | A lot of beans, sweet potatoes, peanut butter, and pasta, likes vegan junk food | |

| <i>Interview Questions</i> | <i>Participant 1</i> | <i>Participant 2</i> | <i>Participant 3</i> | <i>Participant 4</i> | <i>Participant 5</i> | <i>Participant 6</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| Definition of vegan changed | Never made it a big deal; issues with vegan products non-sustainable | | | | | Wondered if you could be healthy and vegan. Now, mindful of nutrition. |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Being vegan in Burlington | Diffult, few choices | Extremely easy | Harder than California | There are not a lot of vegans, but everyone knows what it is. And there are plenty of vegan things to eat. | Difficult because not many gluten free and vegan options/ restuarants. Wants to move to a place where she can go out and eat more. | Relatively easy |
| Vegan and business | Advertising vegan is negative to omnivores | | Ask people to try, but employer not vegan | If people ask about non-vegan foods, will say I'm vegan, so not the best person to ask. | Now works with vegans at Vine who are very pure hearted and don't look at it as social status | Do not make a big deal of it at work meetings |
| Conversations with omnivores | | Starts meaningful conversations; everyone has things they don't eat | Have changed 4-5 women friends to vegan lifestyle | Have in depth conversations with friends. Felt good about "winning" an argument with a friend, though excepted that he "just likes the taste of meat" | Loves getting people to eat more veg | Do not want people to feel judged. |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

| <i>Interview Questions</i> | <i>Participant 7</i> | <i>Participant 8</i> | <i>Participant 9</i> | <i>Participant 10</i> | <i>Participant 11</i> | <i>Participant 12</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Definition of vegan changed | thought it was strictly reserved for animal rights people. | Went overboard in the beginning with sprouting. No other food for family in refrigerator. | Used to think they were preachy and judgemental. | You can be normal and be vegan. | Moved from just health reasons to non-violence, social justice, compassion. Vegans more than skinny sprout eaters. | didn't know about vegans before husband, just vegetarian |
| Other | Used to think that vegans had to have lots of time on their hands. | | | Reduced challenges by experiencing them over the years and now knows how to handle. | Denial fries: when traveling in south and nothing to eat, may eat fries that could be fried in animal fat. | |
| | | | Used to be a hard-core omnivore who made fun of vegans. | | | Was vegetarian for a few years before with a former boyfriend |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Being vegan in Burlington | Burlington makes it easier, harder in the winter because there aren't as my high quality produce. | More fresh food in VT than NJ | Easy to find food, but more difficult to find other vegans because it's a dairy state. | Not too hard. | Easy, good sources of vegan food. | Hard to find cheap bulk foods like beans and nutritional yeast |
| Vegan and business | People at work are generally curious and ask questions. Feels like she is a good model for unhealthy co-workers. | Very quiet about it at new job. | Wants to get into vegan nutrition. Helps vegetarian patients now. | | | Worked at two different subways, one had vegan patty other didn't not |
| Conversations with omnivores | Thinks it leads people to evaluate their own food choices. | Will answer questions, but does not think she needs to advocate for veganism. | Omnivorous friends sometimes joke about it. A lot of people ask questions. One girl asked for help on becoming a vegan. | Can be respectful; talks about animal exploitation. Avoids confrontation and does not bring up unless asked. | Vegan is more than food, but about living without violence. More than animal welfare; slaughter house workers' welfare | Pretty laid back about veganism, more does it because of husband |

| <i>Interview Questions</i> | <i>Participant 13</i> | <i>Participant 14</i> | <i>Participant 15</i> | <i>Participant 16</i> | <i>Participant 17</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| Definition of vegan changed | Now thinks of it as sustainable whereas before it was only a moral issue | Thought raw food and veganism was weird, now thinks it helps her mind to become clearer. | Not as political with veganism, now just a personal choice | Didn't realize that vegan could mean you excluded so many things like sugar, originally just thought things you could see like meat and eggs. | Thinks of it more of a lifestyle now as opposed to just a diet |
| Other | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | |
| Being vegan in Burlington | Hates it because everyone is seemingly progressive even though big into meat and cheese | People have much more knowledge about raw food compared to New Hampshire | No vegan restaurants, but lots of places to go like Asian restaurants and StoneSoup, laughs at City Market for trying to not to seem like too much of a veg place | Lots of vegan options | Really Really easy, esp compared to Kentucky |
| Vegan and business | Wants to get out of the food-industry because doesn't like serving non-vegan food and having intolerant managers. | Tries to work with patients by meeting them where they are in respect to how they are feeling about food. | Parents bring vegan snacks to the preschool, things it's good that they get to try it. Talks with kids about why he is vegan, but never teaches about veganism | Easier than Gallop, New Mexico where they don't know what vegan is. | |
| Conversations with omnivores | When talking to omnivores who are not so open and they ask, make it about the taste preference verses the political position even though has that too. | Lets them bring it up and knows that if they are defensive, it's usually something going on with the omnivore. | Talks about if it is brought up, but now doesn't really care what others do. | Only talk about it if food comes up in conversation | Really appreciates it when someone takes a little effort to bring vegan food. |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Appendix D: Transcribed Interviews

Participant 1 (Male, Age: 26, Years Vegan: 12) 74

Participant 2 (Male, Age: 39, Years Vegan: 23) 79

Participant 3 (Female, Age: 28, Years Vegan: 2)..... 84

Participant 4 (Male, Age: 30, Years Vegan: 8) 89

Participant 5 (Female, Age: 32, Years Vegan: 7)..... 98

Participant 6 (Female, Age: 35, Years Vegan: 11)..... 104

Participant 7 (Female, Age: 40, Years Vegan: 1.5)..... 110

Participant 1 (Male, Age: 26, Years Vegan: 12)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 1: I am 26 and a tattoo artist. I became vegan when I was 14 or 15. Before that, I was vegetarian for a couple of years.

Kelsey: Could you talk about how you first became vegetarian?

Participant 1: A lot of vegans know the day or date that they started. As far as becoming vegetarian, at one day I was at camp. I always knew burgers were made from cows and it just hit me that an animal died to become this and I don't want to contribute to that so I became vegetarian. Then, the more I looked into things, I realized if I am doing this to not be contributing to the death of animals, the dairy industry contributes to the veal industry. Dairy products are not even vegetarian. Eggs contribute to chicken industry. I realized that being vegan or vegetarian are kind of the same think if your motives are to not contribute to the slaughter industry. So, I became vegan.

Kelsey: Do you remember how you came across that information?

Participant 1: It would have been a combination of research online and then tables with PETA pamphlets at music shows. Now, I don't like PETA.

Kelsey: Do you think it happened because of what you saw at music shows?

Participant 1: I started to become a vegetarian before I liked punk and hard core shows. I had already made the choice to become vegetarian before I went to the shows. I realized the ties between egg and dairy after going to the shows.

Kelsey: When you became vegan, you just did it overnight rather than making a gradual transition.

Participant 1: I did it pretty much all at once. When I decided to become vegan, I still had eggs and dairy in my refrigerator and I didn't want to just throw those things away. The next time I went grocery shopping, I did not buy eggs or dairy and went all vegan.

Kelsey: What were the obstacles when you first went vegan?

Participant 1: When I first went vegan, it feels like you are creating a big list of "I can no longer eat these things." But, I had also not been exposed to tempeh or seitan. I just didn't know about many of the companies that exist that make vegan products. At first, there was a period of all these things I could not have anymore because you weren't looking into it, you wouldn't think that some products had dairy in them. For example, some crackers and potato chips have dairy derivatives in them. You think, what could be in a salt and vinegar potato chip? There is salt, vinegar, potatoes and none of this is dairy. But they are making potato chips for the shelf and they somehow put whey in it. I would say that my diet is much more varied now. Now that I have become accustomed of what to look for, I have branched out and know better what to purchase.

Kelsey: How do you usually eat on a day-to-day basis?

Participant 1: I go through stretches of having a really good diet, taking care of proteins and starches and all fresh. Then, I get lazy and then have stretches of crap, such as Gardein chicken. At the moment, I am putting much more effort into homemade protein, veggies. It comes and goes. I go through stretches of eating a lot of Chinese food.

Kelsey: How did your family and friends react when you first went vegan?

Participant 1: When I became vegan, many of my friends were part of the punk rock community. Even if they weren't vegan, they got it. Even if my friends ate meat, they had no problems to visiting and eating a tofu stir fry or what not. In my family, when I first started at 14, my dad who was doing most of the cooking said this is what I am making for dinner tonight. If you don't want that, you can make your own food. I had a job then and some money and I would make my own protein for the meal. I would grab the veggies before he put butter on them.

Kelsey: How was it living in the house with non-vegetarians?

Participant 1: Well, I didn't want to be hassled for my decisions and I wasn't going to hassle them for theirs. I can't expect them to just jump ship. Ironically enough, both my parents have adapted a vegan diet just now for health reasons. Dad is hoping to undo the two heart attacks he had.

Kelsey: Do you talk to them about veganism?

Participant 1: We talk recipes, but I know the motivations are not rooted in animal rights but they are only looking at the health aspects. They are both hoping to live past the age of 60.

Kelsey: How do you think that being a vegan has affected your relationship with people now?

Participant 1: Not a whole lot. I have never made a huge deal about it. Everyone knows what is going on at this point because of Facebook and social media. If people want to make a difference, it is just a search away. My wife is not even a vegetarian. If I am cooking a vegan dinner, she is happy to eat it. But, every now at then, my wife may want some chicken. She always makes sure to buy local and free range. She knows if she wants to buy it, she has to cook it.

Kelsey: It is not an issue now?

Participant 1: No. I never made it an issue.

Kelsey: Do you support other food movements, such as local foods or organic foods?

Participant 1: Yes, for the most part. I try to do most of my veggies at the farmers' market.

Kelsey: Do you think there is some sort of correlation between that and veganism?

Participant 1: I don't think they are the same. Whether you are vegan or vegetarian, there are benefits to local food or organic. The benefits are there no matter what, especially environmentally. It really doesn't change those benefits for me.

Kelsey: Do you know any other vegans and are they a support system for you?

Participant 1: I know a lot of vegans. Living in Burlington as a kid, I often got together with other people. There was always a pot luck going on at someone's house. Within the punk and rock community, if there was a pot luck going on, it was always a vegan pot luck, even if the host was not vegan. All the food was edible by everyone. Even the omnivores were adept at cooking vegan. It was nice to go to parties and know even the cake was vegan.

Kelsey: Did you always live in Burlington?

Participant 1: I grew up in Ontario and then my family moved to Vermont while I was in high school.

Kelsey: Do you think it is easier to be vegan in Burlington?

Participant 1: It is a lot harder. There are a select few restaurants that have vegan options. When they do, there are only a few vegan selections. Considering how rural Burlington is, it is decently okay. My wife's family is from Kentucky and we were just there. They have a Whole Foods and I have never seen such a variety of prepared vegan foods. Every restaurant had multiple vegan items. They were good vegan items, more than vegetable stir fry over rice.

The Brewery here in Burlington has a simple Portobello mushroom on a bun. One of the restaurants in Kentucky had jerked seitan sandwiches, tofu parmesan, and a whole pile of stuff. One place had a tofu Ruben. Many of the coffee shops had vegan wraps. It was all over the place. Other than the big chain restaurants such as Chili's, (which I don't even know if the veggie burgers are actually vegan) the locally owned restaurants had multiple vegan items and some had separate vegan menus you could ask for. Here, many of the Chinese places have tofu on the menu.

When I go out to dinner with my wife, there are very few places to choose from. When we go to one of them, there is just the same one item on the menu. It is funny; a small place in Kentucky made it difficult for me to make a decision because there were so many choices. I ended up eating one thing in the restaurant and getting another thing to go because I could not make a decision. They also had a dessert menu that had multiple vegan dessert items which you can't do around here. City Market occasionally has a few vegan cookies. Vermont is surprisingly not easy to be a vegan. It is getting a little easier; Hannaford and Shaw's are now starting to have a few vegan items, but they are not the cheapest places to buy food.

For example, there is a company called Gardein. Healthy Living has all of them, but they want \$6 per pack. Hannaford started to carry these products for \$3 per pack. I used to work at Healthy Living. The stuff there is more expensive than the big chains because they can't order the big volume. As part of their price scheme, Healthy Living is trying to keep poor people out. So, much as I like the idea of supporting local, they are catering to a high end market so people on food stamps don't go there and their shoppers appreciate that. I don't want to support that and only go there for a few items that I can't buy anywhere else. I'll go to Hannaford to get Gardein stuff, but I don't support price gauging.

Kelsey: Does being a vegan play into your career as a tattoo artist?

Participant 1: I make sure that all the ink I use as a tattoo artist is vegan. As a non-vegan, I would use the same ink because it is the best ink out there. The companies don't make a big deal that they are vegan and I don't either. There is a stigma that vegan ink is a bad ink. In my experience, the ink I use is the best out there and it just happens to be vegan.

Kelsey: Do people come to your tattoo shop because it is vegan?

Participant 1: We have had a few people come as a result of them being vegan. If they call and ask we will tell them. There is a little note about it on our web site, but we don't make a very big deal about it. Non-vegans who aren't concerned about it might think they are not getting a good product.

My friend had a cupcake cart a few years ago called Saber Tooth. She moved to Connecticut and she had all vegan products. She had a small sign that said "Vegan options available" and if anyone asked, she would say everything is vegan. Non-vegans would buy her products and realize they tasted like really good cupcakes. They realized there wasn't a big flavor difference.

Kelsey: Do you think it would turn people off if they realized products are vegan?

Participant 1: Yes, omnivores are very un-adventuresome with their diets. If they have a choice between a regular cupcake they are used to versus a vegan cupcake, there is that big unknown. They will go with what they know. My friend wouldn't have made as much. Even in Burlington, vegans are not the majority. There are not many restaurants that cater to the severe minority of vegans. You can't do anything that will alienate omnivores. There was a vegan café a few years ago in Burlington and they made a big deal about it. Every vegetarian and vegan in Burlington was there every night. But, after a while, that business tapered off and they did not have the omnivore business. Their stuff was great and everyone would have liked it if they tried it, but the omnivores did not even try it.

Kelsey: How did you find that out?

Participant 1: If I showed up at a party with vegan chocolate cupcakes for people who were not my friends – such as my wife's friends or my parents' friends – if I told people these were vegan cupcakes, at the end of the party I would be going home with almost as many cupcakes as I brought. If I just put the cupcakes on the table and did not tell anyone they were vegan, they would all be gone. As soon as you tell people, "this chicken sandwich is tofu" omnivores will just go spend their \$5 on an actual chicken sandwich.

Kelsey: How has your view of being vegan changed over time?

Participant 1: I never made a big deal about it. I am just doing it for me. It is easier to have a healthy diet as a vegan; you can have just as healthy of a diet as an omnivore. Would everyone adapting a vegan diet be a good thing? No. Environmentally, it would be a disaster. There are things like that, such as belts. I have destroyed so many synthetic belts and they fall apart quickly. As I have gotten onerous, I carry a heavy object for self-defense off my belt. Plastic belts get stretched, frayed. Cloth belts fray and get worn out. It is the same thing with wallets. I have come to realize that the production of these synthetic objects that get thrown away because they fall apart is not good. If I bought a good quality used leather wallet or a good quality used leather belt, they would be the last I need to buy. I have had the wallet I have for a year and a half. I have had the same belt for two years. There are compromises. There are enough used leather items out there that I don't need to buy new ones. The synthetic products are so un-durable and they get thrown away sooner. So, environmentally, that is a disaster. It is moderation. I run into conflicts. I don't like the idea of killing animals, but that is in exchange of filling landfills and polluting the air, which is harming animals also.

I have known other people who deal with these same issues and it gets so complicated that they eventually give up and stop being vegan. My view at this point is diet-wise, as long as I have a choice to not eat meat, I am not going to. My daughter, if I make dinner, she eats vegan. If my wife makes chicken, she eats that.

Kelsey: Have you talked to your daughter about that?

Participant 1: She is not even 1-1/2 years old. As she becomes older and if she wants to eat meat, I am going to take her hunting and she can go through the whole process of finding, killing, cleaning meat and finding use for different parts such as skin. If I ever make the decision to eat meat again, it will be only what I hunt. I don't like to support factory farming and I will never support that. Even free range is not good; free range should be going out hunting. If you are smart with hunting, the deer dies instantly. Even on free range factory farms, the cows know what is going on in the line. The last few minutes of those animals' lives are absolutely horrifying.

I think if you are going to eat meat, you should go through that whole process at least once. If you can't stomach that process, you don't deserve the reward of that process. My wife used to go hunting with her dad, so she knows what goes into getting that meat to the table. She never eats red meat and eats chicken maybe once or twice a month. She knows the process.

Kelsey: Would you talk to your daughter, when she is older, about it?

Participant 1: Yes. I feel it will be an organic conversation. She will know there is something up, especially when the kids at school eat very different things than what she eats at home. I anticipate she will just bring it up. I bet when she says "seitan" at school, everyone will think she is talking about the devil. [Laughs]

Kelsey: Do you have anything else to add about veganism?

Participant 1: The big thing is just to know why you are doing it. You really have to do it for yourself and your own reasons. I know so many people who have gotten caught up with trying to be more vegan than the next guy. Two or three years later, you see them at McDonald's. You can get too pulled into the political end of it. You may want to become vegan for the environment, but then you realize everything else is plastic and that is not good for the environment, either.

You might be vegan for the health, but deep fried tofu or the sauces with all the sugar is not all that healthy. What is left? People get so disillusioned that they walk away. I always knew why I was doing it; I was not trying to be cooler than the next guy. I sometimes get lazy and don't eat so healthfully. The same thing would happen if I was eating meat. I imagine the effects would not be as bad on a vegan diet. As long as I have options of killing an animal or not, I am going to pick the not. I do it for myself to be compassionate to animals. I have stayed pretty low key about it and not gotten too worked up. I know few people who have been vegan who have been vegan for as long as I have, but I have known many who have been vegan for one to three years. They stop and then come back to it. If they come back to it with a low key attitude, they tend to stay vegan. If they come back with a super militant attitude, it doesn't last.

Participant 2 (Male, Age: 39, Years Vegan: 23)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 2: I am employed as a computer technician. I trained as an artist. I have been vegan for years and years, I don't know how many.

Kelsey: Where you vegetarian before you were vegan?

Participant 2: Yes. I became vegetarian when I was 16. I am 39 now. That was difficult to do because I was eating what people were feeding me. I didn't know anyone who was vegetarian, so I stopped being vegetarian for a while. I started fading meat out, and then got rid of all of it. Then, I stopped eating dairy. This happened over decades.

Kelsey: What led you to become vegetarian?

Participant 2: Food can be really complicated. Growing up, there was a lot of bad food around. This was food that made me sick and made me feel bad. Not being in control was a big issue. I felt unhealthy and there were no rules. I was eating garbage and needed some system of control so I selected one.

Kelsey: How did you family respond when you first became vegan/vegetarian?

Participant 2: My family was confused and didn't really understand what it meant. My mother does a lot of cooking and a meal was meat. She didn't really understand me rejecting her food and she was offended. That was a problem. Once I got out of the house, I had control over what I bought and cooked, so that was easier. Having close friends and family who are not vegan has been challenging because I don't want them to feel I am rejecting their food.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 2: The best system I have right now is to tell people up front and not to have a chip on my shoulder about it. When I was younger, I had attitude about it. I gave people attitude about food that I did not like and the food that they made that I did not want to eat. I discovered that is not the best way to deal with it. Encouraging people when they do things right is better. I have a system to deal with it, being prepared and having something in my pocket to eat so I am not going to starve. If I am going to a diner party and there is cream sauce or something, I need a system.

Kelsey: How did you make the transition from vegetarian to vegan?

Participant 2: Over time, I was not feeling good. I was overweight and feeling sick. I started eliminating foods that were making me sick and I felt better. I got rid of dairy first. Then, I started getting rid of honey and stuff like that when I wanted a system that made sense.

Kelsey: Why did you decide to cut out dairy?

Participant 2: I don't think dairy is food for human health. Human milk for human babies is real food. Cow's milk for humans is kind of strange for me. I am not offended by it; it does not bother me ethically. It just seems like some kind of strange thing that people have adapted and accepted.

Kelsey: Did you come by that by feeling sick?

Participant 2: Yes. I don't think anyone really digests dairy very well. Maybe some people better than others. Everyone has some limit and it is probably lower than most people expect.

Kelsey: How did you feel when you first became vegan?

Participant 2: I did feel better when I cut out dairy. I don't know if it was psychological or because I finally had a set of rules that made sense. The exercise of looking at my food choices was helpful – analyzing all the food that I took into my body and being mindful of all the things I put in my body. Maybe that was enough. It definitely made me feel lighter and relieve much of the burden of thought and anxiety of what to eat. I still eat junk food, but it is not as troubling as when you eat McDonald's junk food. It certainly makes food choices simpler. It seems it would make it more complicated, but it does not. There are things tainted and off the list. The things on the list are definitely better. I could eat French fries all day long, but I don't do that.

Kelsey: What was the hardest part when you first decided to become vegan?

Participant 2: Finding food that I liked that was quick food. When you are out at Burger King or someplace fun with friends, you are the guy that has to change the plan to do something different. I didn't have systems in place. Right now, I live a few blocks from City Market, so I have a system. If I was 100 miles from home, I would have a bag with food and I would know what was going on to have something eat. Now, I know how much I need. There is that whole mindfulness about eating thing. When you don't have to think about what to bring with you, it is much easier to accept, not analyze, and just eat what is around and that can be really bad. It is much easier to get lazy.

Kelsey: Did your obstacles as a vegan change over time?

Participant 2: Yes. Now I know where I am going to get my food when I am alone. Obstacles changed to social obstacles. For example, at dinner parties or at work there might not be anything I can eat. At work meeting where there is food, I often cannot eat the food provided. I have to turn down someone's generous offering of a meal and that is the socially appropriate thing to do to just accept it. I know vegetarians and vegans who have an exception rule. A friend travels abroad to very remote locations and she has had to eat things that she would never eat normally because it would be socially unacceptable to decline. I have not had to deal with that. It is much easier because someone in Burlington is offended that I eat vegan that is their problem. But in some situations, it is not their problem, it is my problem.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about traveling outside of Burlington?

Participant 2: Yes. It is extremely easy to be vegan in Burlington. I used to live in Boulder, Colorado and it is easy to be vegan there, too. I used to live in a rural area in northern Pennsylvania and the only stores were large Wal-Mart's. There was a small health store with very stale food and that was challenging. I was in Philadelphia recently. Big cities are easiest and rural areas are not easy. People in rural areas do not know what it means. For example, the fryers are probably used to fry chicken so I don't like to eat French fries fried in that oil. That is a rule that I have held to and that means you can't eat at most restaurants if you do that.

We had a discussion recently about pans. Pans have been cleaned. If it is cast iron, it has been cured and it has oils from animals on it and that will get in the food. I try to avoid that. But, if someone cleans there pans, I'm not going to tell them that it is not clean enough for me.

Traveling is tricky because of the shades and nuance. Getting it right and eating vegetables is not that hard.

Kelsey: How does being a vegan affect your job?

Participant 2: It doesn't really affect my job because I have control over what I eat. However, everyone at work goes out for lunch and I bring my lunch every day. That is a problem because a lot of relationships form over those lunches and I am not a part of that. You don't have conversations that you might have over lunch. I think people kind of respect my position. It starts conversations that are maybe more worthwhile than if I did not eat this way. Someone who knows you are vegan and is not offended, then you are going to talk about food in an interesting way that is not just, "what burger are you going to get?" It is a complicated conversation which is good and I think people respect it.

Kelsey: Before you were a vegan, what preconceived notions did you have about what a vegan was?

Participant 2: Before I was a vegan, it seemed like a radical political thing. I don't think it is, but I have friends who can object and tell people they are disgusted by some types of food. I encountered that quite a bit, especially when I was younger and that was my image of it. I met people who were less militant and I realized I had a choice; I did not have to be like that. I had to learn systems for communicating carefully. The things that I had problems with were not real and just imagined. People have personalities and can be ornery about anything. Some people can be obsessive and hostile and that was my image of vegans for a long time.

Kelsey: Are you part of any groups or have you participated in any events?

Participant 2: No, I am not part of any vegan groups. I have participated in some events. In high school, decades ago, I was in animal rights groups and I went on protests. I was anti-fur and anti-leather. I did not continue doing that. I had some bad experiences with people being political about food ethics. I didn't want to associate with that crowd. When I was 16, I was on a fur march in NYC. We bused ourselves up from Philadelphia. People were spray painting fur coats and grabbing fur coats. It was so horrifying that I did not want to be around it any more. There was a family wearing fur coats with little kids and they got yelled at and harassed and I did not want to be part of that group. It was bad.

Kelsey: Do you now view veganism as an individual thing rather than a political thing?

Participant 2: I do. I don't think it is political – although everything is political. There are some things that are not vegan that I would take just as strong a position. It is a line and the clarity is helpful in making a political statement. It is not necessary to take a political position. It is individual, but it does not need to be more than that. I like to exercise and be vegan, but doing those things does not make any more of a statement than choosing to eat local food, for example. They are a similar level of important as other things, such as food politics.

It is part of a set of other things. Overusing and minimizing energy consumption is a part of all of this.

Kelsey: Are you involved in any other movements? Local food? Organic?

Participant 2: I know farmers and have family and friends who are farmers. I lived on a farm. I have seen all parts of farming. I support this only on the periphery, such as I support my cousin. I find local and organic food is expensive and ideal. Given a choice between organic and local, it is difficult. The dilemma is that you are using fuel and sending your money to Mexico, which could be fine but there is logic to keeping it local. I don't know how to quantify it to make a decision. This is another thing, maybe a vegan fetish thing. If I am buying not organic food, there are pesticides going on the food that is making bugs die. Does that make my vegetable not vegan? I don't know the answer of that. My tomatoes were probably grown with manure from animals, so it is not clear.

Kelsey: Can you talk about how your ideas of being vegan have changed over time?

Participant 2: Most recently, I am thinking about traveling to places where I might encounter people who are not vegan and will not understand and be offended. Humans are animals. Am I hurting humans by rejecting their food and causing problems with their social ties? If I was in a situation where I would hurt someone because I do not eat dairy or meat, I would have a dilemma. Would I continue and let it happen and know the rules are the rules? Or would I hold myself to maybe a higher standard and know that if some animal was going to be harmed, it would be better not to harm a human animal? That is a gray area; it might be an exception.

I don't know where I would go where this would be a problem. Maybe it would happen in a third world county, but probably not in Europe. How hard would this be to communicate? Would I ask, "Does this have fish sauce in it?" Some places, that would work, in other places it could be offensive. If someone thought I was digging for some poison in the food, it would be a problem.

Kelsey: Could you talk about your social interactions here in the US?

Participant 2: The conversation comes up all the time about what you eat. For example, I had a conversation at work where we discussed pork and bacon. Everyone loves bacon. I talked about how I haven't had bacon in years. Everyone pitied me that I hadn't eaten bacon and they were talking about all the great new bacon things there are to eat. It seemed a little crazy to some people, a little cuckoo. Other people felt like I was criticizing them, even though I wasn't. It is a fine line when someone asks why you are not eating the food they eat. You are rejecting something that they choose to do. You do have to explain yourself and if the explanation is not adequate in their eyes, you can offend them.

I have a friend who says "Just reasons" and no one questions that explanation. That is a clever trick and a bit dishonest. Some people are impressed that I am able to do it and it seems like this giant, impossible thing to them. I have never felt that. I know some people think it is impressive but I don't think like that. For example, people wonder, "How do you not eat cheese?" At the office, there might be five pizzas and they wonder how I can avoid eating it. It seems like self-loathing or if you are the vegan victim. This happens especially with people who don't know you and are just casual acquaintances.

Kelsey: How do you respond to people's questions about veganism?

Participant 2: I try to say that everyone chooses what they eat. My choices just tend to be more specific. Most people accept that. I tend to back away a lot. I used to get dicey with people. You can say to someone who eats meat, "Are there things that you don't eat?" They will say, "Yes, I don't eat dogs. I don't eat cats." It is sort of arbitrary and it is not clear why. I shy away from this because it is a bit confrontational. I don't know if it is a good strategy, but it works.

Kelsey: Do you bring this up or only talk about it if it comes up naturally?

Participant 2: I only talk about it if it comes up naturally. I avoid it if I can. There is a joke, "How do you know if someone is vegan? They will tell you." That is true; many times that happens. If something is very important to them, they will talk about it. If it is new to someone, they will bring it up because they are thinking about it. I don't really think about it a lot. It only does come up when food comes up. If someone is talking about how they like bacon, I will stay out of the conversation until asked. It would not be helpful for me to add anything.

Kelsey: What do you think about the vegan movement in Burlington?

Participant 2: I don't know much about it. I know I can go to Stone Soup or City Market and there is stuff labeled vegan. I can go to Chinese stores and there is vegan food. Some food has the vegan seal and I will

almost buy anything with that seal on it, even if I don't like it. The world has changed a lot in the last ten years. Most small, progressive towns will have vegan stuff. It is pretty easy to do here, compared to other places. I intend to choose places like this.

Kelsey: Do you have a vegan support system?

Participant 2: No, I don't have any vegan friends.

Kelsey: Is there a way that you keep up with vegan things?

Participant 2: No. I like the simplicity of veganism, so I don't really need new stories or any of that stuff. The rule of no animal stuff is just a little rule that I follow and it is simple.

Kelsey: What kind of food do you eat on a daily basis?

Participant 2: I cut out many things such as soy and complicated packaged foods for a while. I have backed off of that. I have breads for breakfast and I have coffee with almond milk. I eat a lot of soy. I cook a lot of Asian food, greens with tofu, rice, pastas. I eat the same lunch every day: peanut butter sandwiches or seitan and vegetables in wraps for lunch. I probably eat the same thing over and over again, more than most people. Though, people eat hamburgers every day, so maybe not.

Kelsey: Do you think your family's opinion of being vegan has changed over time?

Participant 2: Well, I have a 14 year old son. He started out confused – we are not in a vegan friendly area so it was different. Now, he would be shocked if he saw his dad eating meat now. For him, he changed to it being expected that his father eats this way. Other people, such as my parents, think it is a health diet. They see food choices as a clinical thing to be healthy and that has not changed. Others saw it as a whim and nothing serious, just a choice I make.

My son is not vegan. He knows my opinions about it. I will buy him food he wants. If he wants turkey for lunch, I will give him money and he can buy it. He almost never makes that choice. If he is out without me, he will get pizza. Now, he eats the food that I eat and that makes him comfortable.

Kelsey: Is it easy to have a mixed family?

Participant 2: My girlfriend eats fish and dairy. When we are together, she does not need to do that, other than milk in her coffee. There are limitations for her, too. People, who do not have restrictions, there can be a little bit of conflict sometimes. Problems come up when people feel criticized. I was disgusted by this salt that has ants in it. It is flavored with ants. That is pretty strange, but it is traditional in some places. I was talking to my cousins about it because I was kind of grossed out. Later in the day, I swatted a mosquito that was biting me and the conversation came up about killing a mosquito and the conflict with that. I try not to kill them, but it was bothering me. It only comes up in weird things, like people eating ant salt.

Kelsey: If someone was interested in being vegan, what would you say about it?

Participant 2: I would suggest that they do it.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you want to add?

Participant 2: No, but you had good questions.

Participant 3 (Female, Age: 28, Years Vegan: 2)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 3: I am 28. I am from Vermont originally, but I lived in LA for 8 years while at school. I worked in the film industry in LA for a few years but then got interested in holistic health, supplements, eating organic. I worked at Whole Foods for 2 years in Northern California and moved back to Vermont 1-1/2 years ago to work with a natural -pathic physician. I am in the holistic health field. I pursue eating well and preventive medicine and treating the whole person. That is why I think a vegan diet is so good.

I have been vegan for two years; I have been vegetarian since I was 11. Growing up in Vermont, I was surrounded by dairy farms. My family has always eaten organic and really healthfully, but my dad hunted. I started questioning, from the age of 10, what was happening to the baby cows who lived across the street in the dairy farm, being separated from their mother. I started learning what veal was.

Putting all this together as a 10 year old was difficult and I did not really grasp it until I saw the movie *Babe*. I saw the pig and it created an emotional connection to the animals and to see they do have a family and the trauma to the animals. There was the duck being separated from its mom, the pig being slaughtered in the slaughterhouse. All those part of the movie made me realize "that's it" and it really connected everything for me. I pretty much refused to eat any meat served in the house. I was eating Morningstar, which was one of the only companies around in the '90s making stuff like that. I got my family to eat that. I still ate cheese.

Kelsey: How did your family respond to your being a vegetarian?

Participant 3: They were supportive. It did not change my parents' opinion of it, but they definitely were open to supporting my decisions. They bought veggie versions of sausage and burgers. It was an easy transition. I went to boarding school at the age of 14 and I was able to make my own choices at the dining hall. The food aspect of it has not been too challenging for me.

Kelsey: How did you become vegan?

Participant 3: It was a long time coming. I have always been an animal activist and tried to refrain from wearing a lot of leather. Working at Whole Food really opened my eyes because there were so many vegans there. It is such an amazing supermarket in its own right. There are some negative things about it. The positive was that there are so many vegan alternatives. I learned how to eat right and healthfully from other people and their suggestions. Having the support there was such a big reason why I became vegan and stuck with being vegan. Also, my partner was also vegan with me. We did the journey together. I think it is helpful for someone wanting to become vegan to have a friend or a support system to help them along the journey. There are many different avenues, such as different cheese, cake, alternative meats that are better than others. The support is what helps people stay vegan. I think people are really scared at first until they find out how easy it can be. At Whole Foods, it was an awesome place to have all those options. It is harder to be vegan in a rural place like Vermont because there aren't that many options. Having support and knowing about larger companies is helpful.

Kelsey: What did you do at Whole Foods?

Participant 3: I bought all the alternative body care products and supplements as a buyer. I did a lot of customer service, but very specific because I bought for the store. I worked with representatives from many companies who were trying to sell to Whole Foods. I also spoke with many customers about different types of supplements and why some are better than others.

Kelsey: Did you become vegan gradually or all of a sudden?

Participant 3: The one thing that made me become vegan was the documentary *Earthlings*. I know everyone says that, but it completely changes your perspective. It has every single category: entertainment, meat, circus, fishing, health benefits. It has five different categories of how we use and abuse animals. Seeing all that put together in one documentary really affected me. I watched the whole thing, balling my eyes out. At the end, I said, "That's it. I'm done." The day after I saw it, I went to Whole Foods, got a vegan lunch, came home, piled all my leather into one pile and sold it on eBay. I took all the money and gave it to support animals. I didn't even want to wear leather. When I wear leather, it seems to others that I support doing that. I did a whole haul of my life and got rid of all my cosmetics and product with animal products.

Kelsey: How did you come to watch the movie *Earthlings*?

It was probably something on Facebook that was shared. I was friends with others who shared those valued.

Kelsey: Was it easy to become vegan?

Participant 3: I missed cheese. That was the one hard thing, but it the one part of the industry that I dislike the most. I think dairy is the worst in terms of what they do to the animals. Dairy was kind of easy, out of sight, out of mind. As I started doing the diet, and I was in such a special community where it was so plentiful with all the options. The hardest part in the beginning was going out to restaurants with friends. It was hard to find vegan options and not be stuck with salad all the time. In California, and it is getting better here, there are more options.

Kelsey: How did you overcome the obstacle of going out with friends?

Participant 3: The one thing it affects, socially, is that when you make such a large decision that reflects more than just what you are eating, it is an emotional and philosophical decision. I try not to be judgmental. It is hard to be surrounded by people who are eating something that you don't agree with. It is not that you dislike them, but you want to educate them. I found myself trying to shut myself up because I found myself being a poster board for veganism. In the beginning, I may have talked about it too much. It gets people thinking about what they are doing and many times they get defensive because food is just such an emotional and cultural thing. For people who love me and respect me, it was fine. A lot of my friends now are more open and understanding and we go to places that have options for both of us. I don't see it as any different from someone who has gluten intolerance or anything else. It is socially challenging. When I go to a party, I try to bring a food choice that I can eat and share for other people to enjoy. I like to share and let people see how great the food can taste without animal products. It is more so being proactive about it, that it is my choice.

Kelsey: Have you changed the way you talk about it after two years?

Participant 3: I am more confident in my decision. I don't get angry inside when I see someone eating a hamburger. It is more a solidarity I have with my own decision. I have come to the conclusion, where in the beginning I was really angry, now I think that people have to get it on their own time. Most people don't become vegan overnight. Having known about it for so long and then just being vegetarian, I sometimes feel shame on me. Everyone will have their own time in life when they feel they may be able to handle it. I know it can be a difficult decision to give up something that is so prominent in everyday life. Now, approaching it more positively and not feeling so angry about it, it is better. I talk more to people about what they do and the other options rather than talking about the darker side of it.

Kelsey: How have your values and interests changed from before you are vegan to now?

Participant 3: I feel that vegan is just the beginning of the whole journey. You open it up and you become more aware of other social issues. You can get closed off and not know what is going on outside your own little bubble. It is easy to be stuck in your daily life. When you go out on a limb and make a decision like this, you have respect for gay rights, hunger, and other things. I have respect for many other things in the sense they are speaking up about what they are passionate about. My husband uses the term “humanization” which is giving human qualities to all aspects to life. Whether it is a dog, a cat, a cow, we are all the same in a sense. We just share a different skin. It is having an appreciation for all walks of life. That is a huge change since becoming vegan because I want to help with all kinds of things.

Kelsey: Do you support other food or lifestyle movements?

Participant 3: You can be extremely unhealthy and be vegan. There are many foods that are not good for you. I want to be a reflection of the vegan movement and look good and look healthy. Getting away from processed vegan foods is good. I am now on day 17 of a raw foods diet. I am doing a detoxification because some of those foods weigh you down. Eating a lot of fruits and vegetables is important. I recommend to anyone becoming vegan to get a Vitamix machine and a juicer to make green smoothies. That encourages people to eat more healthfully.

I start each morning with greens and grapefruit. I avoid coffee and stimulants because you can live off the nutrients in greens and fruits. I am now a proponent of raw foods, but I don't think it is a lasting diet choice for me, but I think I feel really good doing it. Eating more healthfully is a lifestyle choice for being vegan.

Kelsey: How does your work in the holistic health area affect your veganism?

Participant 3: Much of the time, people think meat is good for you. Some people are locovores, they eat local meat, especially where we live. Some people here in Vermont think eating organ meat and raw dairy is healthful. Unfortunately, I have seen many articles on this that people following this diet have extremely high cholesterol and they are getting heart attacks. If you have seen videos like: *Food, Inc.*, *Forks over Knives*, *Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead*, you can see how healthy this plant-based diet can be. It is challenging and being the ambassador for being vegan. I can see look at me and how healthy I am. I don't know what they feel inside, but to each their own. Some people thrive off of eating more protein and are allergic to tofu. I don't think veganism will work for everyone, especially in places where culturally, they need meat to survive. Think of Eskimos. It is probably hard for them to survive on nuts and tofu.

It is about speaking up and being an ambassador. We have had people who were convinced meat and dairy were good for them. They switch to vegan diets and within six months, their autoimmune disorders went away and they are feeling amazing. I tell people to try it for themselves and see how they feel. I don't take it personally.

Kelsey: Does the place where you work advocate for a plant-based diet?

Participant 3: No. They actually slaughter their own animals. It is a different place. I did not deal with it well at first. I can't change their ideas. As a vegan, you realize you can't change the world. In the beginning, I tried to change the world, but I got food tired. I still want to advocate it, but when people are not interested, you can't change them. To each their own. I just have to be okay with the decisions I have made. People are going to do what they are going to do.

Kelsey: What kind of support system do you have?

Participant 3: Living here, I joined PETA.com. It is a great web site and there are vegan groups. All the vegan groups for our state have closed down. No one goes to meetings. I am extremely frustrated because I feel like I need that support. It is hard when you don't have any people to share ideas, nourishing food. Vegan is such a different life style, so when you get together with like-minded people it feels so good. You can be yourself and share your thoughts. I miss the support of people from Whole Foods. Right now, the best support is on Facebook. Last summer, I went to Farm Sanctuary for two nights and met people from all over the US. I try to do things for animals locally. I think your Facebook is really important.

Kelsey: How difficult is it for you to find vegan food in Vermont?

Participant 3: In my town, we have a co-op with some vegan options. There are fruits and vegetable everywhere. To get processed food, I have to drive an hour into Burlington, but you shouldn't be eating much of that stuff anyway. We do have vegan cheese. Supporting local is a huge thing. Living in the northeast, there is not much produce in the winter. I love spring, summer and fall when there are local veggies. I recommend people to get a cookbook and experiment. I make vegan curry and vegan sushi. It is easy to make a vegan burrito with tempeh.

Kelsey: How did you learn how to cook vegan food?

Participant 3: I am still not that great of a cook. I improvise. It is easy being raw because I am just eating raw foods. There is a web site called theppk.com and it is an awesome resource for savory meals. Terry Hope Romero is an awesome cook. I have raw foods cookbook. There are amazing recipes online for free.

Kelsey: How has your definition of being a vegan changed over time?

Participant 3: I don't know. Some people go into being vegan, but don't get rid of the other aspects of animal cruelty. Being vegan means refraining from all animal products, including honey. I don't eat honey. I carefully read labels. I'm actually starting a blog on YouTube talking about more vegan things. I'm editing it now; even if a product is labeled cruelty free, there are many stores, like Body Shop or Urban Decay that don't test on animals; they include animal fat in their products. They include animal by-products in their cosmetics. I try to support companies that are 100% animal free. My definition has not changed, it is being extremely aware. It was overwhelming at first. For me, it was all or nothing and I got rid of it all at once.

Kelsey: When you travel, how do you deal with being a vegan?

Participant 3: Traveling is really difficult. I drove across country from California to Vermont and we had a huge moving truck and me following in a car. We couldn't stop in small parking lots. It was desperado. I won't go to McDonald's for fries or anything like that. It was difficult. My advice is "be prepared" and pack snacks. I have been obsessed with raw chips and take them, with apples, oranges, bars. There isn't a lot on the road, but places are getting better in restaurants. Truck stops don't have much. There are little things, but it is not a gourmet meal.

Kelsey: How do you keep up on the latest vegan news?

Participant 3: I have a subscription to [unclear] which is awesome. I read web sites. Lately, there is a huge controversy about palm oil. Deforestation for growing palm oil is killing off orangutans. Much vegan cheese has palm oil in it. It is not really vegan if you are destroying habitat. Learning about current events is helpful. I don't know that you can be 100% vegan; you are still creating a system. There is manure used for fertilizer. No matter how you try, you are still using animal by-products. I learn a lot by keeping track of current events. I've been looking at small companies that I think are vegan but they are actually owned

by huge companies who test on animals and use animal products. Facebook is good. I talk to friends. I do as much as I can. There is a point where how much more do I have to do? Facebook is one of the worst things for putting myself through that emotional turmoil every day. It makes me really sad. I'm trying to live my own life and be solid in my own choice. I want to be happy in my decisions, when I was first pissed when I learned all of this.

Kelsey: Do you have anything else you want to add about being vegan?

Participant 3: About 99% of people are on the standard American diet. There are people, like my partner, who recently stopped being vegan because he is allergic to nuts. He tried to add protein into his diet because he was losing too much weight. He has a certain health condition. However, most people do beautifully on a vegan diet. We could feed the world if everyone was vegan. We could get off of pharmaceutical drugs. Being all over healthy is an amazing choice and I encourage anyone to do it. I am happy and the animals are happy, too.

It is difficult not to have some products in the house. Try to get humanely raised products, but killing is still killing. I buy milk from a small farm with six cows for my partner. There are tons of terrible dairy farms in my area. It is good. You do what you can to help support the person you are with. If you really love someone, you will love them anyway. Going to Christmas dinners is difficult. It was non vegan. But for Christmas Eve, I cooked an entire vegan dinner and people loved it. For Christmas, I brought what was left over. It surprised people that vegan food tastes good. Being in those situations makes you a salesman for being vegan. I have changed four or five women to vegan with my post and our conversations. It makes me feel really good.

Participant 4 (Male, Age: 30, Years Vegan: 8)

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 4: I have been in Burlington for four years and prior to that I lived in Boston for ten years after college. Prior to that I had always lived in Massachusetts. I had always in the computer field in computer and technology but the last four or five years I have been serving tea. I went vegan with my now fiancé about 8 years ago, 2005 or something like that. We were founding members of the Boston Vegan Societies, there was also the Boston Vegetarian Society which has been around forever, but this was a young group, that didn't do very much, but it was great and it still is. I haven't been involved with it for a while.

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about how you became vegan?

Participant 4: I've always been lactose and tolerant so milk was never an issue. It was this slow transition. In college I was "it doesn't matter that I'm lactose and tolerant, I'm just going to eat everything." Then when I was a junior/senior in college I was like "maybe I should pay attention to what I'm eating." I stopped having milk, that was straightforward. I started noticing other little patterns. There was mad cow disease around then, I think it was 2001. And I was "I'm not going to eat red meat." That's easier to not eat it, so I'm not going to have steak or burgers anymore. So I cut that out of my diet. At this time I didn't know anyone who was vegan and I don't think I had even heard of the term. It wasn't a thought that I'd have. And if you'd told me that I would be vegetarian I would have been like "Oh that's not possible."

Then I realized that I was getting stomachs at certain times and I was starting to piece together when that was. I was like "oh it's whenever I eat pork." That I seemed to get these stomachs and I thought "oh maybe I'm allergic to it." And I've never had any problems with that since, so that was gone. I wasn't going for a specific diet or anything, this was just the thing that I eat. There was still dairy and eggs, plenty of things with milk in them and fish and chicken, birds I guess. Then I was living in Boston, that was over a two year span, and then that's when I started encountering vegans and vegan restaurants, there weren't a lot, I think was only two. I don't know if that there are still that many, but more than Vermont. I would go there and it was so cool because I would have to look at the menu and find something without cheese in it and without all of the other things in it which was hard because even if it was vegetarian it had cheese in it. I would go to these vegan restaurants and it was like "Holy crap, I can eat everything on this menu!" It was so exciting. I started going there all the time and was like "this vegan thing is really interesting." And I started reading about it. There wasn't any specific event. I think some people have a specific event that changes their whole outlook. I've since had events, but they happened after the fact.

I was living with my girlfriend and she and I were both eating pretty similarly. And I was reading all of this stuff and I was like, let's give this a try. There was one month where I was completely vegetarian just by accident. But then I eat something again. So we were like "let's give this a try!" Our main impedious at that point was environmental concerns and it had very little to do with health. We felt like we had been eating very healthy to begin with.

But then we started reading about the environmental impact of factory farming and just of the inefficiency of growing things to feed the cows it seemed silly. So we thought okay. And we lived next to whole foods. I had never seen a place that had so many organic vegetables and foods that actually looked really good. It was in stages. The hardest thing for us to give up was sushi because we both felt like we were really appreciative of the art of that and we were regulars at several sushi restaurants. They knew us by name and we didn't want to offend them, but we didn't want to offend them so we just stopped going to those places which is kind of sad. And we found vegan sushi other places; it's not that hard to come

across. We decided okay we are going to be vegan and we've never intentionally stopped being vegan since. It was kind of an experiment; let's see what happens. Are we going to get sick?

I had heard from many people who had been vegan, "oh I stopped being vegan because I got sick all the time." We figured that we'd do it as an experiment and it worked really well. And then not too long afterwards I read *The way we eat* by Peter Singer and Michael Pollan. That convinced me that this was the best choice, environmentally, and ethically and health was my third consideration. And it's interesting in Burlington vegetarians and vegans that I've met were much more concerned about health than any of the other factors. I don't judge that good or bad, it's just sort of interesting. When I lived in Boston, all of the Boston vegans, who we would go out to eat with or cook potlucks or things, it felt like an activist things. We were trying to save animals and also save the environment and have delicious food too!

I actually forgot one factor that went into this. When we started getting a lot of cookbooks and when I started cooking a lot for myself, which didn't really happen after college. I didn't really know how to cook until after college. Most of the cookbooks I started getting were Asian cookbooks and then vegan cookbooks. There was a huge explosion of vegan cookbooks around that time, in early 2000s time period. Sara Kramer wrote a lot of my first cookbooks: How it all began, Garden of Vegan, and dolce vegan: those there were my first three vegan cookbooks.

And then the *Post Punk Kitchen* by Isa Chandra Moskowitz and Terry Hope Romero. Their *Vegan with a Vengeance* and *Veganomicon*. There was also the Boston Vegetarian Food Festival which is all vegan and that was a big event and that was fun to go to and learn about new things like vegan cheeses and stuff. So the cookbooks and the festival were a big part of our transition. I think because they made it comfortable, you know it wasn't strange. There were all of these other people and they were at least interested in veganism, if not vegan themselves. And the recipes we were cooking were really good, so why would we cook something else?

Kelsey: Do you think being in Boston helped?

Participant 4: I think so, yes. Had I not moved to Boston, had I not moved right next to a Whole Foods or had a vegan Chinese restaurant right nearby, I might have taken a different path.

Kelsey: Was your girlfriend also vegetarian before she was vegan?

Participant 4: Yeah, once she moved in with me which was in 2004 I think, we were pretty much eating the same things. She was eating cheese and I wasn't because it physically bothered me and it didn't bother her. That was really hard for her to give up cheese. I know that that's hard for other people as well and I've read that cheese has addictive properties as well but that was really hard for her.

And having a partner to try it at the same time was really important too and then the Boston Vegetarian Society. It was founded by this guy who moved from California and he was vegan, and not just vegan but he was an activist. He was really outspoken. When I first went vegan I was talking to everyone and being really annoying. I can't believe that I was so annoying and people didn't ostracize me completely. I really toned it down and then I was like I'm just going to live as an example and not try to convert other people because who knows. It seems like there are people who it doesn't work for, physically speaking. But he was quit the opposite. He was really gung ho about putting up flyers everywhere and booths and meetings and vegan workshops. And I am really happy that people like him exist because I don't like doing that because I'm just kind of shy. We had a mutual friend, someone who connected us and we started going to meetings and that's how it started.

Kelsey: What did it feel like physically and emotionally going vegan and what were the obstacles?

Participant 4: The first thing, pretty quickly I noticed that I felt better and I was getting sick less. I don't like to say that, except for friends because I do get sick. I don't know if the feeling that I got was because I was going vegan or because of something else. My life was changing as well, a lot of things were changing. It's hard to pinpoint to it specifically, but I felt better. I certainly didn't feel worse anyway. I didn't feel like I was craving anything or missing anything.

Maybe two weeks after I started being vegan I had a physical with a new doctor. And she said maybe you should go see a nutritionist. And I was skeptical but I figured why not? It's not like she's going to tell me not to be vegan or anything. I went to this nutritionist and she measured my body mass index and asked me a bunch of questions and I got a blood test. The end result was it that she said "I'm a struggling vegetarian; you're way healthier than I am." It made me really interested in the science of it, so I started looking into what the body needs. What do we need to live and what protein sources are there? Where do we get iron? What can't you get? It turns out that as far as we can tell B12 comes from bacteria and from the soil and it usually gets to people through eating meat. But you can get it in a lot of ways. Supplements are an easy way and there are a lot of fortified soymilks and things out there, so that's really easy. But everything else, I sometimes joke to people Kale and almonds, that's all I eat cause that's everything right there.

Generally it's been better than it was before health wise. There have definitely been challenges. There's always those times that you've been eating something that you didn't realize. I remember one time when I was working at a corporate office. And there are vegetarian sandwiches usually although I would find the vegetables in them and be like "Wow! This is what people think vegetables are." It was like overcooked eggplant and zucchini and it's like "no wonder nobody wants to eat this." It was like wraps, so one time the secretary was like there's a vegetarian wrap down here, and I was "oh cool, free food!" So I got it and I looked and it was like vegetables and a wrap, it looked pretty simple, so I started eating it. And then I was like "this tastes strange." And I unrolled it and there was turkey rolled into the wrap really thin, so I didn't see it at first. I was like "whhaaa..." and things like that.

Traveling is sometimes difficult. I think it's much less difficult than some people might think. It probably depends on where you travel. Some of the hardest places to eat are various places in the United States. Like in Virginia, certainly not Richmond Virginia, where some of my really good vegan friends live. It's a super progressive city. There are actually seven different vegan places there. But other places, some places in the Mid West. I've also traveled to several other places since working at the tea house. I've traveled to England and Taiwan, and China. At one point my fiancé and I went to France and the Czech Republic and Ireland all in the same trip and we were vegan, so we were like "is this going to be okay?" So we got the vegan passport.

It's about Passport size, it's from the Vegan Society which is from England. England I was not worried about a cause I was like "this is where vegan came from!" But you can buy it, it's cheap for like 30 pages or something. And each page says I'm vegan and that means that I don't eat da, da, da. I do it this, this, and this. Please prepare me a meal. And each page has it in a different language. And there is a flag at the top in case you don't know the language. It was so useful. You just hold it up to people and they're like "oohh!" Interestingly enough the hardest place in the world where I had to be vegan was downtown paris. Because it is super tourist food, which is like baguette sandwiches with cheese. I speak French, but it was hard to communicate that to people, my French isn't that good. But there is actually a vegan restaurant right outside of Paris and there is a movement there. I think it is just very underground or it was six years ago.

People told us that we would have trouble in the Czech Republic, but no problem. There is a vegan restaurant in Prague or at least vegetarian. We didn't have any trouble there and we didn't speak the language at all. Vegan Passport came in handy. Taiwan and China were remarkably easy. First of all, Dairy doesn't have much of a hold on the country, I think, and being vegetarian is more of a normal thing. Buddhism is a normal thing and means different things. Some Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan. I was told that some people will be vegan one day a week or something. You say in Chinese "I eat vegetables" and they were like "oh okay." It's not that weird. I mean there are places that you can't go like if it's a dumpling place that only serves meat dumplings. And there are plenty of those, but most normal cafés and restaurants, they have all of these vegetables. And they just make it for you. Tofu is super easy to find so it's no problem.

I got pretty good at reading labels on packages in Chinese. Pretty good meaning it took me like ten minutes, but I could decipher the ones that I wouldn't eat. I used this translating program on my phone to translate characters. It was usually pretty obvious if it had meat in it. Very frequently I was surprised to find out "oh this doesn't have anything in it, or oh this does." It's like completely random. There were a few times that I eat something. I think I eat fish once in China. I was like "mehh" and we showed them the Vegan Passport again and they were like "whoohooohhh!"

I'm not going to crucify myself. I think that has been one of the most challenging parts and it hasn't even been that challenging. Friends and family have been very supportive. Early on my girlfriend and I made a cookbook, we learned that recipes aren't copy righted. The recipe form itself is copyrighted, like you can't just photocopy or transcribe directly and make another cookbook. Not that we were selling this or anything. But the ingredients and how to mix things is not copy writable. We copied our favorite recipes and a few that we had modified and made it into a book. We printed it and bounded it and gave it as a book to our families. So that they knew what to cook for us mainly, but it had a lot of tips and things and health things that we had learned. So that was pretty fun too.

Kelsey: How did your family react to when you first went vegan and how do they react now?

Participant 4: When we first went vegan, my family was fine with it. They were "oh that's really cool." I think my dad had a little bit of like "figuring out what I would and wouldn't eat." He just wouldn't remember things at times. Like he would make this all vegan dish and then cover it in cheese or something. And he would say well there's no meat, dairy, or eggs. And then I'd be like "What's that on top?" and then he'd be like "oh I just sprinkled some cheese on it." And my girlfriend's family had a harder time I think. They were from Ohio originally. They had this meat and potatoes kind of swear meal focus. They had trouble understanding that she could be healthy and survive not eating those things. That was one of the reasons for the cookbook and long conversations with people. Over time I think it has become kind of normal. And they were nice about it too; It was like this is what they are doing, they seem not to die. Okay then maybe we'll try to make vegan food for them. They aren't necessarily good at it, better now but yeah pretty supportive I suppose. I've heard of a lot worse families that are like "disown you!" or "you can't eat anything at our table."

A cool thing that we did which I don't know if it factors into this, but four years in a row... There was one Thanksgiving, the first one after we went vegan or what, but we kind of requested "could we help out with Thanksgiving and make a bunch of vegan dishes too?" Cause we were really into cooking and had a lot of cookbooks at that point. We sort of made a large part of the Thanksgiving meal for both my family and her family. We had gotten together and had it together. And it was very successful and everyone really loved it. So the next year and the next three or four years, we did the entire Thanksgiving and there was no turkey or anything. It was entirely vegan. It was this big feast that we had spent three days cooking. It was

really cool, we just kind of got tired of it I guess. I'm not really sure why we stopped. We left Massachusetts and that made it harder, everyone would have to travel to Vermont. I think it was also an exhausting proposition.

So that also helped. We figured out that we aren't going to convince them by just talking to them. So we just have to feed them, so that has been our activism. I've had a lot of debates with some of my close friends about it. And one of my close friends said to me after a particularly long debate. He was agreeing with all the same points, and so I was like "why aren't you vegan?" and he was like "I guess I'm just lazy," And I was "okay, I can't argue with that." It made me feel good kind of because I felt like I had won that argument. Mostly yeah, they respect my eating and I respect their reasons for not being vegan. And most people are fine with that.

Kelsey: Do you have any obstacles reacting to people in restaurants or out in the public or anything?

Participant 4: No, as I've mentioned I'm kind of shy, so I don't like to make a big scene, even in foreign countries. Sometimes in China, I would hand over the vegan passport and they would call all of the waiters over and cooks and things. They would be like "ahh, ahha I see..." So that was kind of embarrassing, but they were sometimes, no we can't do this, but usually they could. Interactions with waiters and stuff I've gotten used to it now. When I go to a new place or even a regular place and you sort of double check that that's soy milk or that there's no cheese or picking through something and being like "I think that pad thai has egg in it." And sometimes you don't say anything or sometimes you ask for them to take it back. No ones yelled at me or anything.

Kelsey: How does being vegan affect your career if at all?

Participant 4: Well before when I was working at a place not with food stuff it was not a problem. At the tea house, when I first started it was a little bit difficult because I think I had to relax some of my morals in order to do it because there is cheese and milk that we serve. It's otherwise completely vegetarian. I don't know if I could handle serving meat or something to people, I think that would just be too much. I'm sort of like gotten over serving milk and cheese to people. I don't like to do it. I certainly try to make sure people know that there are other options. I've made a big push, I'm the manager now so I have some control over things, some new vegan foods onto the menu. I'd say most of our food is vegan now, which wasn't the case before. I know we have a tub of Earth Balance, I don't think that was on the menu before and I knew it's there. There are a lot that's there. We had butter tea cookies and then we got vegan tea cookies as well. We have all of these chocolates. We used to have chocolates, and most of them were milk chocolates and now all of our chocolates are vegan.

It wasn't entirely me, I was just pushing that agenda and other people made decisions based on it. We have vegan cheesecake now from Vermont Cheese less, which I think is a new company based down in the middle of Vermont somewhere, really good cheesecake. We used to have regular cheesecake and a lot of people miss it. And a lot of people ask me about things. We had ice cream, we don't right now, but we had vegan ice cream in the summer. Somebody asked me oh like what do you think of this, or this a cake that's not vegan and they'll ask me "what do you think? Is this good?" and I'll say "well, I'm the wrong person to ask because I'm vegan. I can tell you what things I like." I think it was awkward in the beginning but now I'm very used to it.

Kelsey: How do people respond to that?

Participant 4: People are usually fine or it doesn't seem so odd. I think Vermont is an interesting place. There are certainly a lot of options around and we don't have trouble eating. The coop is awesome and

healthy living is awesome for buying things but there are no vegan restaurants in the state and there is only maybe three vegetarian restaurants. Of which Dobra is one. It's not even really a restaurant and there really aren't very many. And that was surprising to me because it seemed to me that people are very health conscious and very alternative thinking here, just like they were in Boston. But the focus in Vermont seems to be much more on local stuff verses, not that there wasn't that movement in Boston also, but there was also a place for vegan as well. Here it's just like local is the word that people want to use and gluten free and just very health focused. It's been my experience so far that there aren't a lot of vegans, but everybody knows what it is. That's like a nice step, you don't have to explain it in a restaurant which in many places you do.

Kelsey: Do you get a lot of vegan customers at Dobra Tea?

Participant 4: Well, I don't know. I sometimes ask if someone seems to be ordering all vegan stuff but usually I don't like to bother people with a question like that. People usually don't bring that forward. They'll order stuff maybe if they are vegan, but they probably wouldn't say anything. I guess I say it.

Kelsey: Do non-vegans order vegans things anyway?

Participant 4: Yeah, I'm pretty certain of that because people will order one vegan thing and then one non-vegan thing. They'll get the vegan cheesecake, but they'll get their tea with cow milk or something. I think that people really enjoy it. Again I think that it's sort of this mission of mine. I'd like to just put all of this really good vegan food out there. Like in Boston I could go out for vegan pancakes or vegan waffles anytime. Or go to all of these different types of cuisine and they were vegan places; bagels, lots of things that people don't think about. At the Co-op they have two kind of bagels, the Myers bagels which are not vegan and then...I forget who makes the other ones but they are vegan, they are like regular bagels. But there are things like that but I like to have people eat it and enjoy it.

Kelsey: Do you support any other movements like the local food movement or organic foods?

Participant 4: Organic definitely! In fact Peter Singer's book...it wasn't a book that specifically told you to do anything but it was a study of the chain of food. He followed three families and found out what they normally eat and bought. He then followed it from where the food came from and all of the effects on the environment and the animals. And that convinced me that buying organic food is really important even though it's not a perfect certification. It's expensive for farmers to do and sometimes at Farmers' markets I'll buy stuff from non-organic farmers if I'm pretty sure that they are organic, they just don't have certification, which many in Vermont are. I haven't specifically been like "I must be local."

One of the other things that that book taught me was that local wasn't always better for the environment. Cause I think the origin of the local movement was based on the environmental impact and shipping large amounts of food over long distances. But on of the things that was talked about in that books and in a few other places that I've read was that it is sometimes more efficient. I think one example was tomatoes, like if you grow tomatoes in England all year round, then you are going to have to do it indoors like in a hot house. And use a lot of tricks, doesn't have to be chemicals, but you have to be skilled to make a good product, a product to sell in stores. And it uses a lot of energy to keep them indoors and stuff verses if you grow like a thousand tomatoes in Chili on an organic farm and then but them on a barge, a huge but very slow moving boat and then ship them to Boston and then drive them here. There are people who have done these calculations and that is often more per tomato, there is less energy that's been put into that even though it was grown really far away. You were able to pack a lot into the shipping verses having to produce a lot locally.

I feel like it's a question for me that is important but worth looking at from all sides. One of the awesome things about the co-op is that all year round there are local vegetables and fruit. So usually I'm buying local foods anyway.

Kelsey: When you came here to Vermont, did you come because of the vegan culture?

Participant 4: There were a lot of reasons. We just felt like it would be a friendly place for us to live. That was one of the reasons that we chose it and having vegan friendly options was definitely something because we knew that there were. I assumed at the time that there was more that I hadn't discovered yet. It turns out that as far as I can tell that was not the case. One of the awesome companies that we met was Liz and Dan Holts who run Vegan Liz Lovely Cookies in Waitsfield. I don't even know if they are vegan anymore, but they were and their company is vegan. They're cookies are vegan. They're really good. They're really powerful.

It's cool, Uncommon Grounds has them, I think a year ago they started carrying those. That was really exciting to me. I love being able to go to some random place like a coffee shop and be able to get a good pastry at some time.

Kelsey: How did you come to work at Dobra?

Participant 4: Basically I was really into tea for many years. I had discovered Dobra on a trip to Montreal once for various things. I was like wow! This is amazing! I had never seen some place devoted to tea so much, so we started going there regularly even though we lived in Boston. Me and my friends would go; it would be like a vacation. It was really to go visit Burlington, but it was mainly to visit the tea house. Then when we decided to move up here I didn't have a job at the time and the owner, I sort of knew him from having gone here a lot, and he offered me a job, so it was like okay this is great. I didn't think I would be working there as long as I have.

Kelsey: Do you think that working at Dobra changed the way that you looked at being vegan?

Participant 4: Yeah, it probably did. Well meeting other vegans is always interesting to me because everyone always has a different take on it I think. I knew a bunch in Boston, but the first vegans I knew in Vermont were people who worked at the tea house. The owner had been vegan, the previous owner, but then he stopped because he thought that it was ruining his health. He was having a lot of health problems. I try not to judge that, I don't know maybe that was the case. I don't know how much it would have changed my outlook. Certainly as I mentioned of serving things, that has definitely changed.

There was one time somebody had ordered this green tea milkshake thing and she had ordered that with soymilk and I forgot, I was just so busy with things. And I remembered just as she was taking a sip of it and I was like "nooo!" and I'm sure she never came back. But that was soul crushing to me because I don't know if I had been in that position and I'm sure I have been in that position before. It would be so insulting and stuff so it is a little stressful to work in a place that is not vegan. But at least it's in a place that is mostly.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about some an experience or experiences that have changed your outlook on veganism during the time that you have been vegan?

Participant 4: One cool thing, like tea actually, they are both things that have done this; it's kind of a think to seek out, it's like if I arrive at a place it's not like "oh where should I go...? It's more like "where are the vegan places!?" or "tea places or the closest health food stores or something?" It provides a bit of focus I guess for traveling. So you just kind of discover things I guess.

Kelsey: Do you think there is a thing with tea and ethical eating?

Participant 4: It's an interesting thing... I'm trying to remember other tea houses that I've been to and if any of them have served meat or anything. I don't think any of them really did, so there must be something. Though it might just be as simple as like strong flavors, to appreciate tea you usually want to have things that are light. There is probably more to it than that, I haven't really given it much thought. There is the Buddhist aspect of it. The Buddhism and tea grew up together in Asia and spread in the same routes. A lot of Buddhism suggests vegetarian food. I don't consider myself Buddhist as a religion but I definitely have a lot of respect for the Buddhist philosophy and I like Buddhist meditation.

One of the precepts is not killing. The precepts are not like commandments. They are not things you have to do, but kind of suggestions based on other people's experience for how to be happy I guess to be free of suffering or how to not be stressed out or sick, just all of the bad things in life. So there were these set of suggestions that if you are a monk, they are rules. If you go to a monastery and become a monk then there are rules that you have to follow, but I think that's pretty normal. And that's one of them.

But as far as layman are concerned, it's just sort of suggestion. For me it's like oh yeah this is clear. I don't think I had this originally but I developed a very strong moral feeling of being vegan now that I didn't have to begin with. Like when I first started out as a challenge, I could have gone back to eating meat at some point. But now I don't see how I could do it because of the moral aspect. Before it was just an opinion but now it's like how can I support the taking of life.

Kelsey: How do you think you came to that moral understanding?

Participant 4: I'm not sure actually, again there wasn't one specific event. I think it was just overtime... I grew up and I grew up with dogs, I have a dog now. It's starting to think about what people think about as a pet versus what's food. Things I hadn't considered before, like everyone else. Which is that these things you raise and take care of and these things you kill and eat. My mother grew up on a farm and she had a really interesting perspective because she cared for a lot of her animals, that they cared for and raised. But then they would grow up and they would have to kill them. I could see how that could affect one, but that worked for her. I think she felt badly about it but she realized at least that it was necessary for them. Some people have asked me lots of questions about "Do you want everyone in the world to be vegan? What happens to the cows?" Personally there are a lot of theoretical questions that you can ask, but for me it's like this is my activism, this is my stance, I'm not going to support this and I'm going to do the best that I can. The vegan society's original mission says basically to be vegan as best as you can because it's really impossible and to not harm anything. So I just want to do the best that I can. So if there is a family in like the mountains of Venezuela living off of their animals and their crops and stuff, then yeah, they eat meat. I can't judge them, I don't want them to be vegan, that's not for them. But I live in an industrialized society where factory farming is still very prevalent. And vegan food, even in the bad places, it's quit easy to come by. And having that alternative, I feel like it would be morally amiss not to take it.

Kelsey: What do you normally eat on a day to day basis?

Participant 4: I eat normal meals now, we used to eat all kinds of random things but we've stabilized our cooking now. We're not as adventurous now, it's more like we like these things; they're simpler and easier and sometimes we'll still make exciting dishes. We usually make sure we have some type of greens. We make sure that we rotate everything actually and not eat the same thing all the time. Like kale or collards or spinach, broccoli, which isn't really a leafy green but in my book it sort of counts. Then some protein source, we rotate that with tofu, we'll do a lot of different things with tofu and seitan and the field roast sausages are really good and beans, tempeh. And then that's the core of our meals. It is kind of

like when I was young, it was you're gonna' eat meat and a bunch of other stuff. So for us it's like Kale and tofu and a bunch of other stuff. Quinoa is also useful and a lot of sauces. That's one thing that we realized early on, spices are really important to making a good meal. I had a friend, this had an effect on my, who is a chef. He's not vegan, but he's very open to it. He trained in Vermont actually. He taught us a lot about cooking, professional cooking and how to make things taste good. We just apply those rules to our cooking.

He would just cook for us occasionally and we would have him over occasionally. My girlfriend is an amazing baker and she can make cakes that are just incredible and cupcakes. Our friends who are vegan and they asked her to make the cake. She ended up making five different vegan three layer cakes. Each one was different and apparently people are still talking about them. Her friends' family isn't all vegan but they loved the cakes and everybody is always talking about her cakes. We wouldn't be able to live without pastries. A lot of the health vegans I've met, I don't have as much in common with because I don't think I eat incredibly healthy. I definitely eat healthy but if I had to give up cakes and cookies and stuff it would be really hard. I think my percentage of those things is about the same as non-vegans.

Kelsey: How did your fiancé learn how to make vegan cakes?

Participant 4: I'm not really sure, I think the cookbooks were a big help and probably just experimentation. I know that a lot of her recipes for the cakes came from Vegan Cupcakes take over the world which is a book by Isa and La Dolce Vegan. I think she just experimented.

I think one of the things that supported our transition was learning cooking was a big one because what we were learning was not just how to make food, but what ingredients do. Like when we want to make something and veganize it; it's like what do all of these ingredients do. Eggs are a big thing. I've come to the conclusion that a lot of people just through eggs into things because it's been lost into time like cookies have eggs in them. Like scones or something, there is no need for it. They are supposed to be flaky and the gluten will usually hold it together, so there is no need for eggs, but they are in all of the recipes already. I think originally they were in there for some purpose, generations and generations ago when these recipes were first handed down from grandmothers and stuff. But people forgot why certain ingredients were in things.

So, I was learning how to replace certain ingredients. If we need a binder what do we use? if we need a thickener what do we use? I think understanding the science of cooking was what helped us because it made it fun. And we didn't have any trouble then. Cause if someone was like I've never had vegan waffles or I've never had vegan yogurt or something. We were like hmm... we can make that and we'd go and figure it out. Sometimes we would be successful and sometimes not, you know. It was mostly successful, we had very few difficulties that I remember. It helped that we had the ingredients easily accessible, same as we have here. I think in some places groceries would not be as friendly to vegan cooking. Now I could probably do it anywhere, but back then maybe not. There were a lot of things that I hadn't heard of like I didn't know what agar was, not that I use it very often but to do certain things, some ingredients are necessary. Daiya cheese is now all over the place but back when we were first starting there were very few vegan cheeses available. Most of them were not very good, so if you don't have access to those things then...I guess you can order things.

Participant 5 (Female, Age: 32, Years Vegan: 7)

Kelsey: Can you give me some general information about yourself; age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 5: I am 32 years old. I am a photographer and a teacher. I teach photography, I taught in New York City. And I teach here at the Creative Performing Arts Program through Champlain College during the summer. I've taught at a college at a State University of New York. I've done lots of magazine work and that was in Chicago, I've done a lot of magazine work.

Kelsey: Could you explain the initial process of becoming vegan?

Participant 5: I was raised vegetarian, so I never had a taste for meat.

I think in the 60's it was more of a health thing and a little bit of an environmental thing. But they didn't really put everything together, like people put it together now, there are statistics on everything. They just thought it was healthier and they raised me vegan til I was five. And then they integrated some dairy products. It wasn't ethical at all that way. I was raised that way in Southern Missouri in an agricultural town with 4,011 people. They were all very different than me, we were the only liberal family. I was a weirdo because I would bring tofu sandwiches and stuff to school, that went over well, I was very popular.

I was homeschooled till fifth grade and I was raised around goats, so they were like my play buddies. So, I couldn't imagine ever eating them. They were beings to me, so that was probably what did it more than anything else. They were my neighbors' goats, I was an only child so I was friends with my neighbor. It was a communal living situation, it's very common around here, but not so much in Missouri. They eat them and that always sucked. As a kid you don't really put it together but one day my friend would be there and then the next he wouldn't. And her dad would make jokes about eating, you know whatever is name is. I think I may have eaten meat a few times without thinking about it much. But I was pretty much vegetarian for basically forever.

And then after that, I graduated high school. I moved to St. Louis and I was with my friend who had been a vegetarian for forever and then she started eating chicken. She convinced that it was healthier that way, so I started eating chicken. I had meat three times in my life and usually it was that someone convinced me, like they said I needed iron or something. So I eat it. Pork, I've probably eaten, but I've never purposely eaten it. But yeah, turkey, chicken, and I would eat a little bit of that. I would eat a little bit of turkey at thanksgiving. I always felt bad about it, so in 2007, My friend Danielle who had been vegetarian for forever decided to go vegan. I always thought that vegans were really annoying and preachy. Most vegans that I've met were just really obnoxious and judgmental, so I didn't really want to be part of it. And then against my better judgment I started thinking okay this makes sense.

I had some of the information cause as a kid I had joined Peta and World Wildlife Fund, and those kind of things. I understood, I had seen some of those videos I knew about animal testing with cosmetics and stuff. I made a point not to use that kind of stuff when I was young. I just didn't know, it's stupid but I didn't connect that eating milk means that the boy calves have to die. I didn't put it together.

I then read the book *Skinny Bitch*. Those women are super annoying. They are like x-models and they are really obnoxious, but they have all the points in there. I remember reading about milk and how the metal milkers create pus. I didn't know that stuff. I read it because of Danielle. She had it and I read it. I was vegan ever since then with a few mess-ups here and there.

Kelsey: How was it beginning being vegan?

Participant 5: It was super easy for me because I didn't eat meat. Cutting out dairy was hard, but I really like cooking so I can make things taste good anyway. I went out and got a billion cookbooks. Like Real Food Daily, that's amazing, it's a vegan restaurant in LA. On my shelf I have about that many cookbooks. And I also already had a taste for tofu.

You know when it got hard for me when I was diagnosed with gluten intolerance and I was like I don't know what to eat anymore. Seitan was a big part of my diet, so that's when I had a little bit of wavering. I'm still gluten free. I don't really eat soy anymore either, I prefer not to do that. So I eat quinoa and beans and adventurous grains.

Kelsey: How did your friends and family react when you first became vegan?

Participant 5: They were very supportive. My mom actually reacted more negatively than I thought. They aren't vegetarian anymore. They don't eat pork and beef. They will eat chicken and fish. She grew up on a farm and her relationship with animals was way different than factory farming and all that. There are a lot of different points of views out there and I see her point of view but I think she felt a little judge. My dad went vegan for a year, he didn't keep it up but now he likes vegan cheese like Daiya. That was a good experience for him. He dropped his numbers down. I dropped my cholesterol levels down a ton.

Kelsey: Do you think it was also a health decision to?

Participant 5: Yeah, actually that it was at first for me. I worked at Blossom in New York City, I worked there and the people who work there are so annoying. The people who work there are exactly the people who give vegans a bad name. All they ever do is talk about vegan and if someone comes in in the wrong clothes and the wrong shoes and the wrong coat. And I know sometimes people can't stand that but I'm more of a win the hearts and minds kind of person. So I'm not going to disown everyone I know, so they were annoying me and I kind of wanted to resist it because of them. They made me not want to be vegan, I still was I just didn't advertise it.

Kelsey: How did you decide to continue to be vegan even though you also didn't want to fit into the vegan stereotype?

Participant 5: I just felt like it was the right things to do. It's funny cause the guy I'm going to marry now, my fiancé, I hate that word. We've been together for about four years. When I met him he was vegetarian but not vegan. Now he is more all about it than I am because he is constantly watching videos. It's just really funny because he used to make fun of me and be a little annoyed with it.

Kelsey: Do you think that provides a support system?

Participant 5: yeah, I guess so...I think I don't really want one that much. What I need to do is not live in Burlington anymore. We're actually going to move to Minneapolis. We are trying to go back to the Mid-West, but not the southern Mid-West. We are going to go in May. There are so many restaurants there. I just need to not have to cook all of the time. Like, we go to Duino Duende all of the time. They have really good vegan options, they have meat too, but they care a lot more than other local places like the Farm House. That's the other thing, it's either gluten free or vegan, yeah I would like to be able to eat out again. That is something that I need as support to continue on.

Kelsey: Did you have that kind of support in New York City?

Participant 5: So much good food there, so much good food! I think that's what you have to do, just stay incredibly creative about what I eat. I just getting different cookbooks and getting different things. Just kind of creating a collection of what I like. That's usually the way I win people over. Like my fiancé's

family, I gave his mom and his sister copied cookbooks that I gave them for Christmas and stuff. It's a good way to win people's hearts.

Kelsey: How does veganism affect your relationships or interactions with others?

Participant 5: It's one of those things that I like people to discover about me, but get made fun of. Like when I first met Eric to work at Bluebird. The chef at bluebird is So mean because I wouldn't eat anything that he made. And he would just role his eyes at me all the time. That is challenging. I don't advertise it though.

Kelsey: Is that one of your obstacles with being vegan?

Participant 5: Yeah, because I don't want to be one of those people. I don't want to be what I thought vegans were. I don't want to be preachy, I don't want to be difficult or anything like that, especially having been a waitress. They don't want to do that.

Kelsey: Do you know any other vegans and how do they help or not help?

Participant 5: I don't know any here except for you and some of the GMAD people I guess, and Kyle. Danielle, the friend that I mentioned is the one that helps me because she's so into it but she is so non-judgemental, she's the nicest person. She kind of preaches but...For her it's the absolute answer to everything. She helps remind me...and being around animals. Like I couldn't go to Vine (a farm Sanctuary) and then turn around and eat something that they made.

Kelsey: How does your job affect your veganism at all?

Participant 5: I guess it would if I was working in restaurants but that's so far past. Being freelance and being a photographer, I can pretty much do what I want.

Kelsey: How did you deal with the difficulties of being a vegan while working in restaurants?

Participant 5: I don't know...I think I was a little bit of an Outcast. Not at Blossom, but at Braid. I worked at Blossom, my friend Danielle got me that job. I worked there and I worked at ___ (hard to hear on audio), I don't know if you know that one, It's really high end and meat and cheese, in St, Tribecka. I didn't last very long there, I didn't like it. I just felt difficult all the time. People feel judged by you. At ___, they all knew that I was vegan, like the owner was kind of nasty about it. She was just "I was vegetarian for four yeas, but blahaha!" and I'm like "okay! You don't have to be." I'm not telling you that, I'm just saying that that's what I'm doing. So I would say that restaurants are generally not supportive.

Arts field are generally good. Teaching and stuff is usually good. I guess the music scenes that I associate with have always been vegetarian, have always been vegan; like punk and metal and all of those things have always been very supportive of that.

Kelsey: How do you deal with being vegan while traveling?

Participant 5: A lot of the time, Kyle and I plan. Like we look up the restaurants when we went to Boston. Austin, Texas has vegan food places everywhere. But I always make a list of places when we go somewhere.

Kelsey: Austin is vegan friendly?

Texas in general is pretty bad, but Austin, Texas shouldn't be associated with Texas at all, it's just like this liberal artsy place.

Kelsey: How do you continue to be vegan on an everyday basis?

Participant 5: I think the answer I'm going to give isn't going to be helpful to anyone else, but it's just part of who I am. It's not a challenge as long as I can stay in my house. Even City Market has a lot of great vegan food options. They have a lot of great salads and stuff like that. It's easy for me because I don't miss the taste of meat or anything like that. I miss the taste of cheese.

Kelsey: What are your typical meals in a day?

Participant 5: I eat a lot of Kale. I'll steam it or make Kale chips. I rarely have high processed meals. I have oatmeal for breakfast. Rice cakes and peanut butter. I just put a lot of time and energy into it and make a lot of healthy things. I've never been one of those people who eat a lot of white rice or other compensates with sugars or anything like that. Definitely whole foods, the problem is that I make things taste too good and I make a lot of it.

Kelsey: How do you think your ideas about veganism have changed over time?

Participant 5: I think that goes back to being annoyed with the peachiness of vegans. I've just kind of come to accepting it as being the right choice. The people are annoying but that's okay because all people are annoying.

Reading the China Study was helpful because it put science behind what I was thinking although I still think that there are parts of it that are imperfect. I'm not someone who accepts this vegan thing blindly, I still want to have an open critical mind. Like the China Study is great, but let's check the science behind certain areas of it.

Kelsey: How do you get your information and where do you go to get it?

Participant 5: Well there's a lot of documentaries on Netflix. Just books... Sometimes Amazon searches will lead you from book to book. I feel like I'm always looking at it through the lens of doing the project that I'm doing, so I'm treating it as a research project.

Kelsey: How are you using the research with your photographs?

Participant 5: Just in writing about them, figuring out how to frame it. The project itself, I'm kind of relating it to certain religious pursuits. People treat it as a religion sometimes, without the higher power. But it's the same sort of thing when talking to animals. When people talk to a god, they don't hear anything back; most people don't anyway. I think it's that same leap of faith. This book here talks about the roots and the people that brought the term vegetarian, which used to mean vegan. So people who brought vegetarianism to the United States from genesis. That's really interesting to me.

Kelsey: How did you come to decide to do that for your project?

Participant 5: I think a lot of it came with being around the vegans in New York City and being uncomfortable with the peachiness. I liked the people at Vine because they are just so pure hearted and they don't need anyone to know about it. They advocate for the animals, but they aren't there showing off, the way that some of the people at Blossom are. It's much more of an internal quest for them instead of a status symbol.

Kelsey: Do you think you look at veganism that way too?

Participant 5: yeah, and I love getting people to eat more plant based food, I love that but I'm not going to be like (you better be vegan face). I'm not going to think any differently about them if they don't become vegan. Sometimes it isn't always true. A lot of the people that I eat with don't eat a lot of meat. They kind of work on an intelligence hierarchy, you know people who are eating fish but not eating whale.

Kyle's best friend went to Iceland and eat whale. I have a serious problem with that, it really bothers me, or dolphin of anything like that. Yeah, there is a place that I will draw the line, but I'm not going to think that someone is a bad person for eating the shrimp. The amount of pain that they feel is much less.

Kelsey: Have you come to support other foods like local foods or organic foods?

Participant 5: Yeah, definitely and I was probably always into that. Well, organic foods always. Where I grew up, we had a garden so it was naturally organic; Organic foods and then vegan and then local. I was thinking about this the other day, when did the local movement start? You know, when did we start thinking about that, I don't really know.

Kelsey: Do you think that being vegan made you more interested in organic foods or do you think it's about the same?

Participant 5: I think it's about the same. I get grossed out when I eat non-organic foods. The gross out factor works a lot for me. Meat and dairy are gross. I don't really get grossed out by eggs. In my perfect world, I think it would be fine to eat eggs. Like my neighbor, she has chickens and she lets them live to old age after they stop producing eggs. I think that's the best possible scenario that there is. If everyone did that, then maybe I wouldn't have a problem with it or if the roosters got to live.

I just get squeamish, I think about the pesticides or the worms that it might carry or antibiotics, or just the fact that you're eating flesh.

Or like when I started to eat seafood because I thought it was healthy when I was 21, I got shark and I looked at it and I just threw it down the garbage disposal. I just can't disconnect that that's a shark. I mean sharks are scary on their own, but I've never been able to disconnect that the lump of flesh in front of me is something else. I have the same problem when I was trying to eat chicken.

Kelsey: When you were a vegetarian, how did you make that connection or did you always have it?

Participant 5: I think I've always had it. I think that has to do with being around goats. No kid wants to eat meat. Kids eat meat because it's packaged into something that doesn't look like an animal and its put in front of them. I find that disconnect really weird. Every kid toy is an animal, every story is an animal; they don't want to do that.

Kelsey: How do you keep up on the latest vegan news?

Participant 5: I don't go anywhere near PETA or anything like that. It's fine that they are doing what they are doing. The other thing about being raised in the Mid-West and being around farmers is that I know what they are doing won't affect these people at all. It won't change their mind at all. It will only make them angry. It will only make them want to eat meat more and stick to their guns more. I steer clear of things like that.

Kelsey: How easy did you find it to be vegan in the Mid-West?

Participant 5: I was actually here, so I wasn't vegan in the Mid-West. I came to New York, I stayed at Danielle's and I read that book before I went to grad school and then I went back to Chicago. That was

easy because a lot of my friends were supportive of it and the music scene really does support you. I think if someone in 18, 19, 20, just be a part of those music scenes.

Kelsey: Do you have anything else to add about veganism?

Participant 5: No, I just think I have a different perspective on it than other people that you've interviewed. Just because I'm from an agricultural town and I have a lot of respect for people who have made their living raising farmed animals. Like our neighbor was an organic feed farmer. I'm always willing to have the ethical philosophical points in my head. I can see both points. I go back and forth between different points of view. I want to come to my own opinions. I don't want to just latch onto the idea that things are black and white. I see a lot of grey area. But any grey area that I see is overwhelmed by the fact that the population of the earth is too big. I think we need to move in that direction no matter what.

Participant 6 (Female, Age: 35, Years Vegan: 11)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 6: I am 35. I have been vegan for 11 years. I am a speech language pathologist in the South Burlington School District.

Kelsey: What led you to become vegan?

Participant 6: I first became vegetarian because of health reasons. My dad has had heart problems and heart disease. When I was 17, he had quadruple by-pass and then several heart attacks and heart incidents. When I was about 21, I decided to become vegetarian because I thought it was a healthier choice. At that time, I did not think about the environmental impact of eating meat or the animal rights abuses that happen with eating meat. I thought maybe I could do more, but I didn't really know how to do it. Then I met Andy, who was vegan and had been for many years prior to us meeting. I started to learn more about environmental impact, especially in the beef industry. Then I learned about animal testing in the drug and cosmetic industries and how horrible that all is. I saw how someone could do it in a way that wasn't just eating salads. I approached it then and pretty quickly made the change from being vegetarian to being vegan. Back then, there weren't all the convenience foods for vegans. Back then, there weren't all the vegan cheeses and meats. It was about finding good vegan cookbooks and trying meatless and dairy-free meals. At the time, I lived in Boston so it was fun to explore the various health food stores and the different options. We explored what we could make that was good and was not just the same thing all the time. Health is probably the biggest reason I am vegan.

Kelsey: How did you find out that a plant-based diet was the healthiest?

Participant 6: It was from books and articles – I don't remember the specific titles. There were lower instances of heart disease, obesity and cancer. Both my parents had two different types of cancer. I recently read another article that confirmed there are lower instances of that in people who follow a plant-based diet. I didn't read too many of those, but I was convinced of the value of having lower cholesterol and a plant-based diet would help that. My family is very pre-disposed to high blood pressure and high cholesterol and I felt that eating dairy and animals was contributing to that. Of my siblings, all four of us grew up eating meat and dairy. As adults, two of us are vegan, one is vegetarian, and one is still a meat eater. So, holidays look kind of funny for us. My nieces are lactose and gluten free. At Thanksgiving, we have a huge spread with signs on the food: this is gluten-free, this is vegan. The turkey gets low profile; less than half the people there eat the turkey. It changed how all my siblings and I approach food.

Kelsey: Did you siblings become vegetarian/vegan at the same time as you?

Participant 6: They changed after me. I am not close to my brother who is vegan. His wife and two of his three children are vegan. They did it for health and the animal rights reasons. They went to the farm sanctuary and started having their own animals. They realized they didn't want to contribute to animal pain and cruelty. My sister became vegetarian, but her husband is a hard core meat eater. They have a child and they battle: is their child going to eat meat? That is a big conflict.

For Andy and me and our child, Otis, by the time we had Otis we were in agreement as to what kind of lifestyle we wanted to have in terms of eating meat and wearing products. We don't wear any leather or wool. We were in agreement with that so there was never any problem. When I got pregnant, I went to a nutritionist to confirm I was able to have a healthy pregnancy while I was pregnant. She really supported it, as well as my midwife who said there are lots of pregnant women who eat fast food and junk and the fact that you are even thinking about what you are putting in your body. While some vitamins are hard to

come by, at least I was being thoughtful about my food. I have gone to nutritionists over the year and my only deficiency is Vitamin D, which is very common in Vermont. Otis has been raised a vegan. I asked Otis what he thought about it and he said, "I like it." He also does not know any different. He is used to knowing when we go places we either bring something or he asks if he can have something. He understands, as a little kid, that of course you would not eat animals. They are cute. You wouldn't want to use them for our benefit. It seems logical to him.

Kelsey: Can you talk more about raising a vegan child?

Participant 6: I thought it would be more challenging than it actually is. He doesn't go to public school, he is home schooled, so there is an element of control there. Even with being out in different places, he is a sensitive kid. He wants to be vegan. Now, he doesn't feel he is missing something. For example, he went to an art show and there were these chocolate, home-made peanut butter cups and he asked if they were vegan and we said we didn't know. He didn't eat any but the next day we looked in our cookbooks, found a vegan recipe, and made them. They were really yummy. So, I try to be sensitive to that. I don't want to deprive him of sweets. We have cakes on birthdays and cookies at super bowl parties. He is a kid and we want him to enjoy food and not think "I can't have that. I can't have that." I think Burlington, although it would be nice to have a dedicated vegan restaurant, Burlington is at least friendly enough to understand what being vegan is. In other big cities, such as Montreal, it is such a treat to find vegan restaurants where we can order anything. off the menu. Otis really likes vegetables and he is happy with raw fruit and vegetables. He has been a really healthy kid. If he was sickly, I would wonder if he is missing something, but he has always been healthy and strong with good endurance. I would question it as a parent if he showed this wasn't working for his body. He has gotten thinner as he has gotten older and I keep asking him to eat more.

Kelsey: What are the biggest challenges of being vegan?

Participant 6: Meeting new people is sometimes frustrating. I have to explain it to everyone. At work, at holidays, I will be asked to have cookies and such and I don't want to explain. I go to people's houses a lot to evaluate children and I am always offered things. I feel rude saying why, but I just say no. I don't want to make a whole big thing about it.

I try hard to not make people feel I judge their food choices. At work, when I bring something from home and I am eating with my coworkers, I never say, "Oh my God, you are eating meat." Neither Andy nor I try to convince people they should be vegan and tell them why. I think that alienates other people so I make an effort to never talk too much about it. This is my choice and I try not to make people feel bad if they bring a coffee cake and I can't eat it. For example, at a recent super bowl party, we brought vegan cookies and new acquaintances said, "These are really good cookies for being vegan." That is the thing, the "for being vegan." If I meet new people, it is often the first thing that comes up, but I don't like that it is often the first thing that comes up. It is a big part of who I am, but I don't like that it is the only thing that defines me. Food is a social event. We have a great community of friends who are always thinking of "where is a good place for you to go to?" My mom always tries new vegan recipes she thinks we would like and she always makes a vegan birthday cake for Otis. That has been really helpful. Andy's parents are fine with it but are not as enthusiastic about embracing it.

Clothing choices can be challenging. It would be great to be able to buy Frye boots. But I am not going to sacrifice for that. I don't wear silk or wool or leather. Sometimes I have to refuse things I would really like to have, but I don't buy it because of my beliefs around it. People are always asking, "Is that really hard?" It is not hard, but something I have to be cognizant of.

Kelsey: When you first became vegan, was it more of a challenge?

Participant 6: I don't really remember. To me it was a real, fun challenge and I don't remember it being difficult. I was living in Boston at the time, I was 22, and I found some good vegan restaurants. I was figuring out who I was and my next steps. Andy and I just started dating. Becoming vegan was an element of me figuring out who I was and what I believed it. It was part of my journey at that age. I went to UVM and moved to Boston. I was trying to figure out who I was and being vegan made sense and it was not hard. I became passionate about it. Now, it is so much a part of who I am, that I don't even feel I am up-to-date on all the talking points, which was different from when I first started.

Kelsey: Are you involved in any vegan organizations?

Participant 6: No. When I first became vegan, we would go to the Vegetarian Society in Boston. They would have events, but I haven't done any of that. We don't really know any other vegans. We don't have a community of like-minded people and we are just on our own path. Periodically, we stumble on people who are vegan but it is rare. We are not part of any organized thing.

Kelsey: How has your idea of veganism changed over time?

Participant 6: More recently, because of the advent of more convenience foods, what has become more important to me as far as eating is thinking more about local foods and whole foods. You can fall into a trap when you go to Whole Foods and see all these vegan options but it is still processed food. So many things are soy-based. I like finding good, healthy recipes that I can cook that I can feel good about. When I started, I wasn't as tuned into that. It is hard to eat local and be a vegan around here. The farmer's market has so much local meat and cheese. In the winter, it is tough because root vegetables only go so far. There is a local seitan company but it is a little harder trying to eat local as a vegan than if I ate meat and dairy. That is what I have been thinking about: local and non-processed food.

Kelsey: Do you follow other food movements, such as organic or fair trade?

Participant 6: We eat 100% organic produce unless I really need something for a recipe and they do not have organic. Periodically, I'll get local apples over organic apples. Local conventional apples feels right to me over organic. For the most part, we are 100% organic. We are more likely to purchase cracker or chips that are organic over other types. We buy organic Triscuits over conventional.

Kelsey: Do you think being vegan affected that?

Participant 6: I don't know. I think the push for organic happened after I became vegan. I don't even remember organic produce ten years ago, but I kind of remember it being packaged in plastic. That evolved over time separately than being vegan. I think it tastes better. We only shop at City Market. It is rare that we shop at Hannaford, maybe once a year. Now, at City Market, most of the produce is organic. It seems common among our friends here; they have farm shares. We go away in the summer, so have a farm share would be wasteful for us. When we are away, we share a farm share with my parents. That feels complimentary to being vegan. We had a garden plot for a year, but I didn't keep it up. I'd like to do that.

Kelsey: How is it being vegan when you travel?

Participant 6: Typically, we travel to more vegan-friendly places. For work, I had to go to a conference two years ago in Minneapolis. We were at a hotel and I never left the hotel for three days. The only place to eat was TGIFs. We never eat at chains. The benefit of eating at a chain is that every ingredient was written out. They were able to make things vegan. They had a big notebook with codes for every item:

dairy, animal. I said I was allergic to dairy but I didn't eat meat. That was more helpful and they took it more seriously and found solutions for me. They made this great vegetable stir fry that was good. It was more than pasta with nothing on it. If I go to a place that doesn't understand what vegan is, I have to say I don't eat dairy, I don't eat meat. I ask more specifically about ingredients. What is nice is that with iPhones, I can track down vegan restaurants. We like that adventure of finding a little vegan place.

I would like to explore raw food, so there are more raw, vegan restaurants in cities. Andy is not that interested in that. There are many raw vegan restaurants. It is a fun adventure.

Kelsey: How did you get interested in raw foods?

Participant 6: It was another element. There is a part of me that if I could, I would be vegan, no processed food, more raw food. Being vegan has been a part of who I am, but I am always thinking of what other food choices I can make. I think about raw, I think about gluten-free because that is so processed. I think about decreasing amount of packaging. I get overwhelmed and get interested in other elements, but none of that have I been as passionate about as being vegan. Being vegan has those key elements of not just about the food. I have never wavered about that. The other things, I dabble in, but without the kind of passion and resolve I have for being vegan. If Andy and I committed to something, like never having something with more than five ingredients in it, I couldn't do that on my own without Andy. That would mean no convenience foods. It would be difficult to do any of this if your family did not agree with it. Part of being a family is being together and sharing that meal. It would be hard to eat different things. When I was growing up, eating together was important and this is important to us now. We all eat the same thing and I want all of us to enjoy it. Being vegan is the one thing that solidifies us.

I have told Otis that when he is older, out in the world, he can try different things. My parents were Catholic and Republican and I chose not to do that. My parents ate meat and I chose not to do that. I guess his rebellion might be going to McDonald's and eating a cheeseburger.

Kelsey: How does veganism play into your work environment?

Participant 6: I usually bring food for lunch. At the school with many children, I often don't get to sit down and eat for long. There are some people at work who are understanding and some people who don't know. At staff meetings, I don't eat the cookies and stuff. I don't broadcast it and try to stay under the radar. I am sure if I made a big thing about it, every staff meeting would have something for me. But that is not the kind of person I am. I would rather just go without. A co-worker and best friend at work was talking about a conference next week and she said to the coordinator, "Participant 6's vegan, make sure there is lunch for her." I never would have said that and would have just brought my own food. I don't feel entitled to that and it opened a whole discussion. She felt she was considerate, but I thought it was not a big deal, I'll find something for my own. I don't want to stand out. I have to handle non-vegan things and I have to feel the cheese and yogurt for the kids. Some of these foods make me feel a little nauseous when I deal with them. I can't stand to be around eggs and some kinds of cheese really gross me out. I try not to respond to that, especially with the kids.

Kelsey: What do you think is the perception of vegans?

Participant 6: It varies. Around here, it is just "okay, that is one of the choices" because so many people here are vegetarian or gluten-free. I think some people think of me as crazy extremist. I am reminded that it is a small percentage of people who are vegan. Around here, so many people make so many different choices. They ask me questions and I am not prepared for it. Some of my parents ask me, "How do you get your calcium?" or "How do you get your protein?" I am not prepared when people can't even imagine

it. Some people want to be argumentative about it. They talk about it not being healthy, or environmental impact of soy. I don't argue and say it just works for me. It helps that I have done it for so long that it is part of who I am. Some people have no response and I don't know what they think.

Kelsey: Did you have a perception of vegan before you were vegan?

Participant 6: I don't really remember. When I became vegetarian, I wondered if you could be healthy and be vegan.

Kelsey: What are you most concerned about health and being vegan?

Participant 6: Energy. Protein for me. Over the last eight years, I try to do a triathlon every summer and I think about being strong enough and having enough energy. I say I eat lots of nuts and beans and soy products. I struggle, working with young kids, being exposed to lots of germs. Last winter, I had a sick day once a month. That made me question if I was getting what I need. The reality was that I was getting what I need and that was just a really bad year. I may get tested again for peace of mind to see if I have enough nutrients. After the last testing two years ago, I know I have enough iron and calcium and not enough Vitamin D.

Kelsey: Do you feel healthier?

Participant 6: Yes. I also think it was the stage of my life. In high school, I could eat anything and I played sports. I was healthy and vibrant. Then I went to college and I didn't play any sports. I drank a lot and ate pizza. When I graduated from college, I said this is not the person I want to be. After college, I started to run and exercise more and I wanted to be healthy. Being vegan triggered me to get back into a healthier lifestyle.

Kelsey: When you went to UVM, did that affect your decision?

Participant 6: No. I had some college friends who were vegetarian or vegan. I thought they were really weird. That was just not my scene. I was a little more straight-laced and I was not as informed and I had my own assumptions about why people did that. When I first became vegan, I did not think about the long term implications. Looking back, after all these years, there are very few decisions that I stuck with since then. I haven't wavered.

Kelsey: Was there any specific event that influenced you?

Participant 6: One really great time was when Andy and I got married, we had a vegan wedding. We transported all the food in big vats. We had stone soup. At that time, I didn't think my family embraced it. At the wedding, all the food was vegan and I felt good that people liked the food and they were surprised they liked it. I didn't feel bad about it at the wedding. Now, at family events, I know we can share vegan foods. At Thanksgiving, we don't just have butter-less potatoes, but I bring a bunch of food to share with my family. When I thought they could understand it, I could bring that more. My family was open to sharing it with me. My family is really important to me. In the summer, we go to a lake where my parents are next door and my brother and his wife is down the street. We often eat together. I feel really good that they are accepting of that. I don't feel any guilt around our dietary restriction and that really helps. If they were not as open, it wouldn't sit as well with me. Andy's parents are not as accepting but are really not as embracing.

Kelsey: Why do you stay quiet about being vegan?

Participant 6: I don't want people to feel like I am judging them. That would be really hypocritical. I don't want them to judge my choices and it would not be fair if I judged theirs. I don't want to create an atmosphere of tension around their food or clothing habits. It would make me feel bad if people thought I looked down on their choices. I have always taken a low profile approach.

Kelsey: What is a typical day for you as a vegan?

Participant 6: If I am going to work, optimally I will bring vegan yogurt with nuts or fruit. I would really love to have a smoothie every day, but that doesn't happen much. For lunch, we usually have leftovers and we will have lots of fruits of vegetables. Random raw foods and vegetables, even a raw cucumber, might be in my lunch bag along with some leftovers from the previous night. When I get home around 4, I usually want an afternoon snack like nuts. Yesterday, I wanted hummus, sugar snap peas, and a banana. Andy and I share cooking dinner; Andy is a better cook than I am. We try to plan our menus for the week and we get all the grocery shopping done. In the craziness of the week, that doesn't always happen. We follow cookbooks and we are always getting new ones. We like finding new recipes and finding new recipes online. Some things are standbys, like pot pie. We make things from scratch for the most part. We have dinner together as a family. Occasionally, we may go out or order Asian food or Thai food for quick take out dinner. Sometimes, we go to Stone Soup. At work, if I am not thoughtful, there is nothing to grab. You have to be prepared and more thoughtful. It takes an extra step of preparation to be vegan.

Kelsey: Did you enjoy cooking before you were vegan?

Participant 6: No, but that was also a stage in life. I never cooked in college other than mac and cheese. I wasn't interested in cooking and in good cooking and in putting in effort. Now, I like putting in effort and it is satisfying when it works. I can improvise and that comes out okay, too. It is nicer now. It is nice to cook for a family, whereas when I was 22, 23, we did not have family dinners and I had to cook for myself. As a family, I love that it is part of our tradition and there is something satisfying in that.

Kelsey: How did having a family affect your veganism?

Participant 6: It made me more thoughtful about what Otis had. When he was first born and he was nursing, I nursed him for two years but the second year he was a big food eater. When I was nursing, I wanted to take care of his needs as well as mine. I am really thoughtful about his lunches and when I am not there. I try to give him a fruit, a vegetable, a protein, and a grain. A peanut butter and jam sandwich is his food of choice. I want him to be a healthy kid. I was worried he would be perceived as unhealthy because he was vegan. It is different when you are thinking about more than yourself. I want my child's brain and body to have what they need. It was more than just me believing this. I work with kids with disabilities so I am conscious of why that happened; most of the time it is not dietary.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you want to say about veganism?

Participant 6: It is what I am going to be for the rest of my life. It is funny to talk about it. I haven't really thought about it for so long, but it was cool to talk about it? I am vegan because of many things, not just one event. It was a complex experience of multiple factors coming together. It is for those three reasons of animals, environment and health, it is solid. What might change is how I do it, like raw or avoiding soy. Is soy the best thing for me? Is there a premenopausal thing about soy? I can't picture abandoning being vegan, but maybe doing it in a more thoughtful way. That means I would need Andy's support and we would do that together. Vegan is not that limiting when you think of all the other things I could do in addition.

Kelsey: Thank you. You said a lot of really great things.

Participant 7 (Female, Age: 40, Years Vegan: 1.5)

Kelsey: Could you give me some general information like age, occupation, and years' vegan?

Participant 7: I am 40 and I am an artist. I have four children and I'm married. I live here. I was working at the Flynn center. I just finished a degree in graphic design. I am in an interview process for a job but then I'm also a fine artist in between.

Kelsey: Could you tell me how you became vegan?

Participant 7: I was doing a cleanse for the first time it's a seven day Ayurveda cleanse. This kind of cleanse, you eat rice and bean mixture as much as you wanted three times a day. I have a high metabolism, so I didn't want to do a juice cleanse or something like that. I wanted food. I tried that, but after seven days you can't just go back to what you were eating before. So you have to really think about what you are putting back into your body and your body really reacts strongly to things that it doesn't like.

For me, sugar was a big thing. When I had a bit of a piece of pie, my throat almost closed, my body reacted really strongly to it. So I was like sugars don't work really well for me. And dairy was another one. I had been vegetarian before and I wasn't at the time that I had done the cleanse. Through a lot of my pregnancies I would eat meat and when I was nursing. And my kids eat meat. I had that in my mind, I wanted to go back to vegetarianism when it works, when I had time to devote to it. So I had that when I was coming off of this cleanse and putting foods back into my body. I was like maybe this is a really great opportunity to go back to vegetarianism. I was spending a lot of time thinking about what I was eating.

And then when I reacted to the dairy; that's when I thought oh veganism and maybe I should try this and see if it works. If it doesn't maybe I'll just start adding different dairy products and then see what happens.

Kelsey: How did you come to get to the cleanse?

Participant 7: I had had friends who had done cleanses before. I do yoga and one of the journals that I subscribe to had a program set up to set up daily e-mails or send during the cleanse, like different yoga exercises to do during the cleanse. That's how I was introduced to that?

Kelsey: How is a plant based diet intertwined with yoga if at all?

Participant 7: It is. In the yoga tradition that I work with, I think most yogis, cleanses are a natural part of that philosophy. I've done another cleanse with Chinese herbs which is in the tradition of the kind of yoga that I do. It's kundalini yoga that I do and it has a lot to do with gland work. How we live closes up the flow of our glands and that affects all of our organs. I know that the Hindu don't eat meat and that's a spiritual piece, so I'm sure it's a spiritual piece as well. Enlightenment is having a lite diet. And there are other things in that diet like only fruits before noon. There are a lot of different things in there as well.

Kelsey: Do you think you think like that as well?

Participant 7: I have a spiritual program that I practice, so I think it affects everything. I wouldn't say that that was the intent of being vegan and the spiritual intent of being vegan so much. It's thinking more about animals and the impact; there is a certain spiritual element. It goes along with my values so I think that that's not spiritual life too, it's just my values.

Even as vegan and there is nothing else to eat when I travel...Like if I go to Maine with my family and I want a cup of clam chowder, I'll have a cup of clam chowder and not feel like "eeehhh", so I don't treat my values so strictly I guess.

Basically I think the value as far as the animal piece goes. If I wanted to have chicken, would I be willing to kill the chicken, skin the chicken, and eat the chicken. The answer is definitely no and it would make me really sick to do something like that. I think it is along the lines as a path, of living really consciously and that's kind of a yogic tradition, mindfulness and making conscious decisions. I think that's part of my path. Thinking about my choices and making choices around them that make sense rather than dimply disregarding them. Like oh well I don't care, this is easier or this is quicker or something like that.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about you being vegetarian before you became vegan?

Participant 7: I think I first wanted to become vegetarian when I was in high school and I don't remember why. I don't remember how I was introduced to it but I do remember talking to my parents about it because they still made the food and bought the food that I eat. They were not for it at all, so it didn't happen at all in high school. In college, there were years in college, I don't remember exactly why or when I just kind of followed through with that choice when I was living on my own and could make food choices and that sort of thing. When I was pregnant, I have had four children; during each pregnancy I would eat chicken. I felt like I needed more food and more variety of food. I think it was after my third child because my first two children were also vegetarian until I was pregnant with the third.

When I started eating chicken, they all wanted to eat chicken too. After that they all just continued eating chicken. And I'll feed them whatever they want. My oldest son likes red meat even though the rest of us don't eat red meat, so I'll cook red meat for him. I want them to be intuitive to their own needs and what their body wants.

Kelsey: Do you talk to them about being a plant eater.

Participant 7: yeah, I think one great thing is that for new vegetarians getting used to tofu and things and the consistency and the taste is a big transition. It can kind of stop people from eating tofu and things. My kids as babies having that and beans and other sort of foods...like my girls eat meat but they still eat tofu and they still eat the other foods that they were used to at an early age. So, I'll cook separately for myself. Now it's my boys mostly now that they are older. The girls are older.

The boys will often taste the foods that I'm making where they are less apt to eat it if I put it on their plate, like Brussel Sprouts. I love them. I sear them so they are a little bit crispy, put some good sauce on them and they love them. They're watching, especially the younger ones. They really watch and pay attention to what they are doing.

I have one older girl still at home and she's like "no thanks." She's on her path of what she wants and is willing to try other things. So they've grown to have a lot healthier choices because of watching me eating. And I do tend to make healthier food choices for them anyway. Not having chips and cookies and things in the house. We'll stop for things when we're on the road so it's not totally off limits. They are definitely exposed more and they try more, which I think is really a good thing at that age. Because when they are older they will have that image of "oh yeah, we had healthy food." We plant a garden every year and they pick things out of the garden every year. I definitely mindfully approached food with them like that. And then I have some kids that are pickier than others and only want to eat pizza everyday it's like okay...if that makes you feel good, go ahead. I don't want to be really tight with them about what I'm doing.

They definitely ask me questions, like can you eat this? Can you eat that? So they have definitely become knowledgeable about it.

Kelsey: Do you support other food movements as well?

Participant 7: yeah, I do in my own small way try to do the shopping locally and organically.

Kelsey: How is being vegan in Vermont?

Participant 7: I think winter is definitely more challenging because of the lack of variety and a lot of the produce is imported from so far away. The quality and the taste and the variety is less but I feel like being close to Burlington really helps, and that's what helped me especially in the beginning. There was so much planning and preparation that I had to do every day and with traveling or whatever. I wanted to make sure that I had what I needed. And here there are several really good options. If I don't have time to pack ahead, I can find some place to eat healthfully. I feel really supported in that. It's interesting to think that if I lived further out, more rural, I think it would definitely be more of a challenge to not have a back-up.

Kelsey: How do you deal with traveling away from home?

Participant 7: The first time I traveled I went to a wedding, it was six weeks after... It took me six to eight weeks to really regulate into the new diet and I needed to eat a lot. Now I feel much better and if there was nothing to eat at a meal, I would be fine until I went somewhere and get something else. But at that time, I didn't feel that way. I went to this wedding and there was nothing. Everything was coated in butter except bread. It was really almost like a panic feeling, like oh no! I'm going to starve. Just that feeling of not having anything to eat was a new experience but I was like "okay." We are driving home, we can stop somewhere in the morning. We stopped at a Dunkin Donuts. There was nothing that I could eat there and that's when I got that panic feeling again. I was like "we need to go to a grocery store right now." We went to a grocery store and we got a bunch of food that I could eat. That was a real challenging experience, but since then... If that was me now I would have eaten something at the wedding and not worried about it. I'm not as strict with myself.

We did a lot of traveling with my oldest daughter, ridiculous amounts of traveling. It was impossible for me to bring a cooler or to eat something more and I wasn't just going to have salad the whole times. So I would eat things like pasta with cheese grated on the top. You know, something like that not necessarily meat. And now I search out if I'm planning on going someplace. I search out restaurants and grocery stores and health stores. And I've had pretty good luck with that.

Kelsey: What are some other obstacles to being vegan?

Participant 7: I don't think so... I've always thought that I've always been the same weight. And I need to eat a lot. I have a high metabolism. For energy levels, I need more food than most people. At first my energy levels were affected. I was always concerned that it wouldn't work for me because I was literally eating non-stop and other things in between meals. I think that was an obstacle at first because I thought that that would continue. I really learned how sensitive my body is to change and I tend to think that it is this warrior vessel and it can just do what I tell it to do. Changing a diet is a major over-hall on all of my enzymes and all of my organs and whatever is needed with the food that is coming into my body. I could see that there were different phases that my body went through. Now with exercising, I would just not feel well after a certain time. I looked up some answers to that online, which is why I responded to this. A lot of time the responses are "oh yes, that's what happens when you are vegan." And you better not do that or whatever. And I was thinking that I don't think this is going to work for me.

I just made a commitment to see for a certain amount of time. So being over the initial part, like now I exercise more, all of the benefits are huge. I don't get dizzy. I don't get low energy. My body is regulated to it. Initially I thought that was an obstacle but it turned out to be just the transition. But the transition can be pretty lengthy.

Kelsey: Why did you decide to make the commitment even though you thought it might not be right for you?

Participant 7: I think I sensed that the changes, the phases continued to get better and that's when it occurred to me that "you know you're body is really sensitive." Like when I put the sugar in after the cleanse. I never had an experience like that. I couldn't believe how quickly my body responded. If I wasn't improving I probably wouldn't have committed. There wasn't a lot of information out there, so I committed. I looked at exploring foods that I could eat and different amounts.

I think anything works. I don't get sick. I don't get digestive issues. I don't get any body issues, I only feel strong. I feel strong and energetic. I was more fatigued and thyroid stuff. I required a lot of sleep and that's totally gone away. I still try to mix up what I'm eating cause it's easy to fall into that. But I have the basis. I eat nuts now and some fruit snacks and things that I need throughout the day.

Kelsey: What do you usually eat?

Participant 7: In the morning I usually have a smoothie. I work with chakras and there are different recipes. I try to make whatever smoothie will work with whatever chakra I'm working on. Or base it off of whatever I have in the freezer. There are about eight or seven different ones that I work with. I try to do the fruit before noon, but I often will do bagels because I'll need more than just the fruit. Especially in the colder months because I'll feel like my body needs more fats. I'll do that if I'm craving breads.

Lunches, I would often eat out and go out to Stone Soup. I would eat some sort of variety of tofu or tempeh with rice and lots of different vegetables. Mostly I try to incorporate greens like kale or broccoli. Hummus a lot, soups sometimes. Oil is another thing, I'm not sure if I've gotten that down, like avocado, I try to eat a lot of oily food. I know I don't get as much fats as I used to. Burritos, so that's like beans and rice. Quinoa, I really like. So usually I'll do beans and rice or quinoa with vegetables and some cheeses. My favorite thing to do is to just stir fry them in an iron pan. I put some soy cheese on and it'll melt into it, it tastes really good. That's what I'll do for a quick dinner for myself cause I'm cooking for five other people or whatever. I used to try the soy yogurt and stuff but that never worked well with my digestion. Everything has become efficient. I love sugary stuff, so now if I want some I have to plan ahead. It's not that convenient every day. So it's like "Do I really want a cookie every day?" So that's helped with my sugar stuff.

Kelsey: How is cooking vegan and non-vegan things?

Participant 7: I don't have a problem with it. I think that's a major issue in the United States. They are forcing this and that. And people are telling them to eat this and not to eat that and they aren't listening to their own bodies. I really feel strongly that our bodies crave what they need. I was told that with my babies when they first started eating solid foods. The doctor was like your baby will eat what they crave. Let them eat what they want. Through their toddler years when they are running around and not eating so much, and the doctors were like they'll eat what their body needs. That has been the case with me, so I want to respect that with my kids. My second guy, my third kid needs red meat. I really feel that. He doesn't want it all the time but when he wants it, he loves it so I feel like his body needs something. I'm helping them make their own choices.

Just because I wouldn't skin a chicken, I don't think that has to be there's. I have asked that; like would you eat this chicken if you had to kill it? They will joke about it like "Well it would be funny if it ran around with its head cut off." And then I'd say "well then you'd have to skin it." And they are like "oohh..." so they are aware of the process and being connected with the process. I don't know if I would be connected to the process because I've never done it. Cause we're so far removed from the process of how our foods get to our plate. It is one thing to be aware of that process and for them to not be thinking "Mom's making me do this." I feel like that could lead to food issues with them later on.

I've become more and more grossed out by meat, which surprised me. Cause I wasn't a vegetarian or vegan who was anti-meat or grossed out by it. When I'm cooking it I feel like I'm cooking it for my husband or my kids so it's a different feeling than when I see pictures of red meat cooking on a grill. So my experience around it is different and smelling it is different than it was before.

Kelsey: How does your veganism interact with your work if at all?

Participant 7: I think it does, I think people are so shocked and curious about it that they will ask questions about it. When I was doing the cleanse and eating the foods I was eating, other people were like I was diabetic and this is what I had to do, so it definitely opens a conversation. Some people were not eating well were inspired. Some people have used as a support. They see me with my good food. I worked with this one man who ate pizza every day. And he got self-conscious about it because he walked by my desk every day. He would smell this awesomely yummy food. He started to slowly change. It was a reminder to him that "I'm being really unhealthy." He was so overweight and he had heart issues, he really needed to make a change. It seemed like those people were at a really low point with their health and their food choices.

Kelsey: How do you think that being vegan affects your experience of doing yoga?

Participant 7: Yeah, I think that was a surprise. I think it has softened my personality. I think that's a yogic philosophy as well. It takes some of the aggressiveness out of you. The whole karma of the animal going through makes a print karmically on you or something. I don't know about that, but it definitely made me a softer individual in general.

Kelsey: Do you think doing yoga affected the decision to go vegan?

Participant 7: No

Kelsey: How do you think that your ideas about veganism have changed overtime?

Participant 7: I was surprised that it was manageable. I never considered being vegan, I didn't really think it was necessary. I really liked being vegetarian. I thought that was more manageable, so if it wasn't for the dairy issues that I had, I don't think I would have considered veganism. It's not as difficult as I thought it would be. It's the same amount of time and choices as being vegetarian.

Kelsey: Why do you think you didn't think it was necessary before?

Participant 7: I thought that I wasn't passionate about the animal piece so much. I don't think I'd say that's a predominant piece for me. I was looking at veganism from an animal perspective and not from cutting it out for other reasons.

I think because it's (animal rights) is a part of it, I kind of embraced that and was more open to thinking about that part of it and where I stood with that. I think I have kept it as that same thing. I respect that each individual can have their own thing. I don't think that every vegan should be an animal activist.

Being introduced to that and participating in that is a really great feeling. To be like Wow! Imagine not touching animals at all, it's kind of a utopian idea and it's really a great benefit to live that way but I don't think that everyone should do that or that that's a solution for whatever...I can identify with that piece of it and I can identify with people who do it because of that because you know, what I thought was more difficult is really manageable. I share the manageability part of it because I think there are a lot of misconceptions. It's always a question; "where do you get your protein?"

Everything around it; I think how my thinking was different before, I think there can be some educational qualities around that and I definitely participate in that. But that's as far as I go because I don't feel like it's my place to say what's right for me is right for you.

Kelsey: Is there anything you want to add about veganism?

There is a whole medical model that I've never been entirely happy with. I think it's a structure that works but I also think it's a structure that limits people's understandings too because they can't support things that aren't researched a certain way or whatever. I had a sinus infection for the first time and it was from the heat in my work place. She was like oh well, it could be because you're eating vegan now. And you know even just those kind of messages, okay maybe it is but it wasn't. She's not my main doctor, she cannot say that she supports it because it is not backed by their medical model. There are a lot of other insinuations like with my childbirth. They were all at least two weeks overdue. She basically had to say to me that from my paperwork, this is what has to happen. For the medical model, they are reliable if they let me go two weeks overdue. I'm not going to fight it but is it really necessary?

It's not just the veganism that I've had discussions with my doctor about. I think everyone is over medicated.

I've had to make personal choices around that and veganism is one of those. It's interesting, I've had to use other resources like other vegans and naturopaths and things to make sure that I am getting what I need and not through my primary doctor.

I hadn't had health issues either; I think that sinus infection was a year ago. I've been to my primary doctor maybe twice in my adult life, so it's not like there are health issues there anyway. But she is definitely perplexed by it, not very pleased. I think it's a little outside of that food pyramid or whatever.

If I had ongoing health issues I would use someone different...Chinese herbs are different. I forgot some of the names of some that I would use. My mother in law uses naturopaths and stuff, more cutting edges. I would seek those out but for like a cold, I can deal with that and still receive what I need.

Kelsey: Do you know any other vegans and do they provide a support system for you?

Participant 7: Yeah, I don't know a lot in this area. I don't even know if I know of any. I've met some random people in this immediate area. The vegans that I use were friends I had that live away from here and they were really helpful with recipes at first and questions about how I was feeling and that sort of thing. I think they and I are always trying new and different things. We check in like "I'm eating this thing and try it out."

(Knew them before she was vegan)

Kelsey: Do you think they were also a reason that you decided to be vegan?

Participant 7: I actually always kind of looked at “oh my god, they must have all this time.” Again my preconceptions were really off so I think I kind of looked at them like oh they are so lucky. This is a lazy excuse. I think change is a challenge at first so I don’t necessarily look for that or embrace it.

What was great about that seven-day program. It started in September which was when school starts. It was the busiest time for everyone. I was at the Flynn and that’ our season subscription time when people buy all of the shows for the year. And the fair shows, it was like the worst possible timing. And then it just happened that I had a day off the day before the program was supposed to start. And then the day off, I was like “you know what? I have time to get the food that I need to make.” And that was a put off to because I had never made the food before. You’re supposed to rest during a cleanse and you don’t feel very well doing it. I did. I took it one little step at a time. The food lasted three or four days so I didn’t have to make food for it every day.

It just kind of worked out. Usually my experiences are so much better than my thinking is. My thinking tends to be negative. The whole cleanse made me slow down which was actually a better response to all of the activity going on in my life then being all revved up and be in it all the time. It gave me a calm and a peace during that time which was no coincidence.

Having that regimented time worked better for that. My husband was vegetarian before, but then he was like “I don’t have time.” So he has the same thing as I had so it’s interesting to see. It’s probably pretty common that we say we can’t before we even try.

Sudden into veganism after the cleanse.

I realized that I really wanted to commit to go online and answer people’s questions. I wanted to give back like there is a service component to it. There is not a lot of information like I didn’t know anyone in the area. There are not as many resources for people who are interested. I think you definitely need support when you are making a transition.

That was a surprise too, part of my experience of being vegan is that I need to offer that support back to others which is why I answered you’re invite to this. It’s unique; I didn’t feel that way when I was vegetarian or when I eat meat. I don’t know why that is.

Most people are like “maybe I’d try that, but...” I’ve seen a lot of the thinking I had.

Participant 8 (Female, Age: 54, Years Vegan: 7)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 8: I work at the UVM Foundation. Before Burlington, I lived in New Jersey. I am 54; the Foundation is separate from UVM, but it raises money for UVM. I have been vegan for 7 years.

Kelsey: Is your family vegan?

Participant 8: No. My daughter is not vegan and I have one son who just became vegetarian.

Kelsey: How strict are you as a vegan? Is it just about food for you?

Participant 8: I am pretty strict. For me, it is an environmental thing. It is not just about cruelty to animals. I know that sounds bad. I do wear leather and down. For me, it was about greenhouse gases and the effects of factory farms on air quality and the environment. It was pretty much purely about the environment. I had a summer place in South [Hero?] and I was driving my car from NJ to VT a lot, in an SUV. That was 600 miles every weekend. I wanted to offset the carbon footprint thing and started reading about how being a vegan could send a message about factory farming.

Kelsey: How did you get to that reading?

Participant 8: I read a lot of stuff. One book, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, a dumb title, was a really compelling reasoned argument. It compared people who eat the standard American diet, SAD, people who don't eat too much meat and who eat just fish, people who are vegetarian, and people who are vegan. It talked about the facts and figures of the impact on the environment of those choices. It was so compelling. Even things like eggs and cheese, here in Vermont six years ago; there weren't that many vegan options. I was touring a dairy farm just purchased by a friend of mine with my family and I knew everyone in my family did not want me to bring up the vegan thing. Finally, I said, when everyone in my family could hear, "so when you have babies, when the calves are born, what do you do with the male cows?" She pointed to a dumpster in the back. I said to my family, "See, milk and cheese are extremely offensive when you think that every other baby calf that is born is dumpsterized. How can you do that? The public image of the Vermont dairy farm is so sweet and innocent, but really it is not."

Kelsey: Do you think your reasons have evolved from being purely environmental to also humanitarian?

Participant 8: Yes. If I am ever tempted to eat bacon or something, because if I ate a strip of bacon it would not hurt the environment, I do think about sentient beings. In this book, it is amazing, I am learning that animals are just as intelligent as people, so yes; eating an intelligent being freaks me out now where it didn't in the beginning.

Kelsey: In the beginning, how did you feel physically and emotionally?

Participant 8: I wish I could say I felt so healthy, but that really was not so. I was a pretty healthy eater before. I was raw for a while. So, I had already evolved since I became a vegan. I changed immediately, not gradually after reading that book. I couldn't go back.

Kelsey: How did your family react when you said you were going to become vegan?

Participant 8: I spoke with my husband about it. He said, "You don't have to answer to anyone. If you decide to have a hamburger, no one can complain about that." I appreciated that because we all have strange rules about what we eat and what they don't eat. For example, even if they are meat eaters, they may not eat deep fried chicken. Everyone has something. I didn't think it was that different that I would

have a few rules. My family is meat eating and I would cook it for them. I had trouble buying it, but if they bought it and I had to form a couple of burgers and throw it on the grill, that was okay. I was raising children and I did not want to force my views on them. They were clear about why I was doing it, but I had no interest in forcing others to do it. I don't even like to get into the discussion about it with other people because it is kind of a personal thing/

Kelsey: How did your kids react?

Participant 8: I think they are really proud of me. I know they mention it now at then. One time, I voted Republican and they said, "Mom, you are the only vegan Republican in the world." That's funny. I am not a Republican. It is just the image of vegans with hemp clothes ... I dye my hair. I am not an au naturel person at all. I just booked a facial for Valentine's Day. I don't feel the pressure to be real consistent. It is something I am doing just for myself.

Kelsey: Before you were vegan, did you have preconceived ideas of what a vegan was?

Participant 8: Yes. I am a fitness trainer and I used to do weight loss training. I had clients who would want to do weight loss. One of the things I would do is take them to a grocery store and I would take them around and show them what they could eat. This one client was a vegan and I thought, "What?" She was very heavy actually. I wondered how she could ever think she could lose weight and only eat carbs. I told her she can't be a vegan and lose weight – that she couldn't do both. She wouldn't eat pasta, wouldn't eat honey, and wouldn't eat vitamins in capsules. I thought she was nuts; her higher priority was that she was overweight. Now, I feel I should reach back in time and apologize to her. Not that I ever said anything. I get it now; I just wasn't as evolved as she was then.

Kelsey: Did you become vegan while you were a fitness trainer?

Participant 8: Yes, I am still a fitness trainer. I don't work at it as a profession now, but I still have my certification.

Kelsey: How does being vegan play into your work, either as a fitness trainer or at UVM?

Participant 8: No, I don't think it does. The only thing I can think of is that when there are shakes at the gym that have milk in them, I wonder why people are doing that. It is really separate. At UVM, I don't even bring it up, especially because I am new. I went on a business trip to Florida a few weeks ago and we were invited out to dinner at steak houses both nights. There was nothing on the menu I could eat except broccoli. I wanted to say, "This is so unimaginative. I don't want to insult you for eating meat, but isn't there something else we could eat?" I just think it's funny when people think that if they really want a treat or if they really want to celebrate, they go out for steak. But, I am new at my job and I did not want to smack everyone around and ask to get veggies. I don't want to draw attention to myself.

Restaurants are challenging. I just went to Café Shelburne. It is a beautiful French restaurant in Shelburne. The chef there goes five stars on everything. But, as vegan eating there, it is almost impossible unless you get just the green salad. We were there the other night and I said to the waitress to ask the chef to take all these entrées that have meat and just take the little sides and put them on a plate for me if it not a problem. They did. I had the best meal at the table. It was just beautiful. The side dishes were much more interesting than some slab of meat. I told her, she should think about just putting that on the menu. You can have a gorgeous meal without the big slab of meat.

Kelsey: What are some other obstacles as a vegan?

Participant 8: Traveling. It is really hard to eat in airports. I don't do well with soy, so tofu is hard for me and you can only eat so many peanuts on a plane. I pack my lunch a lot. I take food with me. If I get to choose for meals, I will go to City Market or Healthy Living to eat. If my husband wants to go out on a date, I'll recommend them. He likes it and I can get the groceries done. They have so many choices. Places like Penny Clues or Ali Baba's; there are many places that have fun vegan food. There could be so much more. Like Flatbread, all their bread has cheese on it so you can get only a salad and a beer.

Kelsey: Did you have different challenges when you first became vegan?

Participant 8: I went a little overboard. I stocked up on all kinds of grains. I started sprouting my own beans and nuts. My family did come and make fun of me about that. I have a son who is 21 and he opened the refrigerator and said, "Mom, this is gross. There are jars and jars of sprouting things. Where is the food?" I was the only one eating that stuff, anyway, so I am a bit more cautious about overdoing it now. Plus, there is so much stuff you can eat without having to cook so many grains. There are all kinds of things you can eat that are ready to go.

Kelsey: What is a typical day for you in terms of food?

Participant 8: I like to cook bread. I have a really good baguette recipe and so I love that. I would cut some slices of that put it on a Panini press with some Earth Balance for breakfast. Maybe put on some peanut butter instead of Earth Balance. I packed my lunch. I made my own cole slaw with maple syrup, vinegar, olive oil. I had some pickles, peanuts, and an apple for lunch. I'll probably have a bean burger for dinner. I had some great sautéed kale last night. I know this sounds weird and people make fun of it, but kale is great. People make fun of it.

Kelsey: Could you talk about having a non-vegan family?

Participant 8: I spend a lot of time with my parents, so that is also part of my family. So, I plan meals for both my kids and my parents. I can make a whole vegan dinner for my kids and they won't complain about it. They are really open about that. They like sesame noodles with peanut sauce or stir fry and keep the chicken out. I could cook like that for them for the rest of their lives. My husband is a runner and he is very skinny and he feels that he needs the protein: turkey, chicken. I don't think he would last long unless it was spaghetti. My parents are very retro. My mom thinks it isn't a meal unless there is bacon or cheese, sour cream. Breakfast is always eggs and dinner is always meat. My dad is losing weight when he needs to gain a few pounds. My mom is always pushing him with beef. I wish I could be their chef and make really delicious stuff for them that is really healthy.

Kelsey: Have you ever talked to them about this?

Participant 8: Yes. They are always asking if this is just a phase of the day, "What will be next, only white food?" They are dismissive. I see them gradually moving away from it. My mom read an article about pork and no longer eats that. They have moved away from fish. So, it is better if they come to this in their own way, anyway. I don't want to force them.

Kelsey: Where you interested in environmental reasons before you were a vegan?

Participant 8: Have you read the book *No Impact Man*? I have gone through having no impact, such as compost all the food, reuse everything. This was the big change for me.

Kelsey: Do you support other food movements?

Participant 8: *Rawvolution*, I think is really amazing. It is the coolest thing. The theory is that raw food has higher enzyme levels and it helps digestions. It is hard, you have to do it right. Soaking and sprouting nuts and seeds make them so much more digestible. It is really tough on your system to go raw without doing it the right way. There is a book, *Raw Food Revolution*, which is unbelievable about a gourmet restaurant in NYC, called Pure Food and Wine. They have sake martinis; their cookbook is killer amazing. When I have the time to shave beets really thin so it is like pasta ... it takes time. I felt better and I lost weight. I just couldn't keep it up. I'd do it again, maybe once my job isn't so new. My kids are at college, so I would have the time.

Kelsey: The raw food thing was for health reasons?

Participant 8: It just seemed like good science. Intellectually, it just made a lot of sense. *Raw Food, Real World* was the cookbook.

Kelsey: Do you participate in any organizations related to veganism?

Participant 8: I started a group of Vegan Marathoners. I ran a half marathon. I wanted to prove you could eat vegan and still do that kind of athletic thing. I am no longer in that group.

Kelsey: Were you always interested in running?

Participant 8: At one point in my life, I lost a lot of weight. I wanted to surprise my husband for his birthday, so I trained for a half marathon.

Kelsey: Do you reach your goal?

Participant 8: I did not stick with it long enough. I am on some online groups. Do you know Volentia? It is an anti-violence group. It is helpful to get connected. There is a vegan food truck I follow on Facebook called *This Lemon Snail*. They have unbelievable food and they are really cool people. I have never eaten their actual food. Their food is amazing. It is so much fun to listen to what they are doing: donuts, cupcakes, toasted seitan.

Kelsey: Do you have friends who are vegan?

Participant 8: I really don't know anyone else who is vegan.

Kelsey: How do your friends react to your being vegan?

Participant 8: They are pretty respectful of it. When I left my last job, I had a group of 10 – 12 women friends and one was vegan and they were so supportive. They gave me herbs and spices to use for roasting vegetables. That was really nice.

Kelsey: How do you think your veganism affects other people outside friends and family?

Participant 8: The vast majority of people are not vegan or vegetarian. I doubt that there is much understanding about it. I also don't see it as my job to educate them. If I get to know someone really well, I might talk about the costs of producing meat and the costs of food in general. There are lots of people who are not open to knowing that stuff.

Kelsey: How is being a vegan in Burlington compare to being a vegan in New Jersey?

Participant 8: There is much more fresh food here. There is more interesting organic stuff, so I think you can eat better here with fresh produce. But, there is also a lot of milk, cheese, ice cream worshipping here. There is more soy based stuff in grocery stores; Samosa Man has two or three vegan samosas. I saw

vegan tamales in Healthy Living without cheese in it. A couple of years ago, you could not get any of that without cheese in it.

Kelsey: What changes in your life did you experience?

Participant 8: It makes me feel that I am contributing to the world in my own small way. I'm not religious or get involved in causes, but this is sort of a cause, I guess. I feel better about my carbon footprint. I am faithful to it and I stick to it. No one else but me is concerned about this, but I am.

Kelsey: What do you think about the vegan movement and your role in it?

Participant 8: It is tied up with so many things: global hunger, poverty, water resources, organic food movement, and local food movement. It is tied to foreign trade; when China can't feed its people, can't afford meat in every diet, there is a message there about when you eat meat, you are the luxury food eater and you are taking resources from other people. They say it takes ten times as many resources to produce one pound of meat than one pound of grain. So, you are really selfishly taking up resources when you eat meat. I am treading a little more lightly on the world than the average meat eater. I don't have to broadcast that and make people feel bad, but it makes me feel good.

Kelsey: Did this affect your health?

Participant 8: I never got to the doctor. I never get sick. Maybe there is something to that. I think I got sick more before I was vegan.

Kelsey: Do you think you could be a healthy vegan runner?

Participant 8: Yes, I still run. I am not training for a race now, but I can be a healthy runner.

Kelsey: Did being vegan affect your running?

Participant 8: I was a vegan a bit before I was a runner. I think I have to be more careful to make sure I get enough protein. I am 54, I don't need that much protein. I think if I were to race, I would have to find more protein. I could do that; more pea soup and more hummus. I can dial that back and forth and still be a vegan.

Kelsey: Are there other events or books that changed the way you think about being vegan?

Participant 8: Many books. *The Science of Overeating* has much information about the restaurant industry's use of cheese and meat to addict people to overeating. I can send you my list. You get the facts from books.

Kelsey: How did you learn how to be vegan?

Participant 8: Many cookbooks. Even if I did not make their recipes, reading how they did things was really helpful.

Kelsey: Was it challenging when you first became vegan?

Participant 8: It was really challenging. I had to read a lot of labels. I looked for casein or cheese powder. I learned about the prevalence of cheese in salad dressings. It is the same with bread and eggs and milk. How can I tell what has milk in it? I have to read the labels all the time. That kind of thing is hard in the beginning.

Kelsey: If you spoke with someone who wanted to be vegan, what would you recommend?

Participant 8: I would want to say that the food you eat is more delicious as a vegan. You can have more creative, gourmet, delicious food. It is not about missing some types of food, but enjoying what you can eat. There is so much that you can eat. Many people think of it as being deprived, but I don't think it is about that at all. I have hard time thinking about talking someone into it. My son, who became vegetarian, I don't even know why. He just did, one day. He didn't do it because I did it. It probably took him longer because he didn't want to be like his mother.

Kelsey: Did you son become vegetarian in college?

Participant 8: No, out of college. He is the oldest one. We have not talked about why. I should. He and I eat some of the same stuff. I should ask him why.

Kelsey: Is there anything else we should cover?

Participant 8: We cover so much. We spoke about how all things overlap: water resources, Department of Agriculture. The shift to veganism, I may be wrong, but I think it is growing in popularity. It could have a huge impact on our economy and people are afraid of that. There are so many beef producers and the farming industry is such big business that if they see a drop in demand for beef and eggs and milk, it would impact the economy pretty drastically. The opposite is true for producers of beans and grains. It could have an effect on the economy. I think it will continue to grow. It is healthier, it is environmentally sounder. The only drawback is that you can't eat everything you see.

Kelsey: How will the vegan movement grow?

Participant 8: The food industry is motivated by profit. If they see that people buy more French fries, if they see more people see Oreos are vegan, they might shift. That is a cool thing actually.

Kelsey: Were you vegetarian first?

Participant 8: I went straight to vegan.

Participant 8: It is creepy that vegetable growers in California are getting E. coli from the runoff and wastes from animal farms up the hill. That is disgusting. You are not really safe even if you just eat vegetables. I was always interested in food. I like to eat and my mom liked to cook. I like to cook.

Kelsey: Do you enjoy food more?

Participant 8: Yes. If you just went home and had grilled chicken breast and potatoes that is boring. If you made vegetables, that is interesting. Chicken is just white. Vegetable are multiple colors and beautiful. The food is more beautiful and there is such a variety of tastes between vegetables. Chicken is just what it is, a blank canvas.

Kelsey: What do you think the vegan movement means?

Participant 8: Some people have apoplectic views of this that the food supply is in danger. If we have a breakout of E. coli, then we have to retreat to plant-based food. I don't think that will happen. Food is more expensive. It is way more expensive to eat animals. The whole economy is dialing back. If we want to be frugal, we have to be vegan. But I have a mink coat, so the environment is the reason I do this, to balance out my SUV.

Participant 9 (Female, Age: 24, Years Vegan: 2)

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 9: I was born in California and all over the world cause my dad worked for the government. I wound up going to a university for nursing. I graduated three years ago and moved to Vermont last summer. I grew up with the Standard American Diet. My dad made me macaroni and cheese and hotdogs and tuna fish and those were my favorite foods. My grandma used to say that my favorite foods were milk and chocolate. The standard opening story of what I've heard.

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about how you started being vegan?

Participant 9: I was pretty classic omnivore. I was on the anti-vegetarian soapbox. I asked that question in nutrition class once; I was like are vegetarian diets safe? The professor said yes and I was mad. I had two vegetarian roommates one year and I used to make the other one mad by eating fried chicken in front of here when she would make me mad. I was just a horrible person in my past life.

It started for me a little more than two years ago when I started reading about food. There was a display at my public library, the Columbia library and they had different themed books at the library every month. It was September and they had food books so I checked out every food book, I was really into books.

First I started out on the whole grass fed beef thing, thinking that oh! I'm so good, eating these humanely slaughtered animals now. They are not eating crap and blah blah blah. And then I accidentally read *The Face on Your Plate*. I always forget the guy's name. I was really taken aback by all of these animal emotions so I started reading all about vegetarianism and I was on this kind Atkins-y diet. I was eating a steak one day and I was just like I can't eat this anymore, I can't eat this dead animal anymore, so I went vegetarian that minute. That was in the fall of 2010. I started experimenting with veganism and vegan food so after about a month I was like for sure I'm going vegan in the New Year. So I was vegan in the New Year 2011.

It was kind of strange because it was almost like I was meant to go vegan because I was drawn to these books. There was like a power that was out of me that was like you must do this. That's kind of the strange part of it, but it helps me solidify my veganism because it's like it's meant to be almost.

Kelsey: Do you think the people who you knew were vegetarian before helped you go towards those books?

Participant 9: I don't think that they did. Maybe they did talk to me about vegetarian diets but I must have tuned it out. Because I was like I'm not listening to you right now, I'm eating my meat. Mostly it was the reading and doing my own education that did it.

It was kind of a turning point in my life and I kind of wanted to eat better. So it started out as health reasons really. I hate to say that because...any reason to go vegan is good but health reasons usually don't keep people vegan. It started out as a health issue but as I saw all of the suffering and all of the injustice, it became more about that so I know completely identify with the ethical aspect. Just today they were talking about vegan diets. And there was someone who was like "well, I know someone who tried the vegan diet but they went back..." and I wanted to just raise my hand and be like vegan is not a lifestyle, it's a way of being. It's not a diet, but whatever. I just let that go.

Kelsey: How is it being in nursing school and being vegan?

Participant 9: I've had nurses ask me; where do you get your protein? The other day who is new at our unit was like "Ahh, I need my protein!" and I'm like well if you eat enough calories you'll get enough protein. I kind of explained to her, she wasn't so sure. But it's true; Do I look like I'm dying? I've been doing this for two years.

I did have a doctor say to me, the very first doctor I worked with as a nurse, the very first thing she asked me was where do you get your protein? She's been a doctor for a long time so there is a lot of back lash in the mainstream medical field.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 9: I try and educate people as best I can, but some people don't want to hear it. And sometimes it will just come out of left field. It'll happen when I'll be eating something and they'll be like "oh did you try this!" I try not to make it an issue and I'll just say "ahh, I just don't eat that stuff." And they'll ask why and I'll be like I'm not going to lie to them "I'm vegan!"

It's not something to be ashamed about either. They'll be like "oh the vegan will tell you..." but there's nothing to be ashamed about either. You don't want to hide your veganism. And they are like "oh you don't know what you are missing, and we're hunters. And we have these canine teeth." When that happened, it really disarmed me because I hadn't gotten the arguments in a long time, I wasn't used to that. They left before I could argue. Then I ate a bunch of Oreos to console myself.

Kelsey: How did your family and friends respond when you first became vegan?

Participant 9: They were surprised. My dad used to tell people how good I was at cleaning chicken's bones and he was almost proud of that, not that it's anything to be really proud of. To me that was what I was. When I told them I was going vegetarian they were like "no, no way that's not happening." And then we were at a family dinner near Christmas time and I had already made the decision to go vegan in the New Year.

They were telling my grandma's cousin who we were eating with that "oh, Participant 9's gone vegetarian but it's okay because she's ovo-lacto. I was like yeah but I'm going to be vegan for New Year. They were irritated; you are so dumb, why would you do that. And I would be like "I'm not doing it to make you mad.

My mom called me one time and she said that "you know Participant 9, I just love meat and I can't get rid of it." I forgot about the conversation before that but I casually told her that I meat is like the holocaust but it's worse because it's 50 billion animal a year. She got mad and thought that I was associating her with endorsing genocide type stuff. She hung up on me. We get along for the most part though; I just won't tell her that she's a mass murderer.

My parents aren't that liberal and they will accept me no matter what. My family wasn't originally from California; they are pretty conservative. I told them that my carbon footprint was reduced and he told me that "well, actually your carbon footprint increased because vegans fart more." And I was like "oh my god, this conversations' over."

Kelsey: How did it feel when you first became vegan?

Participant 9: I'm a very adaptable person, so it wasn't difficult. I actually felt better. I noticed that I didn't get cramps during that time of the month. But mostly I didn't notice a huge difference. I just felt better in my heart when I was choosing things that were conscious. I would be like "I'm not choosing this

because something suffered to make this, it doesn't feel good at all." I eat a lot of cheese cause everyone is always Chees is my downfall! I like cheese but it wasn't my favorite.

It's funny cause you will go to a restaurant and be like "why does it have cheese in it?!" It's not necessary. There was a difficult when we went to Olive Garden, it was just the learning curve really. I was eating pasta and my sister was like you know they probably made that pasta with egg. I knew she was right and I was like "It is everywhere."

Kelsey: What would you say is the biggest obstacles in being vegan?

Participant 9: Food is everywhere, so that was never an obstacle. The thing that's hard for me now is that there is so few of us and there are so many omnivores and it's very alienating sometimes. I went to the gym yesterday and I was with two friends and I was like I have Kale in my car! And he said, "You don't have bacon in your car?" like "no..." and he said "it could have been a free range piggy." And then we started talking about how they eat everything and they don't care. It made me feel very sad and alone.

Kelsey: Do you have a vegan support system?

Participant 9: I try to. I've been trying to get online more to connect with more vegans. And like I said I just moved to Vermont. I feel like Vermont is very progressive, but it is slightly more difficult to find more vegans because it's a dairy state. But they are out there and it's just a matter of finding them. But I've met a few here and there. That helped a little bit.

Kelsey: Before you moved to Vermont did you know vegans and did they provide help?

Participant 9: I didn't know another vegan until almost a year after I'd been vegan. I had known vegetarians here and there. The first vegan that I knew and met was a guy that I dated a year ago. It was amazing to find a vegan, it was like there you are you exist. It was a guy I liked, it actually spoiled me a bit. I don't think I could ever date a non-vegan now. After that I found a couple here and there but I have to actively seek them out and that's the hard part. It's not hard to find friends necessarily, it's sometimes difficult with finding the vegans.

Kelsey: How does being vegan affect your relationship with friends or people?

Participant 9: Most people really understand. I had a thanksgiving at an omnivore house. They had turkey and that was sad, but they made me a vegan dish and that was really nice. I was like "thanks for that!" So people are generally supportive, they may still want to argue the point. My friends have been supportive.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about your day-to-day life as a vegan? Do you focus on more than just what you eat?

Participant 9: Right now, I really will just eat. I'm a nurse now and I've been working a lot and going to school. I like to go to the Co-op and make food that way. I don't do that much cooking, I wish I did more. I just get so tired that I don't have time. The cool thing about vegan food is that it's pretty easy to through together. Beans and rice are awesome. Wraps I throw together. I'm moving towards incorporating more raw foods for health reasons. Raw foods are easy to throw together too, unless you are going all gourmets with the dehydrating and all that.

I think it's easier than people want to make it. I just avoid the places that I know are not going to find anything. Like if I go to a restaurant that I know is not going to having anything, I just don't go. I don't miss it. That place is just not an option for me. The places that I do find usually have pretty good variety.

Kelsey: How do you keep up with vegan things?

Participant 9: I like all the vegan pages on Facebook. I don't fight with people, but they try to fight with me. I like Happy Cow, that's a great resource. I do keep up with the vegan world and follow up with a lot of the animal rights causes and a lot of inspiring vegans who are leading the way, making change and getting their message out.

Kelsey: How do you think non-vegans view people who are vegan?

Participant 9: As a former crazy omnivore. I thought they were preachy and in your face. I thought they were judging me for who I was. I thought that they were all crazy and had B12 deficiencies and that's what made them crazy. What I realized later on though. I'm so different now, it's just amazing, I wouldn't be able to believe myself three years ago. Basically what I think is that we all have that capacity for compassion but these foods and ways of life that we've been brought up with...you don't want to make people who you up wrong, you don't want to make yourself wrong.

You're going throughout your day sleepwalking, eating these foods and wearing and using these animal products on a daily basis, not realizing how much suffering is engrained in everything. And you don't want to know. When someone points it out to you, you feel bad but you don't want to know. You don't want to feel bad about it so you make them feel bad instead. That's how I feel. It's like a cognitive dissonance. I would say things like "I could never kill anything," and I turn away from violence, I don't like anything gory, I don't like any horror movies, and it was always me, I was just denying.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about that evolving process?

Participant 9: It was like waking up. It was like being in a long long dream and then waking up and being like this is reality. It's what's really going on and do I want to make this choice to participate in this suffering and I have this choice. Once I started making the choices that were more compassionate choices, I felt like I became more of who I really was. This person was waiting to be self-realized.

Kelsey: Do you have to deal with nutrition as a nurse?

Participant 9: No, the nutritionist does that. But it is hard being a nurse because when I was in the nursing home, I would have to feed patients pills mixed with applesauce or pudding and most of the time it was pudding. So I'm feeding my patients pudding and I'm like I'm feeding them poison and I'm feeding them suffering. The hospital food has meat as the center of every meal and it's not really that quality meat. Not that that matters, but I'm actually taking steps away from mainstream medicine now. I'm taking an herbal medicine path and working on being a naturopath. I'm definitely going to be touting the benefits of a vegan diet to my patients once I have my own.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 9: I don't feed them; I'm not the one delivering the food cart to them. I can't control that and as a nurse I can't tell a patient to do anything they don't want to do to their body. It's not ethical at any level. I have had a couple of vegetarian patients. They've been younger. I advocate strongly for them. This one guy came up to me and he asked "Does this look like a veggie patty to you? And I was like "I don't know, let's just make sure." I was on the phone, "Is this vegetarian" and they brought the box down.

Day-to-Day nutrition doesn't come up that often.

Kelsey: How did you come to information like the China Study?

Participant 9: I think Facebook has really helped. Once I've liked a page, they recommend books. The China Study was one of the first books that I read. It was one of those books that was in those nutrition themed books at the library.

Kelsey: How do you think being vegan has affected being a nurse?

Participant 9: It's made me question what mainstream forces tell us because everyone tells us that you need to have these things to survive and that's BS. I've really started to question medicine because no one is getting better. I have worked at good nursing homes but part of the mainstream medical filled is to prescribe these medicines willy-nilly. Nobody is getting better; everyone is just living, surviving. Eating the Standard American Diet not only physically harms you but spiritually as well. I feel like it's almost a karmic debt for participating in suffering.

Kelsey: How did you accidentally read *The Face on Your Plate*?

Participant 9: Well because the cover on it shows a cow on a plate. At the time I had been reading books about grass fed beef so I could feel really good about eating meat and pat myself on the back for heating humane beef. And I'm reading this and was like wait a minute; this isn't what I thought it was. It's been so long since I've read it now that I can't remember everything that was in it and he dropped the vegan word, so I was like oh this guy is vegan. He kept talking about the feelings of all these animals and it was my first real exposure to all of that. It was like really? I didn't realize what dairy cows go through and it started me on that shift.

Kelsey: Why did you continue on the path because you were so adamant before?

Participant 9: I wasn't turned off of it. He didn't present it in a way that said you are doing this, it was more like this is what's going on. I was thinking wow! This is what's going on and I had no idea. I just had the stereotype that everybody is happy on farms with the barn and you know they get killed, but everybody has a nice death and whatever. I read more about farms and about farm animals.

Kelsey: Why did you try to be vegetarian first but not vegan?

Participant 9: I knew that meat was the first thing to go but I kind of felt like it was leading towards veganism. I had to make the transition at my own pace. Even before I was vegan, just vegetarian, I was eating vegan meals anyway. I was like I'll eat some cookies and cakes during the holidays and then go vegan. Even when I was eating those cookies and things, I felt like a monster for eating them. But then I didn't miss those things because I was able to find all the good baked things after that.

I had seen videos too, I watched in my face videos. I knew what happened to chicks, I knew what happened to chickens. I knew everything at that point. I can't eat this and okay know that it was made with the suffering.

Kelsey: If you were to talk to your former self, what would you say?

Participant 9: I would say, you don't know everything yet. The information that you're getting is not in your best interest. Just wait, you don't know everything yet.

Kelsey: How would you respond to people who want to be vegan, but they just aren't sure how to do it?

Participant 9: That happened to me the other day. It just shows that even though you may think you are not making a difference, you still are. I post videos on Facebook and stuff and it seems like it's falling on deaf ears. But a girl actually approached me. She was saying that she wanted to work with rescue dogs,

but she said “I’m worried that that’s not enough, if I want to help animals, I have to go vegan but I don’t know how. I need help and I know you can help me.”

I gave her the vegan starter kit from Mercy for Animals. There’s a new thing called vegankit.com. I think that’s the biggest barrier for people, they don’t know what they can eat instead.

Kelsey: How did you overcome that?

Participant 9: I read VegNews a lot. I went to various websites and all the meat analogs. It helped that I was in a college town and we had health food stores. There was a learning curve. I remember buying veggie cheese and thinking Yeah, Vegan cheese! But then no...that stuff has whey in it, you have to buy the vegan cheese and just those kind learning things.

Kelsey: Do you travel and how do you deal with being vegan then?

Participant 9: Well when I moved from Missouri to Massachusetts, they had a lot of vegan options. There is a great vegan restaurant there in Western Mass, there is a meetup group there. There’s all kind of resources in Massachusetts. There are slightly less resources here. There are vegetarians and vegans but they kind of live in the woodwork. They are not super active like they are at other places.

Kelsey: What do you do when you go to a place that is not vegan friendly?

Participant 9: I had been at the army reserve. Our rations, there is not a single vegan food. Well there are side orders that are vegan but they are not super great. I’ve had to go for drills on the weekend and no one in the military is really vegetarian. They do have vegetarian options in the rations, but not vegan ones. We would go to a restaurant and the only thing that would be available was the salad option which is like a half a thing of lettuce. I’m like I don’t want to order this because that’s what they think we eat. That’s the stereotype, that vegans only eat lettuce.

But there is nothing else on this menu and they aren’t flexible, so I would end up ordering this half head of lettuce. But I also took a couple of army people to a loving hut cause we drilled at a town called loving hut. I did take people to loving hut and it was hilarious.

I used to bring people regularly and it would be different people all the time too.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you want to add about being vegan and becoming vegan?

Participant 9: I wish that I had gone vegan way before this. I wish I didn’t have all the years and years of contributing in the past. But I just got to make it up the best I can. I read this somewhere else, it was an article that said that if you are super spiritual than you would be vegan but a lot of them aren’t. Someone posted his or her link of a former vegan. It had an article that really resonated with me. It said that people who were vegans beforehand were never vegan beforehand because being vegan is more than what you eat and what you wear, it’s a state of being. I just wrote off the cuff that vegan is not a lifestyle it is a heart place. Words mean things and I don’t see myself seeing that heart place.

Some have said that “I used to be vegan but I had to stop because I had some disease or whatever.” I think of that as kind of selfish. I don’t see myself being non-vegan for health reasons even if my health was deteriorating. And if one new study came out and was like “your health is deteriorating because you aren’t eating meat.” I still wouldn’t eat meat because to me it’s like why is my life more valuable than those animals’ lives?

Kelsey: Did you have any pets growing up?

Participant 9: Oh yeah, we're a cat family. I have two shelter cats right now. That was definitely a clue because when I took anatomy in high school, we dissected cats and I was physically incapable of doing it. I want to do it because at the time I was an omnivore and I was going to go to nursing school. At the time I didn't realize the horrors of the animals that get donated to those dissection things.

I picked up the scalpel getting ready to do it and I almost passed out, I couldn't do it. When I look back now I feel like I should have realized that I cannot do that and that it's not who I am.

Participant 10 (Male, Age: 29, Years Vegan: 8)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 10: I have been vegan for eight years. I am 29 now. I have been vegan since I started growing my hair and my hair is really long now. I was working at City Market and I decided to go vegan.

Kelsey: What do you do?

Participant 10: I currently work at Health Food Living. I am a receiver. Anything that comes into the store, I check it in and make sure it goes to where it needs to go.

Kelsey: How strict are you as a vegan?

Participant 10: I am pretty hard core. I meet the criteria of the Vegan Society of Britain. I adhere to absolutely not products derived from animals.

Kelsey: What led you to become vegan?

Participant 10: Short answer is some vegan propaganda, which was some PETA film called *Meet your Meat*, narrated by Alec Baldwin. It is a little 5 – 10 minute video of Alec talking about the effects of factory farms and images of factory farms. It goes through the section of different animals: chickens, cows. It really affected me. I was never vegetarian. For a while I stopped eating dairy, just because I didn't like it. It had nothing to do with the environment or compassion. It just grossed me out.

Kelsey: You didn't like the taste?

Participant 10: I was working at a convenience store and at the end of the night we had to wash out the pots that were at the coffee stand. There were two that had half and half and milk. For hours, it sat with a little bit in it. It just got so gnarly smelling and I opened up the vacuum pot and the putrid smells hit me. I never wanted to eat that again. When I think of dairy, I think of that disgusting smell. I wondered if I could eat an ice cream cake because I don't smell it. That was the last dairy thing I ate, a birthday ice cream cake for my 18th birthday. I realized I had to go zero tolerance, no dairy from anything. It became part of my identity and I was no longer a dairy eater. A couple of years later, I was affected by the video and I realized I would think of the video every time I eat a burger or chicken and it will affect me.

Kelsey: How did you find the propaganda?

Participant 10: It was at a music festival. I was talking to them about, the PETA 2 people, and explaining that I still eat fish. They gave me a DVD, a free copy. I watched it in my bedroom and thought that is it. I am done. I never want to eat meat from this again. I don't want to eat something from an animal that was suffering. I was at the grocery store and got free range turkey burgers and they sat in my refrigerator because I could not bring myself to eat them. I might have eaten fish in sushi. It dawned on me that if I want to be vegan, I have to adhere to the definition which is no fish. At the booth, they told me that the fish go through suffering when they are caught.

Kelsey: Why did you want to be a vegan?

Participant 10: There was maybe 10% pride in saying that I am a vegan and I follow the rules. The other part of it was living up to saying I was going to do it because it really affected me. I went shopping and wondered what I could eat. Part of it was I wanted to be zero tolerance about it or it would not last. I had to live up to the name. I wanted to have integrity.

Kelsey: Before you were vegan, did you have ideas about what it meant?

Participant 10: My friend had to remind me that this girl, April, met up with me. She was surprised that I was vegan. I used to scoff at her when we were younger and she was vegan and I was not. She stopped being vegan and was surprised I was now. Steak was my favorite food in my childhood and teens. My perception of vegans ... I didn't know what they were until I met April. I am the first in my family to even think about stuff like this. I grew up in the North End and it was isolated. I didn't know what it was until I was 17 or 18. My perception was, "Why wouldn't you eat meat because it is so delicious."

Kelsey: So the propaganda helped you change that thinking?

Participant 10: Yes. There must be something deeper psychologically then. It wanted to happen in me and when I saw the film, it was time for me to change. I think it was dormant in me before. I didn't sacrifice anything prior to that for ethical reasons. Well, that is not true; I don't do drugs or alcohol because of the way it affects society. Food had to do with being overweight but back then it had nothing to do with ethics or morals.

Kelsey: Do you think the no drinking or drugs plays into being vegan?

Participant 10: I think the mindset of being an absolute allows me to be more in that mindset. I say no at all times even when I am really tempted and everyone wants me to do it. Peer pressure from friends and drinking made me want to not do it even more. It correlated.

Kelsey: When you first became vegan, how did your friends and family react?

Participant 10: Good question. They had been used to the no dairy thing. At Thanksgiving, I did not eat dairy and I didn't have a good excuse. They just thought I was being a weirdo, but they loved me and gave me some bland potatoes. That happened for a few years. Then, I was dating a girl who was vegetarian and had been vegetarian her whole life. I said I wanted to go vegan and she said she wanted to, also. We got into it together. She didn't want to give up cream cheese, but she found tofu cream cheese. I was going to do it anyway, but I think she probably would not have done it without me. I think she is still vegan, but I don't know; that was a long time ago. Since she is still vegan, I can say she wasn't doing it just for me. I was going vegan with a girl I was dating. I don't think my friends cared. My brother doesn't care and my mom doesn't care. They think, "Participant 10's Participant 10 and he is a weirdo." They question me all the time. It will be harder to accommodate me if you make me food. Don't worry about it. My distant relatives are wondering what that is all about. One aunt asked, "Don't you believe in the food chain?" I said, "The food chain where we eat everything". I was being facetious. I got some snide remarks. Everyone has something to say; it is more people who I just meet. I stopped saying I am vegan; I don't volunteer it right away.

Kelsey: What kind of reaction do you get?

Participant 10: They look right at you and say, "Oh you are a vegan" and they are trying to decide if they are going to make a thing out of it. It is as if they want to say something and want to learn more about it ... I saw that girl April with someone she was dating. He thought I was straight edge and was pissed off with me because he had been beaten up by some straight edge people. Everyone has some sort of stance on it. I just don't care about their stance on it. I just want to be normal; the more normal I am - well, I don't look normal nor do I act normal - but I have a friend who looks normal and acts normal and has been vegan for longer than I have been. He lives in town. His name is Ed. He introduced me to the idea of being a normal vegan. The more normal you can be as a vegan, the more people can accept that veganism is not an extreme phase or a fad or an extreme movement. They look at me or someone with tattoos and think veganism is just another way of being extreme. Ed is not extreme. He is a normal guy, straight,

clean-cut. You would be surprised that he is vegan and it makes it a game changer. I strive to be vegan and be normal. Other people get to know me and not my diet. Whatever connotation people have about veganism colors their perception of me. Ed and I met at the dairy department of City Market and he was volunteering there. They stuck him in the dairy department. We talked to each other and realized that we were both vegan and we were both stuck in the dairy department. We are now the best of friends. I learned about veganism from him, too. He spent time in Boston and more exposure to city life. In Boston, people know about it. In Burlington, it is on the outskirts and there are few options at restaurants.

Kelsey: Do you have other vegan support systems?

Participant 10: I have tried to years ago. One of the girls I dated was vegan and the one after that went vegan to try to impress me. That was part of our social aspect. There is a social aspect, but I don't have to have vegan pot lucks to remind myself to be vegan or that veganism can be fun. It has gone beyond the point of feeling normal. I am not interested in veganism any more, it is just who I am. I would like to explore some deeply philosophical ideas. I could do more as an activist. I am content with living up to the standards of being vegan and I don't have to do anything else to be vegan. I don't have to do anything else. I am in my comfort zone. I don't need vegan pot lucks and I don't need to meet more vegans. I don't need to go to protests or meetings. I like to do what I can because I am knowledgeable but I am not driven to get other people to be vegan. It works for some people and not for others. I wouldn't ask indigenous societies to go vegan. The only people I am concerned about going vegan are privileged societies.

My downstairs next door neighbor saw some vegan propaganda and wanted to know more about it. She loved animals, all of them, and saw three vegan documentaries and asked me to help her with it. She talked a lot about changing herself. I gave her a book and a cookbook and told her to just do it. I wish everyone could be vegan?

Kelsey: What kind of person can go vegan?

Participant 10: Psychologically, that person must be okay with their anger. It makes you angry when you see terrible things happening all around you. It is funny – once you become vegan, you don't need to see more pictures of slaughter houses. I know and it sucks. There is no point in talking about it unless someone wants to know about it. You have to be okay with that anger and frustration. I know some vegans who are not okay with that anger. It makes them unhappy and annoyed with the world. They feel like outcasts. I try to work in a place that sells meat and dairy and my work goes to supporting a company that profits from the exploitation of animals. I need a job and I need to work. You have to be okay with the world the way it is. If not, you will find some way to say it is okay to eat meat and dairy. Not just that you like to eat meat and dairy, but that you should. Just because you go vegan and you want the world to change, it takes some knowledge that you are not going to get pissed today or you are not going to succumb to the justification of eating meat.

I'm in a band and the bassist is a meat-cutter. There is a vegan drummer. The bassist lives meat and wants to talk about types of meat, grass fed beef, all the things he can make from meat. But, the guys are eating garbage, hormone pumped, pink slime stuff. He would like the grass fed beef, but they want to believe there is some version of the meat out there. If they eat a \$9 hamburger from Misery Loves Company once a week, they are doing what they can to feel better about eating meat. But that is only in the people who are conscious of the immorality of the ethics of eating animal things.

Kelsey: What is it like working at City Market or Healthy Living as a vegan?

Participant 10: Because they are both grocery stores, I once walked up to a sandwich station and the person there rolled her eyes and said the word “vegan” as I was coming up. I realized I was not going to get a sandwich from that person. There was a problem of using a different knife for spreading vegan cream cheese versus dairy cream cheese. They were not even trying. If anyone has to deal with a vegan customer or picky customer ... I use those places a lot to learn about other people’s non-veganism. I spoke with people in the break room about it. Why did people want to eat meat? There would be tension. It was about differences between co-workers. I have strong ethical beliefs and other people might be opposed to people like me and they don’t want to talk about it or think about it. There is tension with the differences. It has not been an issue with management or work structure or discrimination.

Kelsey: Did you learn from those conversations?

Participant 10: There was a woman who still works at City Market from Armenia. I asked her, as a person from a different culture and as a pretty firm person, I asked her why she eats meat. She looked at me and said, “I like meat.” I realized that’s it. She did not dance with her words; she was direct. Since then, no animal product person has topped that answer. She is not going to argue with me or provide justifications. I can’t argue with that. I can’t argue with tastes or preferences. I realized that I should stop asking about preferences. I don’t think people eat meat for any other reason than they like eating it. I do believe there can be a health need for nutrients obtained best from animal products.

There was another time that helped me to calm down. I spoke with someone who had a vegetarian shirt with a cartoon pig that said, “Don’t eat me” but she was walking with a plate with meat on it. She said bacon is delicious and I was offended at the time that she would wear the shirt and eat bacon. It is confusing and inconsistent. I told my friend the story and he agreed that bacon is delicious. I had to walk away from that, too. I couldn’t argue with it.

Kelsey: They helped you understand the paradox?

Participant 10: Yes, I can’t convince someone to be vegan. The best seed to plant is to be pretty solid, healthy and normal. Saying anything about being vegan stimulates some reaction in them that is more detrimental than helpful. Trying to get people to become vegan is manipulative. I don’t want to do that. If you are unhappy being vegan, you are also a suffering animal. We feed into the idea that humans are separate from animals. Speciesism is the next level for me. I don’t think humans are above animals. That separation makes us feel power over animals and we have responsibility over them. It is a paradox. Ethically, we shouldn’t use the power. I don’t want people to be unhappy.

Kelsey: Were you involved in any protests or movements?

Participant 10: I did one a few years ago. My friends organized a vivisection thing at UVM. Apparently, there are a bunch of vegans at UVM and they don’t integrate into the Burlington vegan community. There were about 20 of us and someone heard of us and the news channel was there and the police were there. It didn’t feel like it did anything. I am not a protester. Everyday life is subtly protesting. I am annoyed by protesters; you are making me not care about it by putting it in my face. Maybe I am afraid it would fail.

Kelsey: How can you be happy as a vegan and ignore your anger?

Participant 10: Probably the way anyone shuts out the violence against animals. Happiness is relative. I don’t think being vegan can make you happier. It can be a pride thing. None of the animals that I don’t eat do I ever get to meet. You don’t get gratification for not eating an animal. Some people kill and eat their own chickens and I think that is weirder than getting it in a box from Pennsylvania. The fact that you grew it and strangled yourself tells me maybe it is okay. It just means you are okay with violence. There

are creative limitations through your efforts and when you limit something, you actually get a certain type of quality out of it. For me to go back to being not vegan when I could eat at a steak house, I would ask if that is what I want to do. It has made me a better cook. Those limitations are like poetry versus prose. The limitations end up with more quality. It is a minimalist attitude.

The limit of traveling is where there are vegan restaurants. I went to Paris to a vegan restaurant and found it amazing. I am not a food snob. To eat in Paris and be vegan was awesome. We can adapt to bad things and mediocre things can be amazing if all you have ever had is mediocre. If you limit yourself, you are becoming a person who appreciates things more. I appreciate food more. I have explored things that have no guilt attached to it. Having no guilt is the best thing. When there is no need for justification, it is the best. Last year, I went raw for four months and everything I ate was organic and raw.

Kelsey: Why did you go raw?

Participant 10: For me, knowing there was a guiltless aspect of it, the health benefits of it; it was another level of being vegan. It was another limit to only things that were good for me. I learned a lot of things. I did a juice fast before it. I wanted to see what would happen and how it would feel. There is so much bias around diets and you don't know how it will pan out until you try it. I will probably go vegan raw this summer again because there is a big difference in how you feel. It is good in the summer. Everything is cooling; you are dropping weight, it feels good.

Kelsey: Did you feel healthier when you became vegan?

Participant 10: I want to say no. I didn't lose weight. I have been unsatisfied with how my body looks for a really long time. Lots of really weird things have come up. I want to see how fast I can lose weight. How will it make me feel? I ate a bunch of tofu for a while and felt terrible. I don't know how it would feel if I was eating steak or a cheeseburger. I don't think it made me feel good before. I ate emotionally as a child and got overweight over it. I dropped the weight naturally; I went from 260 to 180 and didn't even realize it when I was maybe 16 or 18. I got friends. I stopped eating McDonalds and mayonnaise back then. Since then, I wonder what my emotions want me to do after I have eaten. Only vegetables and nuts and seeds is the most guilt-free diet I could think of. Even then, there is the question of how the food got here.

Kelsey: Did you support other food movements?

Participant 10: You mean like organic, local, fair trade? Yes, anything that is fair to anti-exploitation should be in check. People should realize that is not cool. Chocolate slavery; I am down with fair trade. Any agricultural evil-doing and bad business practices are bad. I don't know about it. I ate that chocolate, but was that fair trade chocolate? How many am I going to abide with? I do support fair trade and organic and it is ideal. I am stuck with coming up with excuses to eat conventional rather than organic or eat slave chocolate or slave coffee. There is so much I could feel guilty about. There is the Paleo diet solely for the consumer is thumbs down. It is not just about you. Veganism has the environmental area, the ethical area, the health area. You can't argue with it. Paleo diet is the epitome of being a privileged American; same was raw food. I am going to avoid all these other foods and only have things that are perfect for me. It would be raw meat and berries. That is not a good point about privilege.

Kelsey: What kinds of vegan foods do you eat?

Participant 10: I commute to work and I am really busy. At work, there is an angel program. Anything that does not sell is in the cooler and it is all free. I can eat stuff from that. I was gluten free for a long time and tried eating gluten recently. I eat a lot of sandwiches. When raw, I could be satisfied by a large

salad and nuts or other dense calorie source. I found I can eat a giant salad in a mixing bowl and eat the entire thing and feel satiated for a long time. I can eat a whole bag of brown rice pasta with an entire jar of pasta sauce and tempeh. I eat half and feel bloated and then I go back and eat the rest. The calories did not stop me from eating more calories. A bowl of salad shuts it off. I am trying to eat more sandwiches with tempeh, my preferred choice for meat alternative. It is about the calorie density. Your body wants calories and that hunk of wood in the stove. You can't just give it kindling. That metaphor works for winter to keep your body's temperature up. That was a big thing about going raw because that was not calorie dense foods. I try to eat more micro-dense foods. The sandwich is the best thing I can eat with vegetables, more dense things, wrapped up in bread. It is important if you are working and doing labor. You need fuel. I eat vegetables, wheat, a lot of carbs and starches. I can over eat carbs, big time. If I am getting sick, I stop eating dense foods. I'll just drink miso soup and drink tea and have a minimal dense food. I eat chocolate peanut butter chunks and other things that are easy to eat. I get smoothies made so I don't have to cook. If I do, I cook quinoa or rice or millet.

Kelsey: Do you eat out more?

Participant 10: I eat more because that is where I am every day.

Kelsey: You mentioned traveling. How do you handle that as a vegan?

Participant 10: The first thing I do is look for vegan restaurants or grocery stores that have vegan options. If this is a survival mission, I look for foil-wrapped energy bars. One trick is that Asian food is easy to get vegan options. At an airport, I was starving with my ex-fiancé and she has food restrictions. She wanted white rice and soy sauce. In survival situations, you can find cool things in Asian restaurants. In the middle of nowhere, they likely have corn chips or Fritos. This is if you need calories. In a city, there are restaurants that have options. I went to Applebee's in NYC and they made me a salad with ice burg lettuce and tomatoes with no dressing. That was enough to eat after I ordered a second one. It has its adventurous side. People get on me that traveling is not about being vegan, but it kind of is if you can go to a vegan restaurant. I went to Seattle and there were vegan donuts at everyplace I went to. I ate vegan Philly cheesesteaks and vegan pizza. You could get vegan anything. I bring snacks, trail mix. Sometimes, you can't eat at restaurants.

Kelsey: What are the biggest obstacles?

Participant 10: The aspect of if it is an identity issue and being around people who don't accept me. Or, is there a way to find something to eat. If you have a hard time not having a full meal in front of you, you are not going to have a good time in many places. You can be a strict vegan at home and not eat anything fried in a fry-o-lator that had cheese in it. If you can get over that, you are okay. Most restaurants are trying to make money and not serve you.

Kelsey: Have the challenges changed since you first became vegan?

Participant 10: I have reduced the amount of challenges by experiencing all of them. There aren't many different ones. It has to do with traveling and if you are with someone. One obstacle is relationships and how you feel about other people who you care about. You want to date a vegan. Sharing food is huge in the relationship world. Eating food together is hugely social and a part of dating. If you can be okay with someone not being vegan or if you are with someone who is insecure about you being vegan, it is easier. Cooking food together when someone wants meat is interesting to see. In some couples, one person is vegan by proxy. I have had tension in relationships because someone was not vegan. I have grown out of that because I have maturity. Some obstacles, you just grow out of them. Finding food is the only big

obstacle. Nutrition can be an issue. There are emotional things around food. If you are a junk food vegan and only eat chips and soda, you are not going to be happy or healthy. You have to learn how to maintain your health. Some people don't get over that. They are junk food eaters as vegan or omnivores. The only static obstacle is finding food when you are traveling and finding people who are okay with you being vegan.

Kelsey: Do you have anything else?

Participant 10: Pet peeve is don't say you are vegan if you are not a vegan. The UK Vegan Society definition says what it is. If you are saying you are vegan and not doing things. My new roommate is vegan. She and her husband and kids are vegan. She found that her daughter was having complications from not getting enough calcium. The daughter is getting raw milk; my friend is drinking it and she takes it as medicine. It is more important to her that her kids develop than being vegan. They go to Happy Cow Farm and buy raw milk from farmers. They met the cows. They see it as eating medicine. I think she is vegan and is trying to avoid exploitation of animals. Veganism is a boycott against exploiting and suffering of animals. Vegetarianism is the boycott of death of animals and veganism is boycott of both suffering and death of animals. If you can adhere to that practice, I don't care what you call yourself. You are cool in my book. My roommate actually eats honey and I think it is funny that she worries about the milk thing.

For people who are interested in being vegan, you have to understand your relationship with animals and to life and the life you live now and the social structure you live in. There is a good chance that if you are vegan, you are not living in the right culture. It is psychological that you are culturally surrounded by people who don't see what you see, you can become jaded. You have to think of the animal you are about to eat and some people can forget about them.

Participant 11 (Female, Age: 32, Years Vegan: 6)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, years' vegan?

Participant 11: I am 32. I went to UVM for early childhood education. I went to grad school at the School for International Training in Brattleboro and I studied conflict resolution and social justice. Now I am a case manager for adults with disabilities at a local agency. I like photography and dance. I love cooking, so being vegan and cooking is fun. I have been vegan for 6 years.

Kelsey: How did you first become vegan?

Participant 11: I was vegetarian for several years in college. I got a boyfriend in the south who could not believe I was vegetarian and I started eating meat again. A few years later, I became more interested in food and where it came from. My roommate at the time gave me the book *Skinny Bitch* for my birthday. She thought I would really like it. It is all about being vegan and how it is a healthy diet. I initially started being a vegan because of health reasons. As I did more research, I learned about the environmental impact and compassion for animals. At that time, I was looking into programs for social justice and I became more concerned with a non-violent life style. I tried the diet. Living in Burlington was really easy. It was hard at first adjusting and detoxifying your body. It was hard to give up cheese, apparently that is hard for everyone. After figuring out what I could eat, I found it really easy.

Kelsey: Why did you become vegetarian in the beginning?

Participant 11: I started because of health reasons and weight in high school. I remember it started grossing me out to eat meat. After that, when I first ate meat, I was feeling nauseous. I don't know if that was mental or I really felt sick.

Kelsey: What were the obstacles to transition to vegan from vegetarian?

Participant 11: I remember, when I was first transitioning, I went to a breakfast/brunch place for my last egg. They didn't have anything vegan. I had a guilt trip in my head about it. My friend said I was way too hard on myself about this. The waitress was giving me funny looks because I couldn't decide what to eat. That was the hardest part, eating out and having to explain myself to friends all the time about my reasons for being vegan. I had to learn not to judge people who didn't know that shredded cheese was an animal product and they put it on my salad. It was hard to describe, "Nothing from an animal on a plate." People didn't know where their food came from and that was a surprise. I got used to it. I looked at it as an education. Part of being vegan is being compassionate to all living things, so after the initial frustration, I am way more compassionate now. Not everyone understands what it means to be vegan. You have to be really specific and say nothing with dairy, nothing with honey. You can't beat yourself up if you make a mistake. Sometime, you can accidentally eat something with an animal product in it. It is important to be empathetic with yourself.

One easy think about the transition was that the book from my friend, *The Skinny Bitch*, came with a recipe book. That was really great so I laid out all the replacement products and where to get the products. I always liked to cook and I knew how to cook. That helped with the transition. If you can't cook, you will be eating carrots out of bags.

Kelsey: What made you be open with veganism when your friend did not like it?

Participant 11: I think of that a lot. She comes from a different family and grew up differently. I grew up with parents who were open to different people and practices. My dad was in the Peace Corp in Kenya and was accepting. My mom worked in the health department at UVM for a while and they were really

open. They were willing to hear other sides of the story. Her parents were more Catholic, American food-oriented, white bread and hot dogs for dinner. My mom fed us a wide variety of foods. The culture played a big part.

Kelsey: How does your family feel about your being vegan?

Participant 11: Initially, they asked me what I was going to eat. I used to cook for my family. I would make the birthday cakes. I was the go to baker for events. I remember my first vegan birthday cake for my dad; they were afraid to try it, but when they did they thought it was better than the non-vegan cakes I used to make. I eased them in by cooking. We have had a lot of conversations about it. My mom wants to be flexible when I go out. She didn't want me to be such a stickler for it. I would challenge her on it; I would eat meat if she would eat vegan for a whole meal. I wasn't going to eat meat.

Other family members have been sarcastic and asked ignorant questions. I say, "I would be happy to explain why I am vegan if you can explain why you eat meat." I would throw it back at them in a nice way. It opened up a lot of nice discussions. My uncle is American baseball and food and I asked him to explain how his hamburgers were good for him. My parents loved the vegan food I would make because they trusted my cooking before. Now my dad and step mom have mostly vegan food when I go to dinner. They have made some diet choices because of the information I have given them. For example, they don't buy much dairy food. For Thanksgiving, they still have their turkey, but everything else is vegan. We have vegan dessert and regular dessert.

They have been really supportive, which is really nice. My mom gave a presentation on veganism and the environment for one of her classes here. After that, she was vegetarian for maybe two days. It didn't work out for her with her Eastern European background.

Kelsey: How do you handle friends outside your family?

Participant 11: It worked similar to the way it worked with my family. I really like to feed people and cooking for people. I throw a lot of dinner parties. If I am the one cooking, they are vegan. I could not open a restaurant, but I am good enough that people like to eat my food. That is nice to have that trust. My friends are not judgmental. They will apologize before they eat meat. I say they do not have to apologize. I have had conversations about my reasons. There has been friendly banter about it.

The thing about quinoa that just came out; in Bolivia and Peru, so much quinoa is being exported and it has gotten so expensive that they can't afford it themselves. There are all these articles about it: can vegans stomach the quinoa crisis? The answer is "Yes we can because there are so many foods that have similar issues." These other food cause harm to people and animals and we will be fine without the quinoa. Corn is fed to animals and we would be fine if we grew food rather than corn for animals. You could feed the entire world on the corn fed to animals. I don't think raising cows is better. There are arguments about what kind of diet is better for you. I trust myself.

Kelsey: How do you feel on a vegan diet?

Participant 11: I feel great. One reason I stuck with it for so long is because of the way I feel on it. I feel lighter. Once I lived in India for six months and it was a place that was not really westernized. Their vegetarian stuff was vegetables and rice. They don't have tofu. While I was there, I ate an egg once or twice a week and I was living in a really poor area. People would offer me tea with milk. It is terrible milk right from a buffalo. It is really hard to refuse anything from an impoverished person. They were giving me the last thing they had. There are broader ethics around eating when you are traveling. I could feel the difference when I was eating egg and milk. I had bad stomach problems and bad eczema which totally

cleared up. I deal with stress better; I don't know if that is age or diet. A vegan lifestyle is about compassion and looking at things outside a box. It is a broader perspective of not just supporting animals but also the people in slaughter houses. There are higher rates of domestic abuse among people who work in slaughter houses because they are being violent every day. What is their pay and working conditions? It is broader than just the non-human animals. Mentally, I feel different and am more connection with the earth. That is a really hippy thing to say, but it is true and a lot of vegans would agree with me. I have noticed that when I go to friends' houses with dogs who are hostile to people, the dogs come up to me and no one else. I wonder if they can tell I am not violent toward them. That is little bits of magic happening.

Kelsey: How is it traveling and being vegan?

Participant 11: I went vegan right before grad school and that was easy. Brattleboro has vegan food. Then, I went to Thailand for a month – I had lived there before. I knew it well enough to know where to go for vegetarian food. Vegan is becoming a bit trendy there. There were vegan places popping up all over the place and that was great. In India, it was easy to be vegetarian. The hardest part of that was being around people who were not as privileged as me feeding me. For me, part of being vegan is seeing beyond the box of not harming animals and when humans are suffering and all they have to drink from are buffalo, where is that line? That was a challenge. You don't see physical harm to the buffalo. We know cow's milk is not as healthy as other things to drink. It was finding a line. I would accept the tea with milk and pass it along to someone next to me. India was easy to refuse meat because so many people are vegetarian. Asia is a good place to be vegan or vegetarian.

My boyfriend and I drove from Florida to Vermont. In the south, the chain stores are terrible. For three days, I had a baked potato with nothing on it and "water salad" that has no color on it. I put ketchup on the potato. Everything was cooked in animal fat. When we got back here, I had the biggest bowl of vegan soup. That was harder than living in India.

Kelsey: How is it living in Burlington?

Participant 11: It is really easy. If anyone wants to go vegan, they should move to Burlington with the Co-op and Healthy Living. The chain grocery stores are okay, too. If I can't make it to Healthy Living, I can go to Schazz right near my house. They have a really good organic section and they have vegan ice cream, which is huge to have around your house. It is more main stream here and you are not looked at as totally weird. People are concerned about where their food is coming from and eating local and tracking where food comes from. That can go hand-in-hand with being vegan. We are missing a total vegan restaurant with a full vegan bakery and café. For the most part, eating out has been fine. It is easy here.

Kelsey: How has your view of veganism changed since you became vegan?

Participant 11: It was interesting to go from not being vegan to being vegan knowing what my own ideas of being vegan was. Before I became vegan, I thought, "What does that mean? That is a really severe diet." I did more research and realized it is not severe; open heart surgery is severe. I still struggle with veganism being so focused on animal welfare. PETA is about animal welfare. I think being vegan is about non-violence and that is in all areas, not just animal welfare. I totally agree with the animal welfare piece, but other aspects are not considered as much. For example, think of people who work in slaughter houses, work in factory farms, political systems and food, food justice, effect on the environment. I am lucky to be able to go to the Co-op and go to Healthy Living. Some people can only afford to go to Burger King because that is the community they live in and that is where they grew up. There are generations of American Poverty and there is Burger King, McDonalds, and Taco Bell. I believe in food justice too and I

get annoyed it is so focused on animal rights and not non-violence in general. Environmental injustice and food injustice is a topic for non-violence.

Kelsey: What was your stereotype of vegans?

Participant 11: Vegans were translucent people who were skinny. They didn't wear shoes. They did not eat that much. I knew what it was but I didn't know how it worked.

Kelsey: Had you met any vegans before?

Participant 11: I think I must have, but I didn't really pay much attention. I did not have awareness to have a conversation with them about that.

Kelsey: Is there anything you would want to add?

Participant 11: I noticed I have more pet peeves as a vegan. There is a specific way to ask a vegan why they are vegan. The correct way is "I'd like to know more about your lifestyle." That is the best way to ask anyone about their lifestyle. For example, on Facebook, I was talking to someone about quinoa. I was, "We are going to make a sign. There is no problem. It is terrible that people can't afford their own crop, but there are other sources of protein. We will be totally fine with this." I was obviously joking and I went on about corn fields and replacing corn with other edible crops. This person said, "Bacon should be the next quinoa" and I thought it was a stupid comment. The person went through the time to read the article and respond thoughtfully and he had something to say. I thought many of my responses are about bacon and it is really dumb, with no education around it. Your best response is bacon? That bugs me.

Kelsey: How do you handle that?

Participant 11: I just ignore that one because it was on Facebook. There is no point in getting argumentative about that. It depend on who it was and the context. Many of my close friends know that that type of commentary is ridiculous and they would never make it. It depends on how much energy I want to spend on it and how important this person is that I would spend energy talking about it. How much of a jerk were there before that comment. I try to choose my battles. If I have to say something, I would say that my lifestyle is to be non-violent and as kind to the earth, other beings, and myself as possible. I am not here to threaten or judge you. This is what I do. You have asked me to explain myself and I have and it would be nice to be answered in a considerate way.

Kelsey: Any other pet peeves?

Participant 11: PETA uses the sexualization of women in their ads. That can also be really bad. There is a very short thin line between that and sexual violence against women. There are the stereotypes of vegans that we should look a certain way. There are all sorts of body types who are vegan and we are not going to look the same. It is like saying omnivores have to have the same body type. There should be education around it. People ask me about my diet and many vegans have a well-researched answer and it is met with an uneducated response around it.

Kelsey: Has cooking affected your veganism?

Participant 11: I am much more aware of what I am putting in my food. What kinds of oils am I using? Where are my vegetables coming from? I try to make my meals as balanced as possible. That is a continual challenge, but I like the consciousness surrounding it. I like experimenting with flavors. I finally have a tofu press and that is a cool thing. That is a lot of fun, little contraptions like that. The more research you do on veganism, the more research you do on nutrition. I have lately been focusing on

minimizing cane sugar and using maple syrup or agave or coconut sugar as replacement sweeteners because they have more nutritional content. I probably wouldn't have thought of that before. Alicia Silverstone has *The Kind Diet* and that has been really helpful and her web site is supportive. It has been really fun cooking vegan. It is a fun challenge. Can I make vegan tiramisu? Can I make a vegan version of what I liked before I was vegan? I have. I have not missed anything; I haven't missed the flavor of egg yolks, but I have missed what you can do with them. There is now a vegan egg yolk. I noticed my pallet for dairy has changed. When something has dairy, I can really tell. It tastes really sour to me. I have tried cheese and I did not like it, when I liked it before I was vegan.

Kelsey: If you were talking to someone who was interested in being vegan, what would you say?

Participant 11: I have been in this situation a few times. I always recommend my favorite books or web sites. *Skinny Bitch* is funny and kind of hard love. It is motivating to try it. I invite people over for dinner a lot. I offer to go grocery shopping with people so I can show what you can use: diet cheese, veggie sausages. I always point people to Alicia Silverstone's web site if they are female. If you are male, I point them to the Engine 2 diet's web site. He is the son of the guy who did *The China Study* [actually, son of Caldwell Esselstyn of Prevent and Reverse Heart Attacks]. His is 50 and really muscular, young looking, healthy. They only eat vegan food at the fire station where he works. It is more geared to the male perspective. Alicia Silverstone is pretty, glamorous, famous. She cooks herself and she is accessible.

Kelsey: Is Alicia Silverstone a support system for you?

Participant 11: Yes, absolutely, I think it is important to have those kinds of support. With any lifestyle change, there is always a question of doing the right thing, is it working for me. If you subscribe to these web sites, you will get emails that say things like the reasons not to eat fish, because they harm the oceans and you can get Omega 3s from flaxseed instead. Okay, just when I thought it was really hard ... it is not hard, but when all your friends are eating animals and you can't share your dinners and the girl sitting next to your boyfriend is really pretty and they are sharing food. It is not a reason, it is so not a reason to go against your lifestyle, but having fun celebrities is really good support.

Kelsey: So, when you are in those situations, you channel Alicia Silverstone?

Participant 11: Yes [laughs]. I see her pretty hair and her pretty skin. When I am in those situations, I will go to my favorite vegan web sites to perk me up a bit. I know I am not going to change, but I sometimes have slumps and wonder if I could be a meat minimalist or this or that. I have done that. I have done every single diet; it really a life style that I have felt the best on.

Kelsey: What was your own original reason for becoming vegan?

Participant 11: Originally, it was for my own personal health. I read a lot about clearing out stomach problems, stomach problems, fighting off diseases, reduce aging. Also, it was I feel really good. That panda looks really sweet and I want to learn more about pandas and what they eat. Actually, in *Skinny Bitch*, there is one section where they write in that hard love, funny way. They say, "The steak is a decomposing hell on you plate." They put dye to make it look like it is not decomposing. It is a slab of decomposing animal flesh and I don't want anything dead on my plate. Or poor cows, when you learn what happens to animals to get to your plate, it is so horrific. Then, the environmental impact ... you learn about one thing and it leads to the next thing. Your lifestyle builds around those reasons.

Kelsey: When you became vegan, did it help that you had been vegetarian before?

Participant 11: Yes. I recommend that to people. When they say they want to be vegan, I say just cut out one thing at a time. Because I was vegetarian before, I knew a lot of ways to eat vegetarian before. Then, I just had to take out dairy or honey. By that time, there were vegan cheeses and that was easy. Veganism has become more main stream. It is not totally main stream, but it is getting there. There are accessible vegan options, a big difference from when I was in college.

Kelsey: Did you slowly become vegan or all at once?

Participant 11: Once I read *Skinny Bitch*, I already cut out meat. I don't want to think about eating that. I did a week or two without meat, then was dairy, and next was eggs. By that point, it was just learning how to eat out or cook differently. It was out of my system. I can't remember it being hard to eat that way unless I was in a restaurant and I was really hungry and there were no options. I stuck with it and sometimes just had salad with my friends. Sometimes I cheat; French fries are sometimes fried in animal products. Especially in the south, if I am really hungry, potatoes can be your best friends. I call them denial fries and they might be the only things I can eat. For the most part, around here, I can find something or I know the restaurants to go to. I'm not going to a steak house.

Kelsey: Anything else?

Participant 11: I think that's it. Thank you.

Participant 12 (Female, Age: 29, Years Vegan: 8.5)

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 12: I'm 29, I stay at home with my kids and I've been vegan for 8 and a half years.

Kelsey: How strict are you at being vegan?

Participant 12: Anything that we buy that's food is vegan. I know that there are some vegans that say they will eat honey, but we don't eat honey or the beetle coloring stuff. When we go out to a restaurant if it's place that has a lot of vegetarian options, we ask about the ingredients for stuff, but if it's some place that has only one vegetarian option on it, as long as it doesn't say it has dairy on it anywhere on the thing than we'll just go ahead and get it. If it says it has dairy, then we'll ask. We aren't going to starve.

Kelsey: Is your whole family vegan?

Participant 12: I'm vegan, she's vegan (indicating 2 year old daughter), my husband's vegan and I have one more daughter who is a vegetarian. She just started school and at school she can make her own food choices. She doesn't mind the dairy. She's five.

She's been vegan until a couple months ago when she started going to public school.

Kelsey: How did you become vegan?

Participant 12: I was dating my husband and he was vegetarian. But I still eat meat. He became vegan when we moved in together and it was just easier to just buy all vegan stuff because I could eat what he could eat, but he couldn't eat something. I was vegetarian for a couple years before I met him, but I started eating meat a couple years before I met him.

Kelsey: How did you become to be vegetarian before?

Participant 12: I dated someone else who was vegetarian and I figured that I would do it to be supportive of him, but then I found out that he was just doing it for a bet. When I first met my husband I wasn't convinced that he was really vegetarian because of morals.

Kelsey: What do you think of you both being vegan now? (although hard to hear the question on audio recording)

Participant 12: It's easier to do the entire same thing and I think my husband would be hurt if I let the kids eat non-vegan stuff.

Kelsey: Do you have any moral reasons for being vegan?

Participant 12: Not really. It's not like I want animals to suffer. It's easy and supportive of my husband. Even when I'm not with him, I still eat vegan.

Kelsey: Do you know what your husband's reasoning is for not eating meat?

Participant 12: I think it's mostly animal suffering stuff. When I first met him, he tried to get me to watch the videos of the factory farms and I was just like "no." I don't like watching snuff videos, so no.

Kelsey: Was it a gradual change into veganism?

Participant 12: Not really, it was pretty much when we moved into together. I still eat meat for a month after we moved in together, but I didn't eat cheese. When I was at work and stuff. I thought the cheese would be harder to give up, so I gave it up first.

Kelsey: Do you and/or your husband participate in any events or organizations having to do with veganism?

Participant 12: We used to, we just moved from California a few months ago. When we were there we went to the World Veg fair and stuff like that. I joined a few meet up groups in the area but none of them were geared towards families, it was just young couples. Going places that weren't appropriate to bring kids to. I tried to start a vegan playgroup because there seemed to be a lot of vegan and vegetarian families in the area, but no one seemed to come to anything so that was a bust. I haven't found anything like that here.

Kelsey: What do you make for your vegan family?

Participant 12: I like to bake, so I make a lot of cookies and puddings and stuff. Chili's, sometimes I make tofu loaves. I think normal things, like tofu and cinnamon stuff.

Kelsey: When you got to the doctors, do you face any obstacles with that?

Participant 12: I thought that I would. They were like "oh that's fine!" When I was pregnant with my oldest daughter, I asked to see a nutritionist and talk to her about it because maybe the Opi didn't know if there was some problem with it. The nutritionist was like "oh it's fine, just keep doing what you're doing." And the pediatricians have never said anything negative about it. Just give her a vitamin and we could find vegan vitamins. They get multivitamins and calcium. And I put flaxseed in everything that I bake so I guess that helps a little bit. That's not why I put it in...egg replacer.

Kelsey: How did your friends and family outside of your immediate family react to you being vegan?

Participant 12: If I went to a pot-luck or something, I would ask if I could make something that was vegan. I don't think we got any negative reactions.

Kelsey: Have your family and friends' reactions to your veganism changed over time?

Participant 12: Well my parents' reaction has. When I first became vegan they didn't really care that much. But then when I got pregnant with my oldest daughter they were really concerned. They were like "Well if the doctor says that she has to eat meat for this reason are you going to give her meat?" and I was like if there is something that she needs that she can't get with a vegan diet, I'll give it to her. I'll give her a non-vegan vitamin if I have to and then they were okay with it.

Kelsey: How do you think being vegan affects your interactions with other people, like if you are in a restaurant or something?

Participant 12: At the restaurant I don't think it affects it very much except for occasionally having to send food back because they didn't write it down when I said no yogurt on it. Sometimes my group of friends in California would all go out to some restaurant together and not invite me and sometimes I think it's because "oh well she probably won't be able to eat anything there anyway." They sometimes ask me "where can we go that you can eat?" And I'm like "I can eat anywhere and if there isn't anything, I have a cliff bar in my bag, I really just want to go out. I just started that when I was pregnant so I had something if I felt light headed. It's been useful, so I keep doing it.

Kelsey: Do you know any other vegans and do you think that they act as a support system?

Participant 12: I don't know any vegans here. I knew a few in the area when I lived in California, but we weren't very close. My sister-in-law and her family used to be vegan. They were vegan for about five years and then they went back to vegetarian. But that was really helpful because for family gatherings it was like well there are so many vegans that we'll just make vegan stuff. They even had vegan Thanksgiving at my sister's house, she still does it every year even though she's not vegan anymore. She does that on different days than thanksgiving.

Kelsey: How is it different being vegan in California verses in Vermont?

Participant 12: In California there were a lot of vegetarian restaurants and quit a few vegan only restaurants so it was great cause it's like "alright, we have ten different restaurants to choose from if we ever want to go out that are all within half an hour." Here not so much. We haven't really gone out so much. I have found two or three restaurants that say that they have two or three vegan options on their menu. But there are definitely not any vegetarian or vegan restaurants that I know of.

Kelsey: How does veganism affect your role as a home-mom?

Participant 12: Well all of the food in the house is vegan. I just make whatever is there. I think it would be different if I weren't vegan because it's a plant-based diet. I always try to get vegetables in, whereas other people are like, "oh we'll just have hamburger helper tonight and maybe I'll throw in some canned vegetables. I would probably be like that to if I wasn't vegan.

Kelsey: How much information is your older daughter aware of the issues?

Participant 12: Yeah, my husband gives her little lectures every time she mentions that she eat the school cookies. She gets quiet, she doesn't tell him when she's eaten the school cookies anymore, she just tells me.

Kelsey: What are the biggest obstacles to being vegan?

Participant 12: Here, it's mostly the availability of stuff. I need to cook food. I'm having a lot of trouble finding some things. In California we went to a warehouse kind of thing, it was kind of like Costco, but you didn't have to buy like huge things and it was cheaper. They sold things like fifty pound bags of oats and I'm not really sure how to find fifty pound bags of oats around here or nutritional yeast. I've only found nutritional yeast at city market and it's kind of expensive. Now I have a membership at Cosco because the alternative is City Market. We've visited here several times before and spent \$200/300 on one week's worth of groceries and I can't do that. Cosco has a lot of stuff that is better than the stuff at the store in California. The bagged frozen vegetables are much better than the cruddy vegetables that they had at the store. I think I might just start buying the dry stuff online because it probably will end up being cheaper. I was so surprised that Cosco didn't have a fifty-pound bag of beans or something.

Kelsey: How do you deal with traveling and going to a place that wasn't necessarily vegan?

Participant 12: If it's a bigger city that is going to have fast food places, I don't really worry about it because we can go to Taco Bell and get no sour cream and cheese on stuff and be alright if we have to. When we come here, when we came to visit before we would look up restaurants online. Sometimes we went to Happy Cow; it's a website that lists vegetarian and vegan restaurants, it's not updated very often, a lot of stuff is out of date. I don't check it unless I can't find it on Google. I make a list of all of the restaurants that have decent stuff. I put it with our travel stuff so we can check it out while we are there if we want to eat out.

Kelsey: Do you look at veganism as a lifestyle as opposed to just a diet?

Participant 12: Yeah, I don't know what's all in car things or in electronics but we don't buy leather stuff or wool. Although my dad is a leather worker and sometimes he'll send me stuff and I haven't sent them back or anything because that would be rude. I do have some leather stuff from him that is in the closet.

Kelsey: Do you every talk with your Dad about that?

Participant 12: Not really, he used to be vegetarian. I'm not sure why he got into leatherwork specifically. He was vegetarian because he didn't like the texture of meat. Now he's figured out ways to cook it where it doesn't bother him.

Kelsey: Before you were vegan, what did you think of vegans and how has that changed now that you are a vegan?

Participant 12: I don't think that I knew that there were vegans, it was all just vegetarian to me until he told me that he was going to be vegan and stop eating dairy. Sometimes I think that he uses unethical tactics on me. Most of the time he didn't try to push me. Once I was drinking a glass of milk at my parent's house and he comes up behind me and says "udder pus, udder pus." And I could never drink milk again and I thought that was really rude. Now every time I look at the milk, I think about that even if it was at a friend's farm and knew the cow had no problems at all, I would still think about it.

Kelsey: Is your husband involved in any vegan related organizations?

Participant 12: I don't think so, a couple of times we'll get things sent to us, but it's also in my name. I'm not sure if he signed me up or what.

Kelsey: Is your husband vegan for any other reasons than the animal ones?

Participant 12: My husband's family has a lot of heart problems. A lot of his family members have died. He doesn't want to die of a heart attack in ten years. My family has a lot of cancer and I hear plant-based diets are good to avoid that but it's not really a reason for me.

Kelsey: Has your opinion about veganism changed over time at all?

Participant 12: I think it's not really to support my husband anymore, it's just that I'm used to it. When I was vegetarian before and I started eating meat again, I got really sick and I don't want to get sick again even if it's just a temporary thing.

Kelsey: So your daughter didn't get sick when she started eating dairy?

Participant 12: No she didn't, I was really happy about that since I hadn't told her teacher that she has never eaten dairy before and some people have a bad reaction to it. It was okay.

Kelsey: If someone were interested in being vegan or having a vegan family what would you recommend?

Participant 12: Stop eating cheese first. Meat has some good stuff for you too, but cheese is just really bad for you. It wasn't really that hard to give up cheese. I'm the kind of person that once I put my mind to something...it was funny because when I was a vegetarian I would just substitute the meat for cheese. It's like the cheeseburger, I would ask for it without the patty but with extra cheese on it. I've heard that's what a lot of vegetarians do and that's why they gain a lot of weight.

Kelsey: When you are cooking now, do you substitute things like that?

Participant 12: Well I just got a cheese cookbook and it was really good but I don't want to make it very often just because it's a big ball of fat. When we get pizza, we usually get the one with vegan cheese on it; we used to get the one with no cheese. My husband likes it a lot better with fake cheese on it.

Kelsey: When you first went vegan how did you feel both emotionally and physically?

Participant 12: I think emotionally it was kind of frustrating. When I first went shopping with my husband, he had just turned vegan as well and he had this whole list and every single thing outside of the produce section, he would read the label. It wasn't a quick read. It took us two to three hours. And I just ended up sitting on the floor for a while, while he read all of the cereal boxes. But physically it was fine. I was in good shape already.

I exercised a lot. My husband really like Oreos and mountain dew and exercising worked that off. The job I had at the time was eight hour days moving around on your feet all day and a ten minute break and that was all for the whole day. I worked at Subway. I think the patty they used when I worked there was vegan. I worked at two, and the other one didn't have the vegan patty, so I brought my own protein from home. I had a couple customers who were vegan but only because their doctors told them to, they were older and they had cholesterol problems. They had to go to a zero cholesterol diet and sometimes they would talk to the other customers in line and try to convince them that this was so much better for them. I think that worked a lot better than an 18 year old telling them that "meat is murder, don't do it."

Kelsey: Do you every talk with people about veganism?

Participant 12: Not really, I don't like to talk to people because it seems like people ask the same questions. You could just Google it if you're interested. I'll make the cookies don't worry. One of my friends is a baker and whenever I would go to her daughter's birthday party she would make four vegan cupcakes and put them aside for us and that was nice.

Kelsey: Do you think that most people are pretty receptive to you being vegan?

Participant 12: yeah, aside from when they want to go out for sushi, they just don't invite me. They kind of assume that I can't eat anything if it isn't a vegetarian restaurant specifically. Once I went out to a Chinese restaurant with some of my friends and I was ordering my food and one of the girls was like "you need to ask them about how they make their rice." And I was "Why? Rice and water, that's how they make their rice." And she was "no, no, no, ask them how they make their rice." So I asked and they said they used chicken broth. She's like "I told you." So I was "thanks for ruining that for me, I just wanted rice."

Or bean, I found out a few years ago that some people use lard to make their beans. I always thought it was just beans and water. My husband has occasionally asked if they use lard in their beans. And usually they are very proud of it if they use lard. My husband's done it only once when we were with our friends. And once he turned to our friends and said, "can we go somewhere else? There's nothing we can eat here." I was like "oh my god, don't do that they'll never want to go out with us again, just have some chips."

Kelsey: So your husband is the strict vegan in the household?

Participant 12: All of our friends know that I'm not that strict. His friend invited us out for dinner one night and he was like "we're going to this restaurant because it's my birthday and I get to pick and I know your wife will be able to eat something, but I'm not sure about you." He (husband) never cooks. At once he told me that he was making his five year plan where he was going to eat more whole foods. And I was

like “you’re going to start cooking! That’s awesome.” And he was like “no, I’m not, my five year plan for you is to cook more whole foods.”

Kelsey: What does your husband do?

Participant 12: He’s a system’s engineer.

Kelsey: How do you handle going to someone else’s household when with someone else’s household is not vegan?

Participant 12: It’s not a problem when it’s a potluck or something. We went to something last weekend where the host told us that she would serve hot chocolate and something. So I told her that “we’re vegan, so don’t worry about the hot chocolate, we’ll just do the cookie stuff.” I always bring something. But yeah, when it’s a potluck where everyone brings one dish, I’ll either bring a starch and a vegetable and a protein in it or I’ll pack a lunch for us to eat. She (indicating 2 year old daughter) especially gets really angry if other people get to eat food and she doesn’t get to eat food. At thanksgiving she was trying to steal cheese off of the tray at the family gathering.

Kelsey: When your other daughter goes to school, do you pack a lunch for her?

Participant 12: yes, I do, I pack a vegan lunch for her. Her school does offer a lunch, but there isn’t any tofu in it so there’s no protein in it.

Kelsey: Do you have people over for a play date with her and how does veganism go over?

Participant 12: Not here. We have a few problems with our current house and I don’t want people to come over, maybe next year when we move. I feel bad telling her that no one can come over, but it smells so bad.

Kelsey: When she goes over to someone’s house, is that difficult in regards to veganism?

Participant 12: Not really, when she goes over to someone’s house for dinner, if the person doesn’t ask...well most people who we’re friends with know what we eat. Sometimes I’ll send some stuff with her. Like one time her aunt was making tacos, so I packed a few things for her.

Kelsey: Do you have any other comments about being vegan?

Participant 12: My sister in law I mentioned was vegan as well and she had another daughter before that, who was three. So she had her daughter be vegan too after that point. That was mostly just because she was dating someone who was vegan and he said that he would leave her if she ever eat meat again. She had her three year old and we didn’t have any kids yet and whenever her three year old would go over to a grandparents’ house, they would always try to give her meat because she had been eating meat up until then. I think it wasn’t really her choice, my sister-in-law just kind of made her. So my sister-in-law had a lot of problems with that. I think the grandparents had worked that out of their system til I had my daughter because my daughter is six years younger than her daughter. It probably also helped that I told them if they tried to give her meat or dairy, they would not be alone with her ever again. I told them that if you do give her this, “you’re going to be having to change quit a few diapers, so it’s in your best interest not to and because I don’t want you to so don’t do things behind my back. My sister-in-law told me how my mother-in-law is very careful about what she says around me and very careful to follow all of my instructions because she’s afraid that if she doesn’t I won’t bring the girls over anymore.

Kelsey: How would you respond if your daughter decided not to be vegan?

Participant 12: I don't really care. Technically they would be murderers I think. When my older daughter was two or three she was really verbal, she knew a lot. Once we were at a friends' house and all of the kids' were having chicken nuggets but my daughter was having something else. She was looking at her friend's place and was like "I don't eat animals." And her little friend Lily was like "I do." And she eat a nugget and I thought that was hilarious, I thought good for Lily. Then the next we were out somewhere and Asha asked me if she could have something and I said no because it had animals in it. And Lily's mom was saying "Don't say that." And I was like "Lily doesn't care." She didn't want her to find out because she was sure that if her daughter found out then she would refuse to eat it. I thought it was weird that it was so immorally representable that she thought that a child would not want to do it, so she was just gong to hide it from her til later. I think most kid's a really fond of animals. My older daughter has asked a lot to get a dog. She's been asking for three years now if she could get a dog. And we've told her that maybe when she's ten or eleven.

Kelsey: Anything else about veganism?

Participant 12: Starbucks has been harder than I thought. I found out that they were doing soy, and I was like "Sweet!" And I ordered a chocolate chip Frappuccino whenever it started and I asked them if there was dairy in it and they were like "yeah, there's no dairy", so I was getting that but then I went to a different Starbucks and then the woman at the counter was like "are you vegan?" and then she was like "the chocolate chips have dairy in it." So I had it without chocolate chips. And then today they said that there's dairy in the chocolate stuff. It's just like "I just want chocolate!" and it has taken tons of revisions to get to this point. No matter what you do it's not.

Participant 13 (Male, Age: 36, Years Vegan: 6)

Kelsey: Could you tell me about yourself?

Participant 13: I'm 36. I'll be 36 in a month. I'm a barista/musician. I've been vegan for six years.

Kelsey: Could you explain how you became vegan?

Participant 13: I was vegetarian for most of my adult life and I chose that because I don't like meat and I never did as a kid. It was just something that I never really liked and when I learned how to cook for myself, I could make whatever I wanted. Eventually I just got sketched out by certain industries, like factory farming and the whole dairy industry. Just thinking that there was cholesterol and it wasn't the best way to get nutrition. I experimented; my girlfriend was like "I'm going to go vegan." And I was like "oh whatever, I'll try it for a month." And I did and it just felt like a natural choice. I also liked to experiment with cooking a lot and that is another thing of experimenting and trying things.

Kelsey: How did you come to get the information about factory farming and related issues?

Participant 13: I had been reading a lot about animal rights type of stuff just because I'm a fan of animals. I think that their place on the earth should come first and I'm always very interested in them. Things just sort of crossed over and I started reading a little bit more. It snowballed with other books and literature.

Kelsey: Were you interested in animals before you were a vegetarian as well?

Participant 13: yeah, I've always really liked animals and I've always had an appreciation for them, birds and butterflies and everything.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about your girlfriend's influence on your veganism?

Participant 13: I can't remember what her reasoning behind it was, but I was always like "I'll try anything, why not? It was her idea and I just kind of rolled from that and I do most of the cooking at home.

Kelsey: When you decided to become vegan did you decide to do it right away or was it a gradual thing?

Participant 13: I did it right away. It was fine, I loved cheese for so much of my life being from Vermont and I've been working in the health food industry and stuff like that. I loved feta cheese; it was my favorite. I was like I don't know if I can live without it. I just kind of dropped everything and it really did seem like a natural switch. I'm also big on Mexican cooking and with that all you have to do is take away the cheese and then you have everything else. Definitely didn't seem like it was a rough transition which is probably why it stuck I feel like. I missed that grilled cheese because it was that comfort food ever since I was little. It was all based off of nostalgia. Now if I want something like that I'll buy a baguette and grill it with olive oil and put some salt and pepper on it. It's kind of the same thing.

Kelsey: How did you learn how to be vegan?

Participant 13: I've been cooking for many years and again mostly Mexican stuff; soups, beans, burritos, tacos and all I had to do was take off the cheese. And if I wanted to make something fancy like a vegan potato leek soup then I would make that. And soy at the most part in my life I try to avoid soy; just a lot of trial and error. I like to try and make something and then figure out what's wrong and then make it better the next time.

Kelsey: How did your family and friends react to you being vegan?

Participant 13: They are very tolerant of it but yet they really don't understand it. They didn't really understand vegetarianism and they definitely don't understand veganism. I don't even do thanksgiving anymore with my family cause it's not really my kind of holiday. They get it and they get it from me but at family functions it's like meat and cheese is everywhere and I'm like "I'll just sit in the back and eat some chickpeas."

Kelsey: Was it the same when you were a vegetarian too?

Participant 13: Kind of except that I feel like that having the cheese thing gave them something that they could connect with me. In a way it kind alienated myself from them and there isn't anything that they could connect to. Now it's like my family and I, we appreciate alcoholic beverages together and I've gotten them into wine. Our warm and little thing is wine and olives now. My parents have a very American way of cooking, fried chicken and this and that and casserole with cream and stuff. Considering that it works really well for me, it gives me confidence in the whole thing. It makes it easier for me to say that I know you don't understand and I'm not here to judge anything. You know you do what you do and everyone does what's right for them. We just kind of respect each other.

Kelsey: How do you think that it's the right thing for you?

Participant 13: I feel healthier and I love the things that I eat. I love vegetables and plant-sourced food; I love that earthy sort of Mediterranean lentils and falafels. It just seems like the food that I should have been eating all of my life. I just seemed sort of natural.

Kelsey: Do you think you appreciate food more than before when you were not vegan?

Participant 13: I feel like I do, it's so simplified. It's something I really like, I like simplifying processes because even in the vegan world there is so much processed food. Especially in the vegan world there is expensive vegan and all the substitutes and stuff. For me it's simple stuff and getting back to nature and kind of a movement in a sense where you start from base ingredients and kind of create it yourself. I feel like for me personally, I really like that.

Kelsey: Every once in a while I'll look up ratios for things, but for the most part I'll make my own stuff. I would say 90% of the time I like everything I make and every once in a while I'll be like that soup could have been a little bit better but everyone has the every once in a while.

Kelsey: How are your other relationships besides your family?

Participant 13: Well I work at a crepe shop where you can't eat anything except a salad if you take a bunch of stuff off of it and maybe the soups sometimes. For the most part co-workers are pretty...at first they are like "why don't you eat this?!" and I'm just because I don't want to. I make a point that I'm not making a judgment on them. That's very important because I think that's where veganism gets such a bad name and every once and awhile a boss or manager will be like "try this, try this! Oh yeah, you don't eat that...uhh...uhh... and I'm just like "sorry dude."

Kelsey: How is working at Mr. Crepe as a vegan?

Participant 13: I don't like it as far as pushing meat products. I feel like I don't like being a part of that industry. I feel like everybody is allowed to whatever but people will come up and say "oh what's your favorite one?" and I'm like "uhh, tomato, mushroom, basil..." and then they are like "I'll get the super lamb!" and I'm like "okay, whatever." I can only pretend that I eat the ones that are what I would consider to be a little more sustainable and a little more animal friendly but I really would like to not be

behind an industry pushing something that I cannot really stand behind. I try to tolerate things, making money sometimes you have to do what you have to do.

Kelsey: Does being vegan play into being a musician at all?

Participant 13: It kind of does because there are certain instruments that will be made from animal hide like a lot of my hand drums. And we are doing this a acoustic stuff right now and we have these hand drums and acoustic guitars and I have this pair of hand drums that have been past down and I want to replace them with ones that have synthetic heads. But I haven't found any in my price range and I'm like as long as I haven't payed for it and supported the industry, I'm kind of tolerating it. But I really don't like making music off of a dead animal. It's not cool.

Kelsey: How do you overcome the obstacles at work?

Participant 13: I just try to be tolerant because I think the more tolerant and flexible you are the more people can see that it might not actually be some weird jerky fad. That it might actually be a better way for the human being to be in the future.

Kelsey: How do you think that being vegan is sustainable?

Participant 13: I think you can get away from factory farms in certain respects and industries like those that make cheese and eggs. I feel like it is such a violent way to live in the world. Killing these animals just for the sake of killing and eating them is violent. It's a weird kind of cycle that needs to be broken.

Kelsey: Do you support other movements like local and organic movements?

Participant 13: If it makes sense or if it's something that I can afford. I feel if you can do local, it's best to do local. With organic I feel think some things are worth it and some things are a lot of hype, you know like you want to get organic potatoes and organic carrots because you want to eat the peels and they have more nutrients in them.

Kelsey: How do your friends and families react now that you have been a vegan for a while?

Participant 13: I think they are used to it. I think it's just kind of gotten where they accept it. They don't understand it but it's a common fact. They've accepted that it's not just a trend or a fad for me. It's kind of settled out.

Kelsey: How do you respond to people at work who ask you about being vegan?

Participant 13: I just try to explain that it's how I like to eat and I try not to put too many political agendas behind it even though I have some of those. I try to explain it as strictly as a taste and a preference. It's healthier; you know how vegetarian used to mean what vegan means now.

Kelsey: Do you have a vegan support system?

Participant 13: I have a few friends. I was in a band and the base player was vegan and the drummer, she was very very vegan friendly even though she eat cheese. So we would have potlucks and everything. I have a few other friends who once in a while we get together and swap recipes and stuff like that. I think it makes it more fun. I think I would still be vegan but it is nice to have a few friends that you can complain about buying shoes with.

Kelsey: Can you talk about having vegan non-food items?

Participant 13: I try to keep things very very simple. I don't buy a lot of stuff, like I don't have twenty pairs of shoes. My girlfriend has a lot of shoes and she spends a lot of time researching and spending and trying to see which ones work. I just stick with the Canvas Vans which makes my life a little simpler and other things; I never really liked leather belts. I never really have because they seemed weird anyway, a little too ancient and fifties or whatever.

Kelsey: What do you think are the biggest obstacles in being vegan?

Participant 13: If I liked to eat out that would be an obstacle. I've been in the food service industry long enough that I've lost a taste for eating out unless I'm traveling somewhere and you have to eat out that can be a little tricky. And visiting friends who are not vegan, you spend a lot of time looking for food. I just look for a falafel stand and if not, get a baguette at some market and eat that until you can find other food.

Kelsey: Does it also help having a girlfriend who is vegan?

Participant 13: Considering I do all of the cooking I would say no, if she didn't want to be vegan, she'd have no choice. If she did the cooking that yeah it would, but it does make it pretty straightforward for me.

Kelsey: How do you think your ideas about veganism have changed over time?

Participant 13: When my girlfriend had first said that she wanted to be vegan, I had had this hatred towards vegans because of the stigma. I knew so many, those vegan punks who were straight edge vegan punks. And I'm like "why are you even doing this?" and I had met with people in Portland who went vegan and then three months later they were eating lobster and steak. It was a fad and a trend. I've come to realize that it can be a really simple earthy movement if it's the right thing for you. I think a lot of people don't want to become that and that's why it doesn't stick.

Kelsey: Why did you stick to it even though you had that stereotype?

Participant 13: I think just because it made sense for me. Again it's all the stuff I like to eat so it just kind of made sense. I honestly feel like it is cheaper if you appreciate very base simple ingredients, beans and olive oil and salt and pepper and a few spices and vegetables.

Kelsey: What would you say you eat on a typical day?

Participant 13: I also eat a lot of smaller meals instead of eating three meals a day because I feel like it is better energy distribution throughout the day. Usually the night before I go to bed, I roast a big pan of potatoes. I can heat those up in the morning and have those with either rice or left over soup from the day before. A little bit before lunch I'll have a carbohydrate or something. And then during our lunch break I would have rice and then after lunch I would have a thing of beans or something like that. And then for dinner I would have a salad, a big salad with some chickpeas on the side. A lot of soups and stuff like that. I try to balance out proteins and carbohydrates based on how much energy I use throughout the day. I think the three meals a day thing is another thing that could probably go away.

Kelsey: Did you always have small meals?

Participant 13: Nope, it's just in the last couple of years. I realized that I feel like if you eat a giant meal and you do a lot of work that works out well. But if you plan a giant meal for the day, that's not really utilizing it and it's not as good for you. I don't think bodies like to eat gigantic meals. It's a little easier to digest and everything.

Kelsey: Do you think your definition of a vegan has changed over time?

Participant 13: For me personally yeah because I never really thought of it as a sustainable kind of existence, it just seemed like something to do and it was the right thing to do. But now I feel like it is the sustainable thing to do if done correctly. It's just not getting processed burgers and morning star, all that kind of stuff. It's like fake this and fake that. It's something that puts a damper in certain vegan things and people are like "I don't want to eat that fake stuff."

Kelsey: How is living in Vermont and being vegan?

Participant 13: I hate it living in Vermont because it just makes me more angry. It's a big hunting and meat state. I've met a lot of younger seemingly progressive people but I see big amounts of meat and dairy and I don't think that's very progressive. I lived in Austin; Texas for six months and it was unbelievable. I worked at the co-op and half of the workers were vegan and you could get vegan food and unspecified vegan restaurants at any part of the city. It was cheap and it was good. That was a place that made it really easy and fun. Portland, Oregon is really vegan friendly too, I lived there for a couple of years. I was vegetarian then but it was very vegan friendly place. There were lots of genuine for real vegans everywhere.

Kelsey: When you were in Portland and Austin did you also work with food?

Participant 13: yes, when I was in Austin I worked at the co-op, front desk in customer service. When I was in Portland I was working in a crumby deli.

Kelsey: Do you think you would stick with being in the food industry?

Participant 13: I'm hoping not to unless I could work for a vegan restaurant that would be fine. I definitely appreciate food enough. I like cooking it and serving it to people if it were something I could stand by and feel comfortable selling. Otherwise I would like to get out of it because it's pretty complicated right now. People who go to restaurant want to eat tons of food and they want to try tons of everything especially if you work in a deli and people want twelve different kinds of meat on their sandwiches. And I'm like how many kinds of animals are you going to put on that sandwich, that's how I picture it when they picture it as meat. You strip away the personality and the feeling and the fact that it was an animal and give it a new name. Like factory made thing that people don't understand where it came from and what it's all about and they don't want to think about it.

Kelsey: How do you keep up with the latest vegan news?

Participant 13: I kind of try to avoid that. I try to go backwards. I feel like there are a lot of civilizations that are vegan like India and Mediterranean. You could have been eating vegan in Greece 1500's, you could get the same falafel you get today. I look to those kinds of recipes and those kinds of ideas and ways of thinking; it's like back in medieval England and the 1800's when they couldn't afford milk or didn't have milk, they would make almond milk. It's such an ancient recipe that I feel like it has some antiquity to it and it's still around and time tells by how good things are by how long things stick around. A lot of them did that out of necessity but you can look at those recipes and convert them into modern times.

Kelsey: How do you deal with going out to a restaurant if you do go out?

Participant 13: This is usually what it will be, a small salad with French fries. You grow to really appreciate that meal. You know a small salad with no cheese and French fries for some kind of starchy substance to go with it. So it's just like a bunch of sides in places.

Kelsey: How do you interact with people in those situations as far as the wait staff and those kinds of people?

Participant 13: I dunno, my girlfriend had this habit of asking people, "is this in it? Is this in it?" and I was always kind of like half the time they don't even know and half the time they will say no it's not just to pacify the vegans. I've worked with people who are like "ah, they're just vegans, who cares." And I'm like "what are you taking about? I'm vegan, how can you say that in front of me?" I try to just say that alright if I order a salad with no cheese, I know that it's vegan. I know that if I get french fries as long as they are not made with beef fat...and you can smell that, you can taste that, Al's French Fries, they cook them in beef fat. I got those as I was goofing around with a friend and I was like "these taste like hamburgers. And I went back and they were like "oh we cook them in this." And they were all proud of it. And I was like "uhh!" and I've learned to not trust them and be like I can look at and know what it is. If it's Asian sauce, it most likely has fish in it, unless it's more of a progressive restaurant.

Kelsey: Is there anything else that you would want to add about being vegan?

Participant 13: I feel like if people gave up eating meat then they would enjoy it so much. I dunno, it just seems like meat eating is a very capitalistic way of eating. It's pick-up truck eating and it's just what you do in America. I feel like we haven't hit that level of progress and I don't know if we are going to. I feel like if people could just get over it and whatever they would actually enjoy it and feel a lot healthier too. Like a couple months is very noticeable.

Kelsey: Do you think that there is progress in the United States?

Participant 13: I don't think that one day it is going to be vegetarian but maybe one day it will be tolerated. I work at a crepe shop where they have no interest in making a vegan batter. I don't care, I bring my lunch everyday anyway. I'm not begging for vegan batter but every once in a while a kid will come in. That was when my boss laughed at the person. Not in his face, but...It was a family and one of them was vegan. They are all "Do you have anything vegan?" and they were a very understanding family of this kid who wanted to be vegan. And I was like "well, we have soups and salads." And then later downstairs the manager was like "why would anyone want vegan anyway and who cares?" For those times that you have to go out with your family, it is hard. It makes you feel a little less like an outsider if there are those options. It's always sad when you're eating like a fruit cup and a salad and your family is eating all kinds of fancy things.

Kelsey: What would you recommend or suggest to someone who is thinking about becoming vegan?

Participant 13: I've talked to a few people. I would suggest being vegetarian for a while first. And then if they are I would suggest cutting out cheese and adding olives and nutritional yeast. Because it has that kind of like sour savory thing like a lot of cheese tastes like. Trade cheese for olives, like kalamata olives. It's got these same things, not together though.

Kelsey: Anything else?

Participant 13: No, I just keep it simple. It's how I try to operate with my cooking. It's a little more time out of my day but I know exactly what's in it because I made it. I do use bulk a lot, beans, and rice, and spices and stuff. I have certain things I get at certain places as a rule. There are certain things that you can get at Hannaford's that are going to be fine and there are certain things that you don't want to get at Hannaford's that you want to get at the Co-op. I try not to get too many specialty ingredients because they get very expensive and that's where you get into that hoity toity vegan thing. I did just get vital wheat gluten to make a big pot of seitan, but I did that every six months. It's like if I need a protein boost, I

can feel it because you get that kind of unsatisfactory feeling with what you are eating. I feel like when you simplify what you eat, you can read your body a little bit more. Your body will tell you what nutrients you want if you listen to it.

If there is something blisteringly amazing, I don't keep up with the trends.

Kelsey: Where did you originally get your information from?

Participant 13: It was this really dopey book called *The Angry Cowboy*. Somebody gave it to me for free and it was so poorly written and whatever but it's about this cattle rancher who goes vegetarian and talks about how disturbed he is with the industry. I started doing research into other industries and went from there.

Participant 14 (Female, Age: 31, Years Vegan: 4)

Kelsey: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 14: I am a raw vegan chef and I do reggae and I teach yoga and I'm a social worker.

Kelsey: Could you describe yourself as a vegan?

Participant 14: Pretty strict and as far as the clothes go, I try...I accidentally bought leather shoes the other day. In general I try not to buy anything made of animals.

Kelsey: What do you exclude from your diet?

Participant 14: Everything! All animal products, I don't eat tofu and nothing with gluten. I don't eat anything with grains.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little about how you became vegan?

Participant 14: I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2008. I went through a yearlong healing process experimenting with my diet. Then I went to a yoga teacher training and I was there for like three weeks in California and that's where I learned about raw food, not as much about veganism but definitely raw food. I was raw while I was there but I was not absolutely sold on it and I thought it was weird. I left and went down and got a chicken. That made me sick, I was sick for three weeks after I had it. It just shows how long chickens take to be processed through our body. After that I came back home and did a juice fast and ever since the juice fast I've been a raw vegan. The juice fast was super healing to my body; I was on it for two or three weeks. My symptoms were gone and I researched what people do after a juice fast.

Kelsey: Did you do yoga before that?

Participant 14: No, not until I got sick and I tried yoga and I didn't like yoga at first either. I think that's just the way that I am, I'm just like "nah, no, no." It took me a while to ease into it. And the way that I did that, I took a leave of absence from work and I moved back to New Hampshire, I was living in Vermont and I moved back to New Hampshire. I rented this beautiful lake house and every morning twice a day there was a yoga TV show and I would watch it and do it every morning. And that's how I got to know yoga and then after that I was hooked.

Kelsey: Do you think that yoga affected your veganism?

Participant 14: It totally does! I know that when I am actively involved in my yoga practice, my eating is much calmer and more centered. When I'm not practicing yoga, my eating is less mindful. It's always been that way with exercise. I used to smoke before I was diagnosed with m.s. and whenever I exercised I smoked lesser but if I wasn't exercising I would smoke more. I think it's just with yoga it definitely helps me now and definitely has to do with diet. I think yoga helps be okay with that discomfort. It helped me handle those feelings when I started to go vegan and to let things go.

Kelsey: Was there an event or person that led you to go vegan and start yoga?

Participant 14: No, when I was at the hospital getting all the tests done and then when I was finally diagnosed with M.S. there was a patient who suggested the A.H. diet, I think it's called the swank diet. I did research. I started changing my diet by taking out sugar, like white processed sugar, and dairy, and grains. I bought that book she had talked about and I went to the library and read some stuff on it. Everything else was the Internet.

Kelsey: How did you change emotionally and physically upon becoming vegan?

Participant 14: Emotionally my moods are much more centered, much calmer, much more centered than I used to be. I used to be super moody. I do do honey. Through the juice fast I definitely got rid of the M.S. symptoms. I felt generally happier. I lost weight.

Kelsey: Do you participate in any vegan organizations or events?

Participant 14: Through my business I do. I'm participating in the MeatOut event that is coming up. It's in March and April. Ours is on the weekend. It's a vegan awareness day and it's taking up at the Uni Church up at the top of the hill or on top of Church Street. I was asked to participate by someone from the community who is heading it up.

Kelsey: What are you doing for the event?

Participant 14: I am going to have information and then some raw food. I'm also going to help her with whatever information she is going to hand out. We have a lot of tables. I'm not a hundred percent sure. Janet I met in the community and she had the vegan meetup in Burlington. She runs the support group that is posted in Seven Days but I don't think she is having meetings right now. She's really nice; I just met her around.

I've spoken at UVM a couple of time at the Women's Center. I have potlucks. And I teach classes and stuff like that. I had contacted people who donate for vegan events who donate food or money, I can't remember the name of it. They are very specific, your event has to be vegan only and you can only donate \$25 to go towards food. There aren't any other vegan groups that I belong to.

Kelsey: Can you talk a little bit about the raw food movement and do you support organic and local?

Participant 14: Definitely organic and GMO labeling and stuff like that. There's a meeting this week on Thursday. It's a grassroots organization working to get GMO's labeled in super markets and they are meeting Thursday, I don't remember where, Thursday evening. The organic; I go to farms and work on farms. That's always been a part of my classes and things like that.

Kelsey: Where you interested in organic food before you became vegan?

Participant 14: Yeah, that was probably the first step. I started to learn about food and permaculture actually and I don't remember how that happened. It was a long time ago it feels like. I started to be interested in permaculture and being self-sufficient and homesteading and stuff like that. From that, I started to learn about soil and food and growing food and from that I started to learn about Organic and conventional. Before I did my permaculture course, I wasn't always doing organic. Now, I use strictly organic and there are things that I won't by that are organic, but it's mostly organic. To me it's all about having a clean body. I know there are people who do it for the animals. I love animals and that's part of the reason like I don't want to eat them. Spiritually I don't think anyone should die for me to live. I know plants die but I don't feel like any animal should have to suffer for me to live.

Kelsey: Do you think that the reasoning behind being vegan changed or do you think it remained the same?

Participant 14: I think it started out as being solely for health reasons and kind of by accident. Then it grew into a larger understanding of why it's important. I don't think that before where my consciousness was, I don't think I would have stopped eating meat just because of animals. Now I think I have a different understanding of life and a different appreciation of life because of being vegan. Eating an

animal doesn't even seem like an option. I used to smoke for fifteen years and then I quit around the same time and now the idea of smoking a cigarette is like "what?! why would I do that?" It's kind of the same thing. It feels similar, I just couldn't imagine.

Kelsey: Where do you think that appreciation of life came from?

Participant 14: Yeah, it's hard to pinpoint. I think some of it is having my life threatened that way and this being a degenerative disease that can basically kill you eventually and it was a big morning process for me. It's a disease that attacks your brain so the part of your brain that is affected loses functioning. I was blind in one eye, partially blind in the other eye. I had numbness in my feet and my hands. I had trouble walking. I had extreme depression and fatigue. The chances of me being in a wheel chair became pretty good. Some of it was that changed my appreciation of my life and my abilities and having me threatened in that way. Documentaries, I learned about how animals were treated and I learned the spiritual aspects of life and how an animal is under stress its entire life and in essence when you eat that animal, all that stress and energetically and chemically all the stuff that goes on with that. The stress produces different chemicals in our body that are not good for us and the same happens with animals. Ingesting that is not good for us. It's kind of crazy.

Kelsey: Can you talk about veganism and your career?

Participant 14: I do health consultation with people who are experiencing illness. My feelings about veganism and raw professionally have changed. For myself it's stayed the same as far as what is good for my body and what I want to do for my body. The vegan part has been very easy, the raw part it comes and goes. It's a done deal pretty much. When I started out with raw I was very "Everyone should go raw!" I thought everyone should be raw and it's the best experience. I had really strong beliefs in that way. Since then, it's shifted to be more compassionate towards where people are psychologically and emotionally about food and through my work with people. Through working with people in my work, I've become aware of how attached people are to food from their past that to push someone too soon and too forcefully is not going to get you anywhere. The reaction is to hold on tighter because it goes back to childhood with our attitudes and ideas about food. When I'm working with a client, it's much more being where the client is at and helping them where they are and helping to identify where they want to be. And not having the expectation because they may never go completely vegan or may never go completely raw but helping them to move further, closer to optimal health. I think it looks different for everyone.

Kelsey: Do people usually ask you what your lifestyle is like in terms of being vegan?

Participant 14: They always ask me about protein, that's always the first question. Raw is the extreme of the extreme to people and some people ask me about that and think it's crazy which I understand because I think it's crazy too. Some people will say, "Isn't that hard? And how do you not have this and how do you not have that?"

Kelsey: How did your family and friends react when you first became vegan?

Participant 14: I have some friends who got really angry, really really angry. I think that before I was not super unhealthy, but I was pretty much eat whatever, do whatever and I eat a lot of vegetables but I also eat a lot of meat and cheese. It was also a big social thing. I would be interacting with my friends who would be eating at a party or out at a bar and I wouldn't. I wouldn't say anything, I would just be there not eating, enjoying the conversation, and having a fine time. For some people that was a big trigger because it forces people to look at what they are doing and their choices. It was really interesting because every time it came up as a big emotional flare up it was always a shock to me because I don't talk about it

that much until somebody talks to me about it. It's not like I'm preaching, "oh you shouldn't be eating that, Do you know what that is?" It always came as a shock to me when people would get upset but it was always something with them that was happening internally. It didn't really have much to do with me but they were unhappy with their decisions. My family, when I started my grandfather was sick and I had moved back to New Hampshire so I was with my grandparents and helping out with my grandfather who would eventually pass. My grandmother did not get it at all. Everyday she would offer me ice cream and I'm like "no, thanks." Still when I go to her house she offers me ice cream. She is like "Do you want some ice cream, I'm going to make myself some eggs, do you want some?" I'm like no Ma, I'm still not eating that, it's been four years now." I've always done my own thing, I've just always done my own thing and I don't really care if anybody is backing me up or not, I just kind of do it. It didn't really matter.

Kelsey: How did you respond to that?

Participant 14: My grandmother is my only family really. And actually my brother was interested too. She wasn't aggressive or hostile about it. I think she just forgets so that every time I tell her it's like a new thing or a fad that I'm doing. She's just like what is crazy Participant 14 doing now. With my friends it's really hard because with my friends it was much more hostile which was interesting. It was a lot of anger and I think maybe they felt a loss with someone participating with them in that way. With me it was like "Oh, I'll still participate." And it felt the same to me, but it didn't feel the same to them. I stopped drinking also and stopped eating meat and eating cooked food and all this stuff, so I think it kind of felt like a loss by some people.

I didn't really argue with them and I can think of two specific incidents when it was a really hostile situation. I was just like "well, I'm sorry that my choices make you feel that way." And asking what specifically what did I do and what did I say to make you feel that way. And eventually they were like "actually it isn't you." It was actually just coming from them.

My brother actually tried...he didn't try being vegan but I do a lot of green smoothies and he tried that which was kind of amazing because my brother is like not very healthy and not very interested. He was feeling really sluggish and tired and he wanted to know how to feel better. I was like the biggest bang for your buck is to do green smoothies. It's what I tell everyone because I get so much energy from them and most people feel it right away. That's what I suggested to him.

I told him about them and he called me like two weeks later and I really assumed that he was just asking me and not following up. And then he called me and he was saying yeah, these green smoothies I can't stop drinking them and I was like add an avocado. He was like "yeah, I did that, I just can't stop drinking them." And I was like "Did you..."because he smokes a lot of pot, "Are you still smoking pot? Of course you're going to want more while you are still smoking pot." It's not rocket science and that's what your body wants. I was also like they have super nutritional value so your body wants more and more and more once you start giving it that nutrition that you're not used to getting. My brother eats at McDonald's still. He noticed changes cause he's like "and my skin...well it's kind of glowing." He said that. And my brother is such a big tough jock, super alpha male and so for him to be like "it's kinda glowing." I'm like "oh, that's good!" So he noticed changes and he doesn't really understand and he doesn't ask a lot of questions about what I eat. But, he was the only person in my family who tried anything that I suggested so...

Kelsey: Are your friends more used to it now?

Participant 14: yeah, some friends I don't have any more unfortunately but I have another friend who tried. I've had a couple of friends who have spent weekends with me and did the raw food thing and tried

it. And got very disturbed when like...you know your body starts to clean out and they were like "I'm on the toilet all the time." I have had some friends try it just to see what it was like. And I've lost some friends and I've added some friends. Actually two of them who were the most hostile and we're still friends and they've accepted it. They still make fun of me but they are not hostile at all and they've kind of gotten over it. One of those friends is like "I would eat raw if you just come and make me the food." It's not going to happen.

Kelsey: How do you handle going out to restaurants and stuff while being a raw vegan?

Participant 14: I don't go to restaurants very often. When I do, I either talk to the waiter or ask them to make me a big salad or something or sometimes if I'm not feeling in the mood for a salad, I'll ask for grilled vegetables. It's harder to find things that are vegan and gluten free if I want to eat something not raw, like if I want to eat something besides a salad. But I don't go out to eat very much. To me, it's hard to know what's going into the food and for me it's probably easier and cheaper to make them at home. And I like it better, so I don't go out very much and when I do I usually go to Stone Soup. I pick what it is.

Kelsey: If you travel, how do you handle eating raw and vegan on the road?

Participant 14: I do, I travel a lot in Central America so it's easier there because there is fruit everywhere. When I'm down there, it's a lot of fruit. When I'm down there it is really easy to ferment things. Sunflower seed yogurt and stuff like that is really easy, coconuts are like my favorite thing in the world. It's pretty easy. There have been times, like last year I went to Mexico and that was maybe the first time when I was like "oh cheese, I remember cheese." And Mexican food was my favorite. So that was kind of hard. Then I traveled in California earlier this year, just in the fall and it was really expensive in California to be raw, I'm not sure if it was more expensive than here but it felt like it. In California, people are much more aware and conscious of food. I like being there for that reason; it's a pretty interesting place to be.

Kelsey: Do you usually pick places that you know are going to be raw and vegan friendly?

Participant 14: I usually check to see if there is a raw restaurant or a raw event going on in the area, but I usually just go wherever I want to go. There is always a grocery store.

Kelsey: Do you have any kind of raw vegan support system or friends who are also vegan/raw?

Participant 14: No. I have friends, nobody here, I'm trying to think, I don't think I have any friends here who are vegan. My last boyfriend was vegetarian and wanted to be vegan. He was mostly while we were together...I have friends who like there's Linda, there's a woman in Westar who is a raw foodist and has a raw restaurant in Vermont. I know a few people but no one who is a support system. I meet more vegans in California than here. But they were all more like acquaintances. I met other raw food chefs and things like that.

Kelsey: How is it being raw and vegan in Burlington?

Participant 14: Burlington's awareness of raw is much higher than New Hampshire was which was interesting. Most people know what it is when I bring it up. I don't have to do quite as much education as I did in New Hampshire. In New Hampshire it was a lot of convincing people over and over again, like "why?" and here people kind of know whether or not they are participating. In the winter it's fine, I eat a lot of warming herbs like ginger and cayenne. I put cinnamon in all of my food, so I don't miss meat or cooked food. Sometimes I'll want the food but I don't think it's because it's cold. I think it's just that I'm

lazy because everything I eat, I make myself, sometimes I just don't feel like it. So, everything down to salad dressing, everything I make myself. Maybe that's when I want more cooked food. But I never want meat or anything like that anymore. I think that I sometimes want pizza but that happens very infrequently, like maybe once or twice a year. I'm like "oh!" or I see someone eating it and I'm like "Oh, I remember that."

Kelsey: Could you also say what your meals are like in a typical day?

Participant 14: So, in the morning I usually have a juice of some kind. This morning...I moved today so it's not really a good day but I had juice this morning, pineapple carrot. I had a salad and halva, I think that's it today. I eat pizzas; I had crackers earlier and salsa. I had kale chips too. In general those are the things I enjoy the most. I like smoothies and I like salad. All that stuff is generally what I eat. I also do zucchini noodles and marinara and stuff like that. I really like that, lasagna if I want to spend some time. But the payoff for lasagna is that it's delicious.

Rachel (friend): That dish makes me want to stay raw forever.

Participant 14: So good, but it depends if I can take some time and the money, sometimes it can be expensive to do that.

Kelsey: What do you think are the biggest obstacles to being vegan?

Participant 14: Convenience probably, It can be hard to find things and I just posted something on my Facebook page for my business about things that have meat in them like Altoids and Minute Maid lemonade and juice. It's like all these things that you pick up and you think its' orange juice, but there's meat in there. I think that it's in other things that we don't necessarily know. I think socially it can be hard like if you go to somebody and they invite you over and they put cheese in the salad. And you're like "Sorry! I can't eat that" when they made it especially because you were coming and they didn't think to not put cheese in the salad. It's kind of awkward and part of me is like just eat the salad and then part of me is like "ehh, it's probably going to make me really sick, so..."

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 14: I just have to be true to me and do what's good for my body. I would apologize and I would feel bad, but I wouldn't eat it. I might wipe off some of the cheese or something like that. And usually if somebody invited me to dinner I would either bring something so I know that there is something that I can eat or to somebody's house who knows.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you want to add about being vegan?

Participant 14: I don't think so?

Kelsey: Would you recommend this diet for all people? (Raw)

Participant 14: I don't think anyone should do anything that is going to make them feel deprived because ultimately that's not going to last if they feel deprived all the time. If a person is in a place where they feel deprived by what they are doing then it's just temporary and I'm more for long-term lasting, those are where you see the effects on health and on the environment. I mean veganism is huge for the environment. Being vegan for five years is the same as getting 150 cars off the road or something off the road, it's insane. I think that if people don't have the drive behind it for whatever reason that it's more important for that person to be compassionate towards themselves and do it at whatever pace they can do it. If being vegan is part of what is supposed to happen in their life than they will get there eventually.

I think that people should not eat as much meat as they do. I do not think that people should eat meat every day, definitely not at every meal. That is because it takes so long to process and it is really hard on the body. Those are the things that I really feel strongly about. They say that based on your blood type some people have to have meat, I don't know. Maybe they do. If they do then that's fine, that's good for them. But I definitely do not think that it's good for people to have meat all the time. Otherwise everybody's body is different. I don't see the value in saying that "someone should do this or someone should do this."

Kelsey: How do you deal with the lightness of everything?

Participant 14: For me, I think it's good because I have always been pretty grounded so I think for me, it adds lightness. For me, I can definitely get ungrounded. I eat a lot of greens when I'm feeling ungrounded. A lot of times, when I can't make a decision, it's really like all over the place. Greens are really my diet normally but if I get really busy, I'll just be grabbing apples at the market and eat them on the go a lot. And sometimes they get left out, not very often, but sometimes it happens. It happened in L.A. which is not a place you want to be when you are ungrounded. So I was like "okay, I have to eat greens." I eat greens, just greens and salads for eight days and I felt much better. I eat a lot of spirulina actually. Spirulina is like magic.

Kelsey: Do you think it's more important to be raw or vegan?

Participant 14: I do have one friend actually who is vegan, and I'm thinking about her diet and it's a lot of pasta and tofu and things like that that are not necessarily healthy for you. In that sense, if you're raw that stuff is off the table just by elimination. The things that are left on the table are good for you. There isn't very much with raw food that I can think of that isn't good for you. I think of anything really, maybe dates, shouldn't eat a lot of dates. But that's not going to do the same thing as if you eat a lot of pasta. So in that sense, I think raw food is good just by default because there's not a lot of wiggle room for bad choices because you can't cook them, you just can't eat them. If somebody is experiencing extreme health conditions like I was, I would suggest they go 100% raw to clear the illness and then move back to 75-50% whatever they want to do. It definitely divided to a multitude of illnesses, even asthma and diabetes. I worked with a man who had diabetes and cleared it in like two months or something like that.

Kelsey: Do they stay vegan?

Participant 14: Sometimes they do, it depends on what their motivation was. I've had people come to me who are feeling yucky, feeling like they are carrying too much weight, stuff like that. And people who come for that usually stay with it for six months or a year. But people who do it for a specific health concern, usually it's a lasting health concern. I think it's more about your motivation.

Kelsey: When people are interested in raw food and vegan diets what do you usually suggest starting out?

Participant 14: I always suggest green smoothies. I also have people listen to their body's a lot after they eat, so that they can start to connect. There is a big disconnect between people and their food. People don't think about where their food is coming from and what's actually in their food. Just for example when I first got out of college, I was working as a social worker in Maryland and every day I would have a piece of pizza or a calzone at this place I really liked down the street. Every day after lunch, I would get so tiered that I would have to shut my door and take a nap for twenty minutes. I was just so tiered; I could not keep my eyes open. I didn't know what's going on so I'm just going to stop eating because it happens every time I eat something. It didn't occur to me to change what I was eating. It was just like; just stop eating, eating makes you tiered. And it wasn't eating a massive amount of food. I try to get people to

focus on the connection of what they are eating and how their body feels. In no uncertain terms, our body will tell us what feels good and what it can handle. It's hard because our bodies will say things like "but, I really want a croissant."

That disconnects shows itself in so many different facets of our society, with our environment and social justice, just all different things. We just don't think about what we are doing and how it is affecting other things.

Kelsey: Do you think that being vegan and raw helped you to come to that connection with everything?

Participant 14: I think being vegan and raw helped me come to a connection because it helped me because everything is so much clearer in myself than it has ever been my whole life. I think it is because of the food and spiritually there was a lot that shifted when I became raw. And emotionally my moods and things like that, it is just operating with consciousness. When you are conscious in one area of your life it can't help but expand to other areas of your life. Unless you start looking at yourself and start questioning, "why are you doing this?" then it does, it moves to other areas. I think it helps for sure and I think when your body is getting the nutrients that it needs, all of your cells are moving at optimal functioning. Your capacity to understand things and to make that connection is higher, I think.

Participant 15 (Male, Age: 40, Years Vegan: 16)

Kelsey: Could you tell me about yourself?

Participant 15: Oh yes, ah I'm 40 years old, soon to be 41. I grew up in Hanover, New Hampshire. I was born in NY in Terry Town. I went to college at St. Mike's and just stayed here. I'm a teacher. I've been teaching for 17 years and so I decided to stay in Burlington. I met my partner who went to UVM and we love it here. So we decided to raise our child here. He's been vegan since he was born. He seems to have a good grasp on it, of why and it wasn't his choice to begin with, still isn't his choices.

Kelsey: How did you come to be vegan? What were the initial steps?

Participant 15: It's actually very clear in my mind. So I graduated in 1995 and I worked at Barnes and Nobel after that for about a year. And I remember having this vision of "a I want to be vegetarian" at that point. And I had a good friend who was vegan, and his partner was vegan. I would give you his name but I don't even know where he lives anymore. I think he moved up the west coast. He was a good friend and I talked to him a lot about it. I remember the last red meat very in particular. It was very delicious. I believe where Magnolia is. It was my birthday, maybe 1995. I think it was then, it was right when I graduated. And then I stopped eating red meat. I kept thinking I was going to go vegetarian. This was when Barnes and Nobel... was in you know where the Staples is right now? And there was also a price chopper, super ghetto chopper. I would go over and get chicken nuggets or something. Horrible, horrible, food. I remember that was the last meat I had too, just horrible decision-making.

I finally said at that point this is just horrible. And you know I didn't like eggs at that point, I didn't know what kind of dairy I was having. Never drank milk, definitely eat cheese a lot. I never had honey, so that was never an issue. Not exactly sure what my dairy consumption was at that point. I was vegetarian, though I don't really believe in the word vegetarian. ah maybe it was UVM... put on something where they hosted...It was PETA, they put on something at Waterman. They put on something and someone came in and spoke. I went and was struck.

So here was the bottom line. The thing that drove me to be vegan wasn't food, it was the images of vivisection, of testing on animals, particularly of chimps. That just knocked my socks off. I just remember crying; this was the most horrible thing that I had ever seen. At the same point the person who was speaking, was actually not the person who was scheduled to speak. Who was actually dying of cancer. He had said no to treatment because of ethical reasons. The advancement had been made because of testing on animals. I was just struck, I didn't know if I'd be able to do that. It was really the imagery, not even the pictures. It was the underground video, the brainy images and just being horrified, of being terrified. And it was that day, it wasn't...I mean it's so hard, giving up cheese (mimicking others' response to the prospect of going vegan). This isn't about food, it was lifestyle, so everything that day out of the house. It was really kind of like a lazy entry into a kind of purgatory vegetarianism and then a smack in the face for veganism, there was no turning back. I think it was fall of 96, sixteen, seventeen years ago. I've never looked back ever since, not even an issue. My partner decided to do it...that was before I had meet her. And then she decided to do it on her own after we had met. I think she might have been vegetarian. She didn't want to think and she didn't want me to think she was doing it because we had gotten together. We never even thought of being worried about raising our child vegan. Even with a naturopath, a local naturopath who went off on Amy about raising a child vegan. Said, what an awful decision, how unhealthy it is. And I've always wanted to go back and bring my son. And then say oh yeah he's vegan! What do you think of that?! Ahh, yeah so that was the process of becoming vegan.

Kelsey: Why in the beginning were you thinking about being a vegetarian?

Participant 15: It was so long ago. I think just a very lazy answer is a care for animals, that I had had a philosophical awakening at that point. I don't think I could pinpoint a specific point, just a general it makes sense. I think I went through those stages. For vegetarianism it was just for me. And then when I went vegan, I was all right, this is how it's gotta be. And then coming back to this is my choice and this is my family's choice, so umm...I can't think of anything specific for being a vegetarianism other than you know I care for animals, so it's probably a smart thing to do. It's never been about health. Total junk food vegan, I leave the kale and all that stuff to my partner. I get all excited about the latest vegan treat or whatever.

Kelsey: Why don't you consider vegetarianism a word?

Participant 15: I guess this is preaching to the converted, but if you are having cheese, you are basically having meat. It isn't about the food it's the philosophy, not about the diet, it's what you're stealing or doing to animals. Now that's my perspective now. I was vegetarian then...I was yeah there's ovo-vegetarian blah blah...you know there's all the different brands you can put on it. Now my perspective is if you are having any animal products, you are ultimately killing animals. Its just labels, but the whole idea is that either you are having animal products or your not. Its kind of the way I see it. And you can make whatever choice they want.

Kelsey: How did you evolve and how do you continue to be vegan?

Participant 15: I think it's getting old. I think its having a family and realizing the choices about how to keep my family safe. And hopefully through conversations and experiences those things you know spread and ripple out. And I think that happens. You know I run a school out of my house and you know through school and through friends they bring vegan snacks and I think it makes people think. I think it's a smart thing to have, you know rather than to hit people over the head. That's all of our political discourses. And you know that was for me it was a conversation is always better. For me, you know I'm a teacher of small children. I'm always trying to have conversations over violence, something I'm always trying to combat. You know evolution through time. I don't know if everyone goes through that. I'm sure there are vegans older than me who are still trying to fight the good fight, you know. It's just not how I view fighting.

Kelsey: How do you maintain veganism on an everyday basis?

Participant 15: People can think whatever they want to think. Day to day it's I don't even really think about it...I guess it kind of does. Cause when we go shopping our money and time is spent in bulk and produce department, so that's obviously easy to work with. I've gone from looking at products. So there was a point in that evolutionary time period where I would look at products, oh is this made in dedicated machinery? I kind of forgot about that and said that if it says its vegan, its vegan, and that's good enough for me. And ahh so I do the majority of the shopping and I spend most of the time in the grocery stores, so I guess indirectly I kind of think about it.

I laugh at city market because it was a very small coop and I think to prove to people...most people wanted a grocery store like a Shaw's or a Hannaford's and whatever and so I think to prove to people that it wasn't just a fluffy fruity place...To make people understand that it's not only a vegetarian/vegan place, they put meat specials on the front door they were like alright. Like do they really need to put that? You know there is no Vegan special on the front door. It's always like this big meat special. And there's the cooler where there's lots of tofu and stuff. It's called the hippie cooler and you know it's like doing an injustice by doing that. You know the owner is our neighbor, he's a good friend. I remember writing and saying I know it's really a joke but you're really doing a disservice by saying it's the hippie cooler. I know a couple other people who have wrote in too, but nothing has really changed.

As a day-to-day thing, it was very easy for me to say that there is no grey area, its only black and white. I'm never going to get something that has animal products in it. I got Dayquil/Nyquil for my partner because she had the flu and we saw it had gelatin in it. We said it'd be really good she could take this and feel better, but we said no because it's got gelatin in it. So it's very clear, it's a yes or no issue. There is no grey area. So shopping every day is easy. We cook the majority of our meals and we know the places around town that are vegan. We do go out and we know in town the places that we can eat at. That's another interesting thing because we know some people who won't go out or eat out at all because you can never know exactly how everything was cooked. And that was like, at some point we were like we're not going to live like that. If they say its vegan, we're just going to trust them. I'm sure over 16 years there have been some mistakes and something that I've eaten, but you know you just have to trust that people do the best they can. And we appreciate that people do the best thing for us. So it's funny because I have a friend who lives in Vershire, Vermont and she's a vegan, I'm pretty sure she was the last time I talked with her. She lived in San Francisco and she was like couldn't be any easier out there. There's full on vegan bakeries and stuff like that. And there is nothing like that here but there are always places to go. There are always places to go, like Asian places are always great places to go. Stone soup is a great place to go. And so it's as if we have our rituals and our patterns, places we know we can go and where we know what we can get. I don't even think about it anymore, it's just lifestyle. It's like anyone who goes and gets hamburgers or whatever, we just don't. And I don't even think about it.

Kelsey: How do you handle going out of Vermont and eating as a vegan?

Participant 15: If we go to visit a relative it depends on the relatives. When we visit my partners' family, her mom always caters to us; she loves experimenting. She loves finding new recipes. It tends to be a lot of soups and salads and rice and stuff. It's very easy, very self-contained because we don't have to worry about anything. If we go to my family's house, its let's bring everything with us. Let's have everything packed and ready to go. Granola for the mornings, almond milk or whatever it is. We bring that stuff with us. And that's for everything. We have to judge. If it's my sister in New Jersey, we know we'll be taken care of. And we always try to be appreciative of everyone. We can bring whatever is needed. But you know, it' also it's our choice. Though I's nice to offer hospitality when its offer. And we never ever look down on people who don't want to offer that out because it's again our choice. When we go out and people apologize, it's like you don't have to apologize, it's no biggie for me. We are pretty good at finding what we need to find. We tend to go to places that we know will be safe. Like Portland, Maine, or Boston, Massachusetts we know where to go. And online there's plug in a town, vegan ...and you'll come up with three different places. And if we're on the road then you're on your own. Can you find a salad at Applebee's' or like whatever but we tend to go and stack up on at least snacks and it's never been an issue in snacks.

Kelsey: How is it raising a vegan child and do you have conversations with kids here about veganism?

Participant 15: With Ottis who is my son, it's been part of his life, it is who we are and what we do. And early on we'd talk about why and in very simple. That we love animals and part of that is that we don't want to hurt them and in whatever form that is. As he's gotten older it's been okay people eat meat and that's their choice. This is what happens when they eat beef, which is a calf, and a calf is a live animal. And what happens is they have to be killed to be eaten. We haven't gotten to grander stuff like vivisection or anything yet. We've talked pretty much diet stuff. Nothing gory or bloody, but this is the facts. Our belief is that you don't need to share everything. And people like to talk a lot. But we talk enough. Meat is from a chicken and you have to kill them. And eggs are the same; you have to steal them from the chicken. And he accepts that and he says that's what he's always what he's going to be. He's 7 and ah it seems to make sense. It's definitely our choice. And if he said he wanted to try something we would say

no. At this point and say when you can go out and buy your own thing then yes. So then if we had a friend who said we're going to have burgers tonight and we're going to offer one to Ottis then we would have to have a huge conversation. Our friends know who we are and they know our choices. I think they are very accommodating to us. And as for other people here. Up until this year, I'm homeschooling Ottis and a couple of his friends this year. Before that for the last four years I ran a school from this house. And the rule was that I came up with right away was my house my rules first of all, that all the families shared a, they'd bring in a snack one day, or one day a week. Maybe it changed over the years. And it was a chance for me to say that my child is going to have to figure out his own path for his diet for a while, so I would like to keep this a safe place for him. And I'd like you to meet us where we're at as opposed to the other way around where we are mostly meeting where other people are at most of the time. Most people were friends already.

They were all very accommodating. They would ask is this okay? Is that okay? And um that always seemed to work out really well and for me I always think it's a chance for them to experience something different, if they haven't. A lot of people are vegetarian or had had experience with friends or families and it hasn't really put anyone out. Other people are like oh I've never done this before, it might not be very good ...and it was never a problem. No one's ever really complained. I mean I'm sure people at home are like ahh f*** you know, what a hassel but no one complained to my face. Everyone to my mind were great and I'm hoping it was a great experience.

...and more to your point did we ever talk with the kids and yes! Umm... not as much I talk with Ottis about it...my son, but to we why we are vegan. You know... 'Participant 15, why are you and Ottis and Amy vegan?' and you know because we care about animals and one way we show that is we don't eat anything that comes from them. And that's to all the kids that go through here. They know that. Participant 15 is vegan and Ottis is Vegan. They don't eat any animals. I've never tried to preach and so very rarely has a kid said 'well I'm gonna do this too.' A couple have... this little one over here has, but she could not be any more of a meat eater. She tried it for like a day and it ...she's a complete meatatarian, like steak and chicken at night. And so...its funny my son and this girl are going to get married...they've been talking about it the last like year and a half and you know you're going to have some interesting choices to make as you get older... umm so it's been good, talking with kids.

I think it's good to talk about it as a healthy choice kind of thing. You know sometimes I've said that. People have said you know 'meats really healthy' and then I'd say 'well that's one way to look at it and here's another way to look at it.' Like anything yeah there's healthy parts about it and there's not healthy parts about it. That's true about a lot of foods. We did talk about it and to a point. I think its good. I think it's always good to broaden children's...especially at this age. I think its good to have a talk with kids, again not teach.

Kelsey: Does your son have any problems with being a vegan.

Participant 15: I don't think so; he seems all aboard and full on with it. And kids never challenge him about it. He doesn't do overnights yet at this point, so it's not really a problem. I think he's had maybe dinner a couple times at people's house. But people...you know like Tyler's house, he's been over there a few times. He and Tyler's oldest son have been friends for a long time and so that's never been a problem and other people's houses. Just close friends and they typically eat something more vegetable based or not, so he's never experienced anything really without us.

The only thing that he's expressed recently, this summer, is that he's wanted to go fishing. Because we would see people fishing on the lake in New Hampshire and like any kid fishing is magical, it's very intriguing. And I went fishing; I think I told him 'it's not going to happen. Do you understand why?' Because you know if you go fishing do you understand what happens to the fish? And even catching really you're still stabbing the fish. And later in the summer I was talking to my partner and I remember saying I'm struggling with it a little bit because could he have this experience with me... Then I could control it, do it and it would feel icky and horrible to me, but I could honor him in his wish for the experience. And hope it goes as well as it could. Luckily...the interest...well not the interest, but it just kind of faded as the summer wore on. But that was a struggle. And that was something we had to talk to him about. And he knew, it wasn't something like...I know and I'm still interested in doing it. I think I would say to him if you can catch one and get it off the hook on your own then that's your...and another thing the kids he was watching were using worms. And he's in love with worms. I was like you understand that... harm happens to the worm too...nothing good comes out of this for anyone, unless you detach yourself from it and enjoy fishing.

So we never followed through with it, but we'll be going away for the summer, so I'm curious if it will come up. So I should probably come up with my response for when the time comes. So that's the only time that he's ever said anything. He really hasn't. He's a pretty deep kid, but he could be hardwiring stuff that I don't know about (laugh). But to my mind it's been easy. I don't like speaking for him, but I think I can in this situation.

Kelsey: How has having a family affected your veganism or how you look at veganism?

Participant 15: Family has changed my political outlook on it. There was a point, I think if you ask my friends at the time there was ten years ago, probably 14, 15, 16 years ago, they would say I was kind of an a**hole about it. Apparently to their mind, I was a little vociferous about it, you know saying 'everyone should be this and you're bad' I don't remember doing that, but I've been told I did that. I never did anything other than give money to places and you know I'm not even sure what else. But yes having a family and having a child in particular, I think. It has definitely narrowed my focus; Less worldly, more locally. Here's what I can control; I can control my family. My family can make good choices and that's good enough. It doesn't mean that we have to raise a raucous or do whatever. It can be let's make good choices; let's buy good food and talk to people when they want to talk. And let's talk to kids when they want to talk. Let's have potlucks when we bring something vegan. Let's you know, be involved that way we are who we are and let that ripple out. Rather than shouting out at the top of our lungs that this is who we are.

Kelsey: Do you think that you have more obstacles when idealized or now as a family?

Participant 15: I don't know, I probably presented more obstacles for myself at that point and then realized probably less obstacles now. If you are at a restaurant with friends and you are like 'oh your ordering that?' that just doesn't work and if you are peaceful and kind about it, at least people will listen. I think at that point I wanted people to change. I think that's what I wanted. I think at that point in my life I thought 'I'm doing the right thing, so everyone should be doing the right thing and if you don't change then you're bad. Now I realize, okay I still think you're making a bad choice. I never say this, but if you really thought about it...and I think at this point I just don't care as much what other people do and probably that makes it easier. And also to people who I...not to sound condescending but perhaps being older and being around older people who have families. When I made this decision... to change it was I was still young still doing wild and crazy things and I was associated with doing those kind of things and

everyone was concerned with their own thing. I think now that people are a little older, concerned about making kind choices and being more thoughtful. This is the choice that I make. I don't really care what other people do, it's just not important anymore.

Kelsey: Do you think the same thing would have happened without a family.

Participant 15: I probably would have mellowed with age anyway. Definitely having a family. Part of it is that I just don't have the time and brain space to worry about more than I can. And what I can do is worry about if my family is taken care of. And that's before that wasn't the priority. Before I had a relationship it was, it's all about me now and so everyone focus on me so definitely. I don't know if I can answer it a hundred percent because I don't know the alternative but most likely yeah, having a family made me think this is our choice. This is our bubble. Before it was all megaphone. I don't remember that...I don't think I was an a** hole, but I've been told that I was.

Kelsey: Anything you want to say about being a vegan or what you would want other people to know?

Participant 15: I guess I would say it's not as hard as people think. It's not as hard to go "cold turkey" so to speak. Its interesting people have always asked 'do you feel better? Do you feel different? And it's been long enough now where I couldn't answer that without any relative sense. I don't know if I necessarily did. I think I was young enough that I was fairly young enough at that point. You know I've heard people said...you know Hollywood stars say, "oh I feel so much better." I don't think I felt anything better but I felt emotionally better. I remember that feeling of this is a good kind thing to do for the earth. And this is kind of where I am now that there's nothing we can do, I'm an internal pessimist. There's nothing we can do to change where we're going and it's not very good but if there is anything that we can do to lesson that, it's a good idea. You know there are books coming out right now that say actually veganism doesn't really help the planet. And these resources are being used and blah. Maybe that's true but from what I've heard and what I've read, and how I feel it is just to kind of lessen the impact of pain. The whole principle of a himpsa; of a not injury, if you can just not injure and not hurt; It seems like a smart thing. Again I don't like to preach it, but I think if people thought about it more maybe at least people think.

The other thing is that veganism isn't a diet, there's a lifestyle. Veganism is just a term but for me it was testing. I think if people had the knowledge...I think it's important for people to just think about it. I think it's good to keep thinking. That's just something I believe. I still. Do you have images that get stuck in your head? Those ones are just stuck in my head. IF people want to investigate it, I don't think people should limit oneself to food. I think people should explore the whole breath of what vegan is. From clothing to fabric to what you put on your body. Just be open to it.

Kelsey: Were there other things besides the PETA event that made you become vegan?

There were books, I did read a lot. At that point there's ahh...somewhere down in the basement. You know feminist literature for vegans and like animal slavery versus human slavery; really deep deep stuff. I did a lot of reading after and I went to info stuff with some treats. And that reading was good. Part of it is I think when you get that space in your life it's kind of like preaching to the converted. It's like I get it. I kind of already know it, but it's good to be knowledgeable... it's good to know stuff and you know that kind of stuff... I think that kind of stuff is there for me but you I remember...I'm sure it was at waterman. I remember looking at the screen, about the size of this wall and thinking this is the most horrible thing I have ever seen and will see or comparable and it was just so strange. I think anything else after was less...any other research or reading or anything...nothing topped that. It was just below that. Like this is it. This is the wall and you're done. Nothing else really compared to that. I think seeing meat in the store;

it really makes me sick. It just does. Seeing whole fishes and stuff is disturbing. I've never totally gotten over it, where I can walk by brown beef or a butcher and sometimes I can get angry walking by and sometimes seeing someone order something and being like... but that's it though really. But yeah that was the moment...I should look it up, I'm sure I could find the actual date and where it was.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 15: Just walk on by, I mean what can you do? You can be an a** about it or you can just be 'everyone makes their own choices.' And either with knowledge they've made their own choices or not. And you'd like people to make the right choices but that's just not my responsibility. It's not my choice to make. Just walk on by.

Participant 16 (Male, Age: 35, Years Vegan: 14)

Kelsey: Age, occupation, and years' vegan?

Participant 16: I know I was vegan in '99, So thirteen or fourteen years. I went vegetarian in '92 or '93. It was gradual into vegan. Well, depends on how you think about it. I was vegetarian and then the following would keep happening: they'd say "I thought you were vegetarian." And then I'd be like "I am vegetarian," and then they'd be like "Don't you know about this ingredient that comes from so and so...and I'd be like "No I didn't know about it, thank you!" So I kept on cutting out more and more things like cheese. I eliminated almost all cheese because of rennet. I can't remember when I cut out can sugar, I think that might have been before I became vegan. I was vegetarian and then I was cutting out traditional vegetarian foods and then I didn't actually become vegan until I met other vegans. I had a roommate who was vegan and I was dating someone who was vegan. It made it seem normal and possible.

Once I decided I was vegan that was it. It wasn't a week vegan, a week not vegan.

Kelsey: How did you make the decision to transition from vegetarian to vegan?

Participant 16: It was like the extension of the decisions that brought me to vegetarianism. Short version is animal compassion. I felt like my vegetarian animal compassion wasn't logically consistent. I was still supporting the not strictly necessary suffering of animals. I had that conflict in my own mind that animal welfare was important to me and yet I was supporting animal suffering. Once I met other vegans and it seemed possible to me, then I went vegan.

Kelsey: When did you start making that connection?

Participant 16: When I was a real little kid, I lived with pets and I loved animals. I was aware that animals could suffer. I never thought that animals were as important as people but I thought that they were important enough not to kill them for fun and torture them, so I opposed hunting but then as I got older and I heard about vegetarianism I realized that I don't need to eat animals to survive then really eating meat, unless you have some sort of dietary compulsion, then it's still killing animals because you prefer the taste not because it's strictly necessary. Again, I was thinking about vegetarianism but again I didn't actually go vegetarian until I had a friend who was a vegetarian. His parents imposed it on him for religious reasons. I met a girl who was vegetarian so it was something I thought about, but I didn't actually do until I was around other vegetarians.

Kelsey: Could go more into how your friend influenced you to be vegetarian?

Participant 16: He was a jerk, so he wasn't a very good influence. But this girl was a very good influence because I thought it would help my chances with her, but she was vegetarian for animal compassion and then also environmental reasons. She was making it as an ethical lifestyle choices, so that really did it for me. That eating meat was actually hurting the world and abstaining was abstaining from that kind of damage.

I had an idea that I shouldn't abuse and exploit animals, but I didn't realize it was practical until I met other people who were living...And my mom was at first angry because she thought that this would mean that she would have to do extra cooking, but I offered to do extra cooking for the family. That was her only objection, so she was satisfied after that.

Kelsey: How did other members of your family react to you being vegetarian/vegan?

Participant 16: I think my father assumed it would be temporary but he held comment. I was fifteen, so he respected my agency to make my own decisions. Peer support was really important and my friends were really supportive of it. Other people thought it was silly to give up something tasty. My parents are not vegan, but they eat a low meat diet for health reasons. They've thanked me for training them towards that. My wife is a vegetarian and will occasionally attempt to go vegan, but it doesn't last very long. My second wife, she decided to go vegan, I think for me. She bought like a two pound block of cheese and said, I'm going to go vegan except for this block of cheese. She eat nothing non-vegan except for this one block of cheese. But immediately after this block of cheese was gone, she was "forget it, I'm buying more." So she was briefly almost vegan.

Kelsey: Is your wife now a support system for you being vegan?

Participant 16: yeah, she'll read a label, that's someway that she'll support me. She'll occasionally miss something, but so what. She's also good if we're having social events, she'll tell people ahead of time if I'm not already close to that person. So telling people ahead of time and reading labels are two ways that she supports me.

Kelsey: Do you know any other vegans who are a support system to you?

Participant 16: Who else is vegan? I think I'm no longer close with any other vegans. I know other vegetarians and I know people who have dietary restrictions of different strips. I no longer feel like I need a vegan support system. Burlington is a pretty vegan town. I don't have to make a special effort to find a vegan friendly place. I needed support to get started but after a year or two I was a self-sustaining vegan.

Kelsey: Where you or are you involved in any organizations or groups dealing with vegetarianism/veganism?

Participant 16: When I was in Boston, I went a few times to a Vegetarian Super Club, maybe four times, maybe three, but it was mainly because I wanted the food. So maybe a few times I looked into a vegetarian community. I don't think there's enough to build a community around. In other things I like there are often vegetarians. A lot of vegetarians are liberals. I think there are relatively few times where I've gotten together with people particularly about vegetarianism. I haven't stayed a part of any of those groups.

I gave up on vegan world; I don't think that's going to happen. It's so sad. As far as advancing the cause of vegetarianism/veganism, clearly I think it's a good idea. And I would want to encourage other to be vegan, vegetarian. I think the best way I can do that is by making it seem like its not hard to do and also by making it seem like it's not strange to do. I think if I had dreadlocks and wore a lot of hemp and had a composting pale with me at all times. There might be some that would attract to veganism but I think that being mostly normal in vegan is most likely to result in future vegans.

Kelsey: Before you were vegan did you have any preconceived notions of what a vegan was and if so what was it?

Participant 16: I always thought that veganism was just the diet. I recognized that vegans often have a lot of stuff in common and it tends to be stuff I like. Like liberal politics and creativity and a bohemian feel and I really like that stuff, but I definitely always separated out the two. There is the dietary restriction and then it didn't have to extend to a lifestyle.

I don't know if I really do vegan stuff, like do vegan stuff. Sometimes I'll Google stuff, if this is vegan. Like I was looking up wines, is this vegan? But I don't feel like I'm a part of a vegan community. I feel

like I live in a vegan community geographically. Probably a couple times I've protested wearing fur or something like that, in a couple of marches, maybe twice ever. It's mostly like a personal choice mostly.

Kelsey: Could you talk a little bit about your personal choice as a vegan? Is it a lifestyle for you or strictly a diet?

Participant 16: Oh yeah. I've got my vegetarian shoes. My toothpaste isn't animal tested. I have a couple of wool things left over from when I was just a vegetarian, but I read labels and I don't buy wool. Food, clothes, personal products... So as much as I can but I have to be practical. So everyone who is vegan has different rules. Some people have really different rules. Some people are vegan except for free. One thing that I do that isn't vegan is that I don't make any effort to avoid destroying bugs. I eat honey because I don't care about bugs. I drive a car and I crush a million bugs on my way home. Would it be nice to drive home without killing a bunch of bugs? I just have to draw the line somewhere. Like dies that come from beetles, I don't care about that.

Kelsey: How did you learn how to be vegan?

Participant 16: When I first became vegan, I thought that that just meant not drinking milk and not eating eggs. I'd have a mouthful of something and then someone will say something. Like if someone said that they were vegan and I saw them using white sugar I wouldn't be like "Don't you know about bone char?" I figure I'll keep that to myself. When I started it would be milk and eggs. People would tell me this is also not vegan, this is not also vegan. I started reading labels.

I made the decision; okay I'm going to be vegan. And then I found out about more and more things and I cut them out.

Kelsey: What do you usually eat on a day to day basis?

Participant 16: I eat a lot of sweet potatoes and peanut butter. Like onions and carrots, I eat a lot of beans. Sometimes brown rice but it takes forever to cook. I really like falafel, sometimes I get falafel from the truck out here: Alababa's umm...it's good. He showed me this chickpea dish-Moroccan style chickpeas-it's really good. For a while I was eating pasta and pasta sauce four or five times a week. I love French fries. I'm not healthy at all. Sometimes I'll eat at Oreos. I don't try to eat healthy. I think I am pretty healthy, but it's kind of a side thing. I cook most of my meals, but that's mostly because it's too expensive to eat out. I use a lot of frozen veggies and hot sauce. I put peanut butter on everything.

Kelsey: Do you think it's easier to be vegan here in Burlington than in other places?

Participant 16: It's easier to be vegan here than it was in Gallop, New Mexico. I would say Do you have anything vegan? And they would say, "What's that?" and here they would say this one, this one, this one. It's part of the culture there to be hospitable and share food with people. I would try to avoid turning down someone's hospitableness with food because that was awkward for everybody by being very upfront about my diet, which I think made me seem kind of strange and pushy. Like "What does this guy think I'm going to feed him." The idea that you would restrict your diet in this way because you feel bad for animals seemed strange to people who lived off of animals or who didn't but didn't have a lot of choice of food. I think it's probably hard to initially go vegan if you are economically depressed because you don't have a lot of choice about your food.

Kelsey: When you go to other places outside of Burlington, how do you deal with that?

Participant 16: If I go to a big city it's no problem. But sometimes when I go to a place that is not a major city, it can be amusing. Like I went to a wrap and smoothie place in some kosher town in New Hampshire

and I said “is it vegan?” And the person behind the counter said, “it’s like vegetarian but you also don’t eat eggs and milk?” And I was like “thank you!” And I went to a dinner and I said “What do you have that’s vegan?” and she was like “salad.” And I was “well, fry me up some salad!” So if I go to a small town, choices are hard. But in a big city it’s easy. It finally hit critical mass, that it’s on the menu. And I always make sure to say that if it’s on the menu “I appreciate that you have vegan options on the menu, I try to encourage that.” Sometimes I buy things that I don’t want just because they are vegan.

Kelsey: What are some other obstacles to you being vegan?

Participant 16: I guess there are a couple downsides. One thing is that when I travel, I don’t get to try the local whatever, like this town is famous for their sausages and dumplings, thanks...but then the biggest downside is the people offering you food thing. You go to somebody’s house and they offer you this buttery tart or whatever. I try to avoid it when I can by in a polite way, maybe apologetic way, saying that I have this really restrictive diet. And then if they want to know more, I’ll be like it’s called vegan and it’s like this and this. And if they are interested I’ll talk all about it. But I try to keep it so that my veganism doesn’t mean extra work for people. I think that turns people off. If I failed to prevent it, like I’m going to insult somebody by refusing something. So far I’ve gotten away with making excuses like, oh I just eat...but it smells really good. Hypothetically if I was really going to hurt someone’s feeling then I might have something that’s vegetarian but not vegan, but this is so far something that I’ve been able to avoid. There is some kind of limit. I don’t judge people.

Kelsey: Do you think that your interactions with people who are not your friends or family members are different than they were before you were vegan?

Participant 16: If they are also vegans then we have something to talk about. Some of my friends like to post funny sayings about loving bacon on my wall. That’s alright, it’s good natured fun...I don’t think I look very vegan. If we are not talking about food then it’s not likely to come up.

Some of them might be afraid that I’m judging them because several times a day they do something that I think is unethical. It kind of makes it sound like I do judge them, but most of the time I don’t think about it. Sometimes people feel awkward about it like they will feel bad about it if they eat meat in my presence.

I try to say that ‘it really doesn’t bother me.’ I do a lot of these motions with my hands (puts palms up in front). I’ll say, “It’s very considerate for you to ask.” I’m not worried about any shared utensils or things like that. Some people think it’s like kosher, I think I quickly get pass this, people who think that I might get offended or concerned that I might be judging them.

Kelsey: Does your work place ever interact with you being vegan?

Participant 16: I missed out on a lot of free pizza. Once a week there are meetings where people get together and talk about their math. Pizza seems to be the feed-people-a lot-of food-cheaply-food of choice here at the university. Sometimes I look longingly at some slices of mushroom that I can’t have. But you know it’s not harder to math with people. It doesn’t get in the way of my job at all. I think there would be some places in the world that it would be hard to travel. I visited some friends in South Korea. These were friends from the US and I said, you know I’m depending on you cause I can’t speak Korean so I’m going to be depending on you to find some healthy vegan foods. Now I know that everything I probably eat had some fish base or fish pieces in it, but I tried.

There is a restaurant chain connected to a religion which is vegan called country life. I don't know if you've heard of it. Country Life is the restaurant chain. There was one in Prague and I eat there like five times. Portland, Oregon you can get vegan donuts. I like vegan junk food when I can get it.

Kelsey: Do you think you felt physically or emotionally different when you first became vegan?

Participant 16: I lost some weight when I went vegetarian and a little bit more when I went vegan. Not a lot. I think I get sick less often but it could be a lot of factors there. Every few years I'll get my blood work done and I have been told that my B12 level has been on the low end of normal. I try to drink more B12 fortified soymilk which is hardly a treat because it's very tasty. Some people I've talked to who don't know me very well have asked me how do I get enough protein or enough iron. They don't know that B12 is the real issue.

Kelsey: Are you part of any other food movements?

Participant 16: I always buy fair trade coffee. I buy recycled paper products even though the price differential is significant. Organic vegetables...I tend to buy them when I'm not feeling broke. Maybe I feel broke a lot because I rarely buy organic vegetables. If the price differential is really small then I'll buy it, but if I had lots of money I would buy more organic vegetables. I would like to get my clothes fair-trade or sweatshop free, but I just bought some clothes that probably weren't so that's a goal for the future I guess. If I had to choose between the socially responsible and the environmentally conscience, even though they usually are the same, hypothetically I would opt for the socially responsible product. I'm not particularly into local. I'm not so sure that a lot of little farms are better than fewer larger farms.

When I did some investing, I tried to do some socially responsible investing. I think that people are important. I think animals are important, but maybe not as important. Animals are at least important enough not to eat them just for fun. Those two things are important. I don't know if that thinking comes from my parents or my religious upbringing, maybe boy scouts, I don't know...Responsibility to do no harm. I don't want to harm people and I don't want to harm animals.

Kelsey: Were there any events or interactions that led you to have that responsibility?

Participant 16: When I was already vegetarian I went to the Peace Abbey, I think it's in Surbure, Massachusetts because I lived one town over where they had some rescued farm animals. At that point I had already made that decision; it was already "who could eat such an adorable creature?" I guess like the motivation for vegetarianism and veganism is not wanting to do harm to other creatures. The actual decision came after spending time with other vegetarians or vegan, whom two of them I felt close. I had the idea of vegetarian. Had it not been them, I might have become vegetarian later on. I think it'd be the same thing with vegan.

Kelsey: If someone were interested in being vegan what would you recommend or suggest?

Participant 16: I think the first thing I would say would be great! And the second thing would be to warn them against orthodoxy. I'm pretty strict within my own rules, but I don't want them to think that being vegan is tuff and requires a lot of painful sacrifice because then they'll be unhappy and they won't stay vegan probably. Even if they used micro-vegan products, but refrained from eggs, milk, and cheese, I think it would still decrease the demand for them. Economically if the production of the main things go down, then it won't be so cheap to use the byproducts.

Kelsey: How do you think someone would continue to be vegan?

Participant 16: I think if they know some other vegans who shame them, it would be counter productive. I think it would make it harder for that person to stay vegan.

Kelsey: How do you personally continue to be vegan on a day to day basis.

Participant 16: I think easy answer is quick inexpensive vegan meals that I can make for myself. Occasional vegan treats. Concocted versions of a non-vegan think like a Tofurkey or vegan cupcakes or something. So it's not hard for me to make the food and it's not hard for me to get vegan treats so I don't feel so deprived. Also it's really helpful when I'm in a place that labels things if they are vegan so I can reduce my label reading stress. I think a lot of vegans stop being vegan because it requires vigilance and vigilance requires energy. Probably it is knowing other supportive and non-judgmental vegetarians and vegans. I think it would be fun to go to a vegan/vegetarian potluck every other week, but I don't have a lot of time for that. If I did have more time then I'd be really into that.

Maybe start with big pieces of non-vegan things that you can see. And then if you're interested in like calcium steriolactate then worry about that later. I think that can be very daunting...you can't be vegan unless you're a chemist.

Kelsey: How do you think your veganism has changed over time?

Participant 16: As I've learned that more things are non-vegan, I've cut them out. Also, I'm not just a pasta and French fries man. I still like pasta and French fries very much. I'm still pretty upfront about it because I don't want to upset anyone by turning down the food that they offer me, so that's a reason to tell someone your vegan. It also fits with that joke: How do you tell if someone is vegan?...Don't worry they'll tell you. I've wondered a couple of times if I'll always be vegan. Maybe someday I'd go back to just vegetarian. I couldn't picture ever-eating meat. I don't think I will but it could happen. Maybe if I was somewhere that it was really hard to be vegan.

Kelsey: Why do you think it would be hard to go back to eating meat?

Participant 16: I would feel as though I were committing a crime against a sentient being. I think that morally there is not a significant difference between stabbing a duck to death with your fork and eating a piece of a duck that has been killed in a more efficient way. I just like ducks, I mean I don't really like ducks because they are pretty awful but I like them enough not to stab them. Hypothetically if I were attacked by a cow and forced to stab it to death, I would eat that cow. But, so far this hasn't happened.

Kelsey: Is there anything that you would like to add about being vegan?

Participant 16: I don't get cravings anymore about non-vegan stuff. I used to but eventually those went away. I think it was just length of time. People say "How do you live without bacon" and it's been 20 years since I've eaten bacon so I just don't miss it anymore. And it's been more than a decade since I've eaten cheese so I don't miss cheese anymore even though I did for a while. If you get hung up on something that you can't have, then I think the way around that is to eat something terrific that you can have. Maybe not a direct substitution for what you can't have.

Participant 17 (Female, Age: 20, Years Vegan: 1.5)

Kelsey: can you tell me about yourself?

Participant 17: my name is Participant 17. I'm 20. I'm from Kentucky I majored in anthropology with a minor in food systems but food systems is more of a hobby and forensics is more of an ambition.

Kelsey: Can you talk about how you became vegan?

Participant 17: I've been vegetarian for about four years now and last the winter break I was really bored. Whenever I'm bored I want do something I want to. I wanted to do a challenge something that was really weird and different, so I decided to become vegan. I always thought it would be something different especially in Kentucky where it is very difficult to cut something out. Because everything is in butter or A casserole and in five different cheeses. Before I went back to school, I decided to do it. Being in Vermont is so easy, it's so easy. I've been vegan for about a year and have been good. I feel a lot better.

Kelsey: How has it been better?

On before I didn't even like dairy that much dairy anyway. Too much dairy makes you feel sick. And I haven't eaten meat in a long time, so that wasn't a problem. And the only thing I really was hesitant about was eggs. I liked eggs and things that had eggs in them.

I just don't feel as lethargic or as bogged down as when I eat dairy or a lot of this and that. It doesn't really sit well. Now I just feel like I have a lot more energy. Which, it seems like it wouldn't be that way but when you decide to have any dietary restriction like that, even vegetarian. You have to know what you are doing. Like, I get my blood tested a lot from being vegan for iron; because the levels get a little funky every once and while. So that's pretty much how it all kind of happened.

Kelsey: How did you become vegetarian in high school?

Participant 17: My senior year in high school, I was in a nutritional chemistry class and that just sparked everything. Just watching all of these really good documentaries like King Corn and Food Inc. Food Inc. were really the icing on the cake, I watched that and was like, alright, I can do this. But I staggered it. It wasn't just cutting out meat cold turkey. No pun intended. (laughs)

But I started cutting out red meat and then I went out from there. I still eat fish; my dad cooks fish a lot. but I had a gap year. My host family cooked fish, but it wasn't fresh fish, it was some weird crusted fish that they put in the oven and then I decided I can't. I can't do it..(laugh). So then I stopped eating fish after that. It sounds like one extreme after another, now that I'm analyzing it. But so after that class I decided to be a vegetarian. Since then, my Dad is like " ahh, I can't wait till you're normal again.

You can eat the food that I made you." So that's pretty much how I became vegetarian.

Kelsey: Where were you in your gap year and how was that, being vegan?

Participant 17: I was in Germany and I was vegetarian then, and they were totally fine with it and they knew I didn't eat meat. They didn't have a very traditional German mindset, which made it so much easier. Because German mindset is so starch, carbs, meat, like that is it. But when we would go to my host family's extended family: aunts, uncles, grandparents were a lot more traditional. It was like I don't even know what to make you. I remember one night, I went over to my host aunt's house for some birthday or something and she had made them all this soup. It had meat in it but knowing that me and my other sister had gone vegetarian and didn't eat meat, she was "oh here's this baguette." It's all she gave us, a baguette and some salad. So a lot of people panic and just don't know what to do.

I was learning German and I remember being at my hosts' grandparents' house and people asking me, or rather drilling me about why I didn't eat meat. And I didn't really have the vocabulary yet to be like this is 'So corrupt, and so inhumane and so inhumane and blah blah blah' you know and I couldn't say that so I was just 'uhh, ahha, uahh, I don't know I just am,' (laugh). There was this weird kind of language barrier with that. And my host family was totally open to it. I think the hardest part was explaining it to people who weren't that open to it.

I think that is the biggest challenge with being vegan. It isn't the food really. Cause if you know how to cook and you know different cuisines then you know what goes in it. You can work your way around it and then mix it up. But then it's the ignorance of other people who don't understand that's the biggest problem.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 17: To each his own. I mean I'm not judging anybody for their dietary restriction or whatever they want to do. So when people pressure me and ask 'how are you vegan?!' (Demanding mimic) and 'How can you live without bacon and cheese?!' That's the main thing. I say 'I don't know. I just can.' You can't really get defensive about it because you can't really make people understand. That has to come from them. Even my extended family, they are still like 'you still on that vegan diet?' I'm like 'oh my god.' I'm not even going to open that can of worms.

Kelsey: How is it like being a vegan in Kentucky, could you talk a little bit about that?

Participant 17: Yeah, I've been really lucky because my family has been really open to that kind of thing. My mom is a red meat vegetarian. My dad is really supportive of local economy. Dad's on the board of the farmer's market. We're really not the typical Kentucky family. They would do much better in New England. They've kind of breached that comfort zone. Like Christmas if I go to my Grandparents' house for the holidays it's casserole after casserole. It's like in Portlandia where they pickle everything. 'I can casserole that. Put everything in a casserole. So yeah, you just kind of work yourself around. Especially if you're at somebody's house where they don't really, it's just a burden. You just have to act like 'it's fine, I can handle it, please don't worry about it.' People stress out of it a lot. So yeah people in Kentucky don't really understand. Vegetarians are one thing but vegan is 'What even is that?'

A lot of people don't understand where the boundary is, so they're like oh..you don't eat eggs? Not quit. You don't eat dairy? They don't really get it. It's not like here where alternative dinning is a big part of Vermont.

Kelsey: How do you keep yourself being vegan in Kentucky?

Participant 17: When I go home I'm pretty much a hobbit. I just don't do anything. I just sit in ma house. And I love to cook and my dad loves to cook, so that makes things a lot easier for me. I can cook and I can cook stuff for my family. And they really love it now. '

'Oh you have to make that again, we really love that vegan thing, it's vegan! It's easy!' My mom is still a little bit apprehensive. She's 'I don't know how to make this vegan.' I'm like 'butter, olive oil. Butter, olive oil.' It's the little things. Although butter makes things taste a hundred times better, it's still the little things.

So it's going out. We usually go to places that you can find stuff and you can work your way around it. So it's really not that hard when I'm at home because I'm usually at my house making my own stuff. Or

at the one or two restaurants in my town that has a vegan option. It's usually just making it myself which I prefer to do anyway.

Kelsey: Where their specific things in the movies like Food Inc. that made you decide this is why I should go vegan?

Participant 17: Being vegetarian was never really an animal rights issue, which sounds odd. If I had grown up in another country where you are not necessarily sustainable, but raising animals for your own consumption it's totally different. I think if I had grown up in any other environment I probably wouldn't be vegetarian. It was just all of the hormones and the huge factory farming which really didn't appeal to me. I know that that's just your classic American, you know bigger, cheaper, faster which really just utterly disgusts me. And you can keep things local and you can keep supporting your local economy but you can't do that anywhere. Movies like that will pinpoint the really bad and not the really good. Like food inc, isn't showing you the local economy. It's showing you things that make you go 'oh my god.' It's pretty graphic too, that always sets people over the edge. They'll say 'I'm going to go vegetarian! And then it last for like two days! So many people do that. And that's fine at least they gave it a shot.

I think it really is how graphic it is, that make it kind of whoo! No thanks!

Kelsey: How do you think you got over the two day period?

Participant 17: I think by staggering it. I staggered the kind of meats that I cut out from my diet. Once you stop eating it for so long, you don't want it. You don't have that craving for it. And I think I was really stubborn and had it in my head that 'I'm not going to eat meat! I'm not going to do it!' And that made it a lot easier, rather than maybe being like 'ehh, maybe I will maybe I won't.' I was like: No! Not gonna happen. So that made it a lot easier to do.

Kelsey: What would you recommend to people who wanted to be vegetarian or vegan?

Participant 17: I would recommend being really creative and exploring different kinds of cooking. Cause if you can get really excited about it and know how to do it yourself with the resources that you have then you will be more inclined to put both feet in and actually do it. If you can take your favorite recipes and tweek it a little bit and make it vegetarian, make it vegan, it might taste a little bit different, but it might taste better. So I think if you can get excited about it. Give it a different outlet than you probably have a better chance of sticking with it.

Kelsey: How do you think your interest in local food intertwines with veganism?

Participant 17: Food systems have always been an interest of mine. It's so funny whenever I write essays, I'm always like Vermont is so awesome! And then I go home and I'm 'oh my god, we have so much work to do.' I think it is local foods and supporting local economies, which I've grown up around oddly enough in Kentucky. In Vermont local foods is huge. It's so refreshing to be in a place where people actually care. It's frustrating to go back home where no one has any idea and are too ignorant too know.

I think that local foods do coincide with different dietary restrictions because you can go to the market and you can see all these vibrant colors. They aren't importing things from all these different countries. It's this is what's available right now. I'm not going to get tomatoes from New Mexico and get something mealy and mushy.

And you know even eating meat locally is one thing rather than getting it imported it from 'god knows where. I think being familiar with your food can shape the way that you eat for sure.

Kelsey: How do you think being in Vermont has affected your veganism?

Participant 17: I think it's made it stronger. Vermont is really good about supporting vegan and gluten free options. It's definitely a lot easier here. And my friends are so funny about it because started out as 'no you're not' and now they search for things that are. They're 'Participant 17, look! It's vegan!' It's not just me trying it, but them exploring it too. And them trying stuff. They're like 'Wow! That's really good and it's vegan.' I feel like that should be a new slogan: 'its vegan.'

Kelsey: How would you make Kentucky more vegan friendly:

Participant 17: It's so hard because Southern culture is so engrossed in those practices. It's 'butter, butter, butter, Paula Deene!' It's all that jazz, which makes it hard because it's a different culture. But there are ways around it and there are farmers markets around it and there is a farmers' market right in Lexington. And they've tried one in the college there, but it didn't do well at all. The food at schools in Kentucky is pretty horrendous. Even at the University they have fast food places within their dining halls. You have McDonald's and stuff. It really kind of starts bottom up. You have to think this might be cheaper, but look at what we are giving people to eat. (local foods tangent)

Ignorance is bliss...really ignorance is the biggest hurdle to get over. I think if you give awareness to it and not in a hippie dippie way. If you teach people about the local movement than it can have a huge impact. People just have no clue.

Kelsey: Do you know anyone else who is vegan in Kentucky? Or any kind of support system?

Participant 17: I have a lot of friends who are vegetarian, but not really vegan and a lot of people don't know what it is. Some of my friends from high school, that I'll see over break and they have no clue what it is and because of that they are not critical of it, which is nice. But we don't even get into that. I'm just 'yep, I am and that's it.' People who are vegetarian and my family are really supportive of it. So it makes things easier.

Kelsey: What does veganism mean to you?

Participant 17: I think it is a lifestyle. Diet has such a weird connotation to it. My sister is 'I don't believe in really extreme diets.' It's just being really conscious about where your food is coming from. And on some level it is extreme. Cause it is totally molding what you eat around what's in season and what doesn't have animal products in it. That seems like it is so far-fetched for some people. So it is a lifestyle because you do have to go out and you have to put forth some effort into understanding your food system. I think it is just being really aware of what you're eating, what's in season, and what's available to you.

Kelsey: Do you have anything else about being a vegan that you would want to share?

Participant 17: It's really not as hard as people think. Bill Clinton is vegan, fun fact. I just learned that the other day. It's a weird word anyway and people just automatically make all these assumptions about veganism and about vegans and what it is. I think just ignorance. You sometimes have to catch yourself sometimes and be like whoa! I probably shouldn't be judging them for something so miniscule because I don't know about it. I'd say if you are going to do it, don't be worried about what other people think. You can't please everybody.

Kelsey: How do you learn new things about veganism?

Participant 17: A lot of it is tidbits that I'll hear, but I'd say most of it is from my friends. They'll be like 'Guess what! Guess what I've heard?!' That is funny because they aren't, but they just think it's the

funniest thing they've ever heard. A lot of what I do learn about anything, about food, or people or the vegan community, it comes from my friends. It's totally turned into a joke, but not in a bad way, in a good way. Cause you know how if you are someone who has dietary restrictions, people who are around you can be very stingy or very rude. 'I can't eat this, I don't eat this, and I'm a vegetarian.'

When I'm with my friends and we something with a lot of meat or animal products in it we say 'Umm, is this vegetarian?' Not to the waiter, but you know to each other? So it's turned into the kind of joking. Most people that I am friends turn it into a joke which is better than someone who is like 'oh god she's a vegan.' Like we can't go vegan?'

Kelsey: Have any of your friends considered being vegan because of you?

Participant 17: They haven't. I don't think they would get on board with it. They've definitely tried a whole bunch of things and they've liked it. But I don't think it's something they are willing to commit to, which is fine. It is a commitment.

Kelsey: Anything else coming to mind about veganism?

Participant 17: It's such a tiny thing. Well it is a big think because it is something that I base my life around.

Here's an example so for my final exam this semester in ecological agriculture my professor gave us chocolate covered coffee beans and I knew that they were vegan because they came from City Market and she had the bag and the only ones they have are vegan. And she said 'So I brought you these vegan chocolate covered coffee beans.' And I was like 'YES!!!' So it's just the little things that make you really excited about it. It seems really silly but it is such a minor thing so when people put forth that effort it is exciting. It's like someone making your favorite dish on like everything.

Kelsey: Any other vegan stories?

Participant 17: I worked on a ranch this summer in Wyoming and it was in the middle of nowhere. It's the west, so you aren't going to get that much variety of things. You have an employee dining room so I just made my own stuff. And it was fine, they had pre-made stuff and you could make your own. And my mom sent me vegan jerky and I remember opening the package and being like ahh sh*! Mock meat stuff is just kind of gross. Tofu is one thing but jerky is just weird. So I remember I opened it and I had a little bit of it and it was so gross. And then later that day; I was like 'I kind of like it.' It was some really weird and random vegan jerky making place in Kentucky, I was reading the label and was like 'no way!'

Most people on the ranch are from the south east because they think they'll be really excited throughout the season. Even though half way through you're like 'get me out of here!' It was like being at home and being surrounded by people who were so ignorant and really meathead guys who were huge and all 'I eat is meat' and they are really condescending of people who don't eat meat. I was just taking like five steps back. But it was fine.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 17: It's hard with people from the Southeast because in general most people are very conservative and very traditional. Most traditional cooking is what you see on Paula Dean. It is collard greens and okra. It is cheese and butter, eggs, and everything else that you can imagine. So it's really hard for people to understand especially those from the Southeast who grew up like that. Some of these guys were just huge and they were just rude, to people who they didn't even know which kind of made it miserable on that in because it's like 'are you serious?' But the things that they would say, it's like 'I

can't even be offended by this because it's so stupid. So you kind of just have to rise above which can be hard sometimes because you just want to scream, but it's really not worth the fight in the end. That was the last difficult vegan thing of the summer.

Kelsey: Would you want to stay in an easier place to be vegan like Vermont, or would you want to stay in a place like Kentucky even though it isn't so vegan friendly.

Participant 17: I hate hot humid weather, I'm not going to lie and I love Vermont and the localvore mindset here. It makes it a lot easier. And a part of me wants to just go home and try to change it and be really influential in that sense. That would be extremely hard and ambitious. I could see myself trying to do that and I know that there would be a group in support of it, but it would be a long road. It would be easier to go to a place that is much more open to that kind of thing.

Kelsey: Where you interested in food systems even before you were a vegetarian?

Participant 17: Yeah, I think it was just with the help of my dad who is a huge supporter of

Farmer's market and he's a landscape architect so he's all about getting outside and using seasonal plants and that kind of stuff. So it kind of streamed from him and growing up we had these friends who designed bike powered smoothies. I feel like I'm describing some place that isn't Kentucky. And at the farmers' market they would use local food and use it to make smoothies for people. And for a couple of summer's I did that and that was like getting on board. Before that I was so naive and didn't really know anything about it until that class in high school. And since then I took it upon myself to really learn about it and do my own research.

Kelsey: How if at all has having a Dad who's interested in food system helped you to be more open to that information?

Participant 17: Yeah, definitely. It's kind of funny because we've both learned a lot from each other. He has definitely taught me a lot about cooking and local foods and that realm kind of stuff. And then I've taught him a lot about alternative forms of cooking and sustainable methods, which he's implemented in his work. Like this week, he's giving a huge talk on sustainable ability and he's really jazzed about it. I took him to see Bill McKibben and its now this whole big thing. He's been a huge influence on that even though he's always been a huge meat eater and local stuff. He's still really supportive of what I do and the decisions that I make.

Kelsey: How was your dad's initial response to you becoming vegan?

Participant 17: He was kind of like 'okay you've already been a vegetarian so whatever.' And I have a stepmom and four sisters so it's kind of like everyone is on different levels there. And he's fine, he's really excited about cooking and whenever he'd cook he makes really good steak. And my sister and I used to fight over the first taste test, so I've kind of pulled out of that, but it's kind of a funny thing. So now when I'm the only one in the kitchen with him, it's like 'oh my gosh, you have to try this, oh sorry you don't eat meat anymore...' He's kind of funny about that. He's not judgmental at all it's just kind of he does his thing and I do mine.

Kelsey: Do you ever have conversations about veganism with him?

Participant 17: yeah, yeah a lot. Cause I've made him a lot of vegan meals. And in comparison to my mom, he already uses a lot of practices that are already vegan. He cooks a lot more with olive oil and that kind of thing whereas my mom does not. My mom is more traditionally southern in that sense so because we can relate to each other in cooking, we swap recipes. And so we teach each other how to do things.

And ironically I love cooking meat. I have no problem cooking meat, it's a lot of fun, sometimes more fun than cooking other things.

It's one of those things that we can bond over without having a weird divide like 'oh you're using butter, Yikes!' I think we both just appreciate food enough to explore different ways of cooking it.

Kelsey: Your mom's not quit as open about it?

Participant 17: Not really, she's open to different things but since she was born and raised in this really hick town in Kentucky, all she knows is how to cook with butter and these kind of things. And she'll do it if I just 'oh yeah, just substitute this for that' but she's a lot more -___ about it. She's all 'I don't know what to make you balalala.' Every time I go home she's like 'I don't know what I'm supposed to cook for you.' And it's like alright I'll just do it. She's a little bit stingier about this kind of thing.

Kelsey: So do you think that one of the things that helped you to become vegan is that you love to cook?

Participant 17: Yeah because you can get really creative with it. Like anything within cooking you can kind of make it your own. My dad told me that I couldn't go to culinary school until after I graduated college. But now that I'm here I'm kind of like 'uhh, whatever.' But it definitely helps cause if you know things. The American diet is just so, like a different world; whereas if you go to other places around the world, you have a very set and traditional way of eating things with very traditional dishes that are familiar throughout the entire country. We don't really have that in the United States. I think that's one of our biggest problems.

If you go to a Mediterranean restaurant pretty much all of their stuff is vegetarian. If you go to Japanese restaurant and you know what goes into then you know what you are getting and you know the vegan things. It's easier to bop around and know what to eat and know what not to eat and its not as straining as it sounds. If you know what to look for then you can filter through really quickly. It's just reading through a menu.

Kelsey: Have you gone to any other countries while you were vegan and how was that?

Participant 17: yes. It was fine. I think Germany was one thing because I was there for a limited period of time. If I had gone to another place that was really heavy on meat then I probably would through things off the chart. I probably wouldn't be vegan. Vegetarian is one thing, but since I was only in these places for a week or two it wasn't really worth getting horribly sick. It wasn't bad.

And usually when I travel it's like 'okay, I'll be a vegetarian.' But I have a friend who has been vegetarian for her whole life and who is going to Argentina this month, for the semester, and is like screw it and she started eating meat. Now all she eats is meat and you would think that she would have gotten sick because most people do and she's been totally fine. And most people say 'yeah you're going to get sick if you haven't eaten meat in three or ten years, but I guess it just affects people differently because she's all about it now. Yeah it's one of those things. It is a lifestyle and you can do whatever you want with it.

Kelsey: Do you think you will continue to be vegan? Or are you not sure?

Participant 17: I dunno it kind of depends. I'm kind of content with it now but I can see not continuing with it. But I hate fluctuating between things. 'I'm going to eat meat, I'm not going to eat meat.' To me that just seems like the biggest stomach-ache ever. So I think I could stick with it for a while but who knows.

Kelsey: What do you think is the biggest drive for being a vegan?

Participant 17: Antibiotics and hormones were the biggest thing for being vegetarian. Eating locally is a commitment because it is so expensive, especially meat. Any meat from anywhere is expensive. Eating organic and that kind of thing the lines are so blurred that what does that mean anymore? I think a lot of it is that I didn't know what I was getting. I really don't like those blurred lines. Fruits and vegetables, you've got chemicals yeah whatever, but nobodies injecting hormones or whatever into your beets. Like there is a different thing for meat. Everything is in moderation but meat especially isn't that great for you so it's kind of like 'eh, I can live without it.' And it's cheaper to live without it. But, I don't have to have it because you can supplement it with something.

I just kind of wanted to try it at first. I was just really curious because 'eh, I don't really know what this is going to be like.' And then realizing just how much easier it was cause I never really drank dairy. That was never really a good mix with me. So, it was pretty easy making that transition. I think really the drive for me is I've been doing it, it works for me and now it's what I look for. There are times where 'maybe I won't be...' but then I'll go somewhere and then automatically look for things that are vegan. In Vermont, everything is labeled, so it's like 'look at the V,' it's everywhere so it's kind of just what I look for.

Kelsey: Do you think your reasons for being vegan have changed over time?

Participant 17: Definitely because whenever you make that decision, you kind of have to know what you are doing. You go into it kind of blindly at first but I did my own research for it and got my blood tested for it. I have half my thyroid out, so you definitely have to strike a balance with it. Doing my own research with it is definitely helpful cause if you are feeling kind of sluggish with it.

I remember when I first became vegan and I was kind of like 'oh god, I don't even know.' I got my blood tested and my B12 was just down. It was so low. And that's just a given when you do that kind of thing. A lot of people ask me about it, especially wanting to be a vegetarian. I'm like 'get your blood tested!' I have friends who just stopped eating meat, not as a very conscious decision but just weren't doing it. And they would be feeling really sluggish and I was 'you should probably get your blood tested because you haven't been eating meat.' And it's just one of those things, 'Oh I didn't even think about that.'

Kelsey: Do you usually change how you eat when you get the blood test back with off results and if so how?

Participant 17: Yeah and B12 is a weird one because it's usually just in animal products, so it's like a vegan's worst nightmare, but you can get in fortified cereals and grains. You can also just take vitamins which seem like a pain but it's worth it if you are kind of at that level of not really supplementing that kind of thing.

Kelsey: How often do you get your blood tested?

Participant 17: I used to get it done a lot more than I do now. Because now I know what to look for if I'm feeling that way I can be like oh this is probably what it is. I don't get it done nearly as much now because I'm used to it right now. But in the beginning, it was 'ahahah, I don't want to get my blood tested.' But it is a lot easier now that I'm used to it.

Kelsey: Where do you get your research about being vegan?

Participant 17: A lot of it I got from cookbooks, vegan cookbooks actually because the first few pages usually tell you about being vegan and how to go about that; food supplements, different ways of cooking

things. That's like the point of the cookbook. But the first part of it is how to do it and not so much preaching to the choir, but more 'this is serious, this is what you should be adding.'

Kelsey: How did you select which vegan cookbooks to use?

Participant 17: If I go to a bookstore, I'll usually look for the new books and then just kind of gravitate towards the cookbooks because those cookbooks are just so much fun. I remember being in Kentucky and looking at this whole selection of vegan cookbooks. It's always so overwhelming because cookbooks are so colorful and have such good pictures. I'm like 'I just want them all!' I just picked one. The front of it had good explanations of everything. It had cool diagrams and supplements and that kind of stuff. It wasn't overwhelming, it was just 'wow, this is kind of cool, I can be really creative with this. So I got this really giant and thick cookbook that I leave at home. Hopefully my mom peeks at it. Since then, people are 'oh, I found this vegan cookbook, you should look at it.' So, it's networking; the people who get really excited.

Kelsey: When you started being vegan, what was the hardest part for you?

Participant 17: I think the hardest part was telling people, like if you are somewhere and they serve you something. And then it's like 'ehh, I'm vegan', you know kind of under your breathe, especially under your breath where they're like 'what even is that word?' So the hardest part initially was not so much as looking for things because that was a given. It was 'okay, I can't have that, I can have that.' I think the hardest part was being vegan and being like 'sorry.'

I think the weirdest part is going out and being at somebody's house. Being vegetarian is one thing. I remember being in Germany and I went to a friend's house and she didn't tell her mom that I was vegetarian. And her mom was furious and if you can imagine this German mom and such a harsh language anyway. It was really embarrassing. And being vegan, I was at a friend's house over break and it wasn't that much different than being in Kentucky. And she's like 'what?! Okay, what does that mean?' She was more curious so you never really know what kind of reaction you are going to get going somewhere which can be really good or really bad. But it makes it an adventure and you get the opportunity to teach people and tell people about it or kind of hide from it. You just never know.

Kelsey: How do you deal with that?

Participant 17: I am always really hoping that my friend or whoever I'm with tells them so that I don't get the initial shock of like 'oh sorry, I just made lamb for dinner.' But I try to be really adamant about telling them that it's not a big deal and not to be stressed out about it. Because I'm not stressed out about it, so don't stress out about it. And if somebody serves a salad I'm not going to be like, 'sorry can you just take out all the little pieces of feta in the salad.' You know it's like just deal with it unless you have a serious allergy to it. It's not always going to be in your favor. You have to anticipate everything not being vegan as a guest in somebody else's house.