“IT FEELS NICE TO BE ABLE TO SHARE AND BE HEARD”: SUPPORTING VEGANISM AS AN AVOWED IDENTITY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

ROSE LANE TAHASH

(Under the Direction of Diane Cooper)

ABSTRACT

College student identity development is an ongoing field of study in student affairs. Encouragement of social identity acceptance and exploration during college is present for many students but, for some, is not the accepted norm and unwelcomed. Much like students who choose to adopt a religious identity, veganism is a salient social identity for many people. College students who are vegan have not been studied in-depth in terms of how they experience college campuses in relation to this minority social identity. Understanding how college students who are vegan experience college is of use to higher education to support and life up this avowed lifestyle choice and identity.

INDEX WORDS: College Students, Student Affairs, Student Development Theory, Veganism, Speciesism, Identity, Social Identity, Food

“IT FEELS NICE TO BE ABLE TO SHARE AND BE HEARD”: SUPPORTING VEGANISM AS AN AVOWED IDENTITY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

ROSE LANE TAHASH

A.B., University of Georgia, 2003

M.Ed., University of Georgia, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2019

“IT FEELS NICE TO BE ABLE TO SHARE AND BE HEARD”: SUPPORTING VEGANISM AS AN AVOWED IDENTITY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

ROSE LANE TAHASH

Major Professor:	Diane Cooper
Committee:	Merrily Dunn
	Corey Johnson
	Barbara McDonald

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2019

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all non-human animals. I love you and I care about you. It is also dedicated to my beautiful, sweet puppy, Scout. You were the light of my life for 10 years and four months and I will ever forget all of the happy moments we shared. Thank you for loving me.

"May all that have life be delivered from suffering." - *Buddha*

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." - *Gandhi*

"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing." - *Albert Einstein*

"There is no fundamental difference between man and animals in their ability to feel pleasure and pain, happiness, and misery." - *Charles Darwin*

"The soul is the same in all living creatures, although the body of each is different." - *Hippocrates*

"When you feel the suffering of every living thing in your own heart, that is consciousness." -*Bhagavad Gita*

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." - *Maya Angelou*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who supported me in this pursuit. Thank you Mom and Dad - this level of higher education would ***never*** have been possible for me without your support. Thank you, Adrian, for getting me through this and always believing in me. And telling me to go do my work during those real dicey moments. Thank you, Scout, for being patient and always willing to wait for your walk or to sit with me when I was down or frustrated. Thanks to my slizzes, Brandi and Emily, for lifting me up and pre-emptively calling me Dr. T. Thank you, Dr. Cooper for being willing to let me undertake a new topic for the field of student affairs – and for all of your support, encouragement, and help along the way. Thank you, TJ, for driving to Gwinnett with me for five semesters – ANOVA alone was worth it! Thanks to CSAA-D for teaching me all of the things I never even knew I did not have a clue about.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If you use Google to search the term “veganism”, a sampling of news headlines pops up: “Veganism: Why it’s Not Just a Diet, More a Way of Life” (South China Morning Post, September 8, 2018), “Will Going Vegan Make You Healthier?” (BBC News, September 4, 2018), “NFL Players’ Surprising Performance Hack: Going Vegan” (CNBC, September 9, 2018), and “A Sociologist Finds Vegans Are Too Open to “Free Riders” (The Atlantic, August 30, 2018). It is not unique for an Internet news search to bring up articles of varying tone. The Vegan Resource Group’s Harris Poll (2016) reported that, “approximately 3.7 million U.S. adults are vegan; 4.3 million are vegetarian but not vegan”. Stated another way, a recent Gallup poll (2018), found that five percent of Americans report being vegetarian, unchanged from their 2012 poll, and three percent say they are vegan, showing very little change since 2012.

Despite how widespread vegetarianism and veganism are in the U.S., scholarly research has revealed that there are three main motivators for which a person chooses a vegan diet: ethics, environment, and health (Bosworth. 2012; Heiss & Hormes, 2018; Mann, 2014; Radnitz, Beezhold, & DiMatteo, 2015; Rosenfeld & Burrow, 2017; etc.). Other motivators may include religious beliefs and medical necessity but are not common enough to have shown up as major identifiers in previous work.

Because dictionaries have entries for vegetarianism and veganism (see Key Terms) but the terms are still used fluidly in society, it can be difficult to find and cite one specific definition for each type/motivator of veganism. In searching for ways to categorize vegans according to

motivators, most explanations are from popular or public media as opposed to scholarly sources and can also be observed/become internalized once one is embedded in the culture.

For example, my observations and Internet research have produced the following summaries of the main motivations for becoming vegan. Ethical abstainers generally do not willingly consume or use non-human animal products or byproducts for any purpose under the premise and motivation of non-violence towards all living creatures (Wiki). Environmentally-motivated vegans aim to do their part towards mitigating the devastating effects of mass food production, including factory farming and the depletion of the ozone layer due to C02 emissions and large-scale agriculture that produces hazardous runoff and taints water supplies (Environmental Working Group). Those who are vegan for health reasons find primary motivation in consuming plant-based foods to lower their chances of risk factors for disease or negative health events (The China Study, etc.). Many people have more than one motivation or some combination of all three, according to vegan organization websites and statements such as Vegan.org (https://vegan.org/about-veganism/), The Vegan Society (https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/why-go-vegan), and Vegetarian Resource Group (https://www.vrg.org/nutshell/vegan.htm). The current sources available on this topic are mainly public, rather than peer-reviewed, but offer important facts and figures to learn more about the movement of plant-based diets, including vegetarianism and veganism.

Those who choose veganism as both a diet and a lifestyle are engaging in everyday resistance by having a diet and/or identity that is divergent from the dominant food culture in our society (Chuck, Fernandes, & Hyers, 2016). The vegan diet can be stereotyped as “unhealthy” (Bosworth, 2012; Burgess, Carpenter, & Henshaw, n.d.; Freeman, 2012; Heiss, Cofino, & Hormes, 2017; Lindquist, 2013) by those who are not familiar with its nuances and/or those who

are critical of it. It can also be associated with attempts at or prescription for intentional weight loss (Freeman, 2012, p. 20; Janssen, Bush, Rödiger, & Hamm, 2016; Moore, McGrievy, & Turner-McGrievy, 2015) as opposed to what many would consider more fulfilling reasons for which they have chosen it. Vegans of all ages exist. Some have been raised vegan or chose to be as a young child after learning how non-human animals are killed for food. Some adopt it later in life after learning more from friends, family members, or educational outlets.

Key Terms

Because a major challenge around vegetarian and vegan diets relates to how terms are both defined and used, my choice to use dictionary definitions of the following terms as stated, especially "vegan," is very intentional. While absolute "T"ruth is not a goal of qualitative research and I certainly understand that dictionary definitions can be problematic, I believe the confusion and lack of adherence to even basic commonalities in definitions in this realm causes confusion for the vegetarian and vegan movements, both from within and from without. Therefore, for this study I am selecting the following definitions:

- *Vegetarian* – a person who does not eat meat : someone whose diet consists wholly of vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and sometimes eggs or dairy products (Merriam-Webster, 2018)
- *Vegan* – a strict vegetarian who consumes no food (such as meat, eggs, or dairy products) that comes from animals; also, one who abstains from using animal products (such as leather) (Merriam-Webster, 2018)
- *Plant-Based Diet* –consists of all minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs, and spices and excludes all animal products, including red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products (Ostfeld, 2017)

- *Abstain* - to choose not to do or have something : to refrain deliberately and often with an effort of self-denial from an action or practice (Merriam-Webster, 2018)
- *Lifestyle* - the typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture (Merriam-Webster, 2018)
- *Speciesism* - 1) prejudice or discrimination based on species; especially: discrimination against animals; 2) the assumption of human superiority on which speciesism is based (Merriam-Webster, 2019)
- *Identity* - one's personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) and the ways one expresses that relationship (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009)
- *Self-Authorship* - the internal capacity to construct one's beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2001)

Statement of the Problem

Despite the definitions just provided from readily-available dictionaries, vernacular and societal use and understanding of the terms around vegetarianism and veganism are inconsistent. In addition to the overarching general problem with varying/fluid definitions for dietary choices and lifestyles, scholarly information about vegans is not prolific and information about college students is scarce. Research with vegan college students is needed to better understand their personal and individual experiences with a minoritized diet/lifestyle choice in the university setting. Existing research points to factors that can influence their lives such as dining hall options and experiences (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016; Derricote & McWhinney, 1997; Dwyer, 2016; Harper, 2016; Kaufman & Smith, 2017), eating behavior (Burgess, Carpenter, & Henshaw, n.d.; Izmirli & Phillips, 2011), social isolation and negative experiences (Bjornson,

2016; Burgess, Carpenter, & Henshaw, n.d.), motivations (de Boer, Schösler, & Aiking, 2017; Merriman & Wilson-Merriman, 2009), and support (Parks & Evans, 2014).

Deeper inquiry is also needed in other areas to provide a more complete assessment of their daily experiences on campus (i.e., identity salience around veganism, support systems, institutional challenges outside of dining halls, etc.) Several studies have excellent suggestions for future research such as challenging both students and faculty to reflect on assumptions, biases, and beliefs (Ortiz, 2011), examining food-related motivation and enjoyment of food as compared to nonvegetarians (de Boer, Schösler, & Aiking, 2017), investigation of how vegans respond to identity challenges in online forums (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016) and obtaining larger samples sizes (Burgess, Carpenter, & Henshaw, n.d.).

Many of the existing studies also use comparative populations (carnivores, omnivores, etc.), which is necessary but in a certain way still dilutes the voice of college student vegans and always highlights them in direct (negative) opposition to the pervasive and dominant norm. Because college student affairs as a field places high value on exploration and support of student's identities, more research is needed to understand how vegan students experience and navigate non-academic life on campus. Students who are vegan, much like others with socially-constructed identities that are not the dominant norm, must craft and negotiate their identities based on context and level of acceptance. Their experiences, stories, and voices deserve to be heard and respected. This study gave members of the vegan student population the opportunity to share their stories/experience of being a vegan within their college community.

Purpose of the Study

As the makeup of college students across the country becomes more diverse and more students with differing backgrounds enroll, understanding them and their unique needs and

experiences is becoming more important (Patton, Renn, Guido, Quaye, Evans, & Forney, 2016). Identities cannot be achieved or completed (Jones & Abes, 2013). Students arrive at college with numerous and intersecting identities, all in various stages of development or exploration. In student affairs, we must support the identity development (of various types) of all our students. One of these identities that students can have or develop is the practice of veganism. Developing an identity as a vegan is procedurally similar to other chosen identities, including religious and political. This specific identity development progression highlights important guidelines for any student affairs professional because a) veganism is a chosen identity, b) review of development of faith-based identity (one of many examples) shows remarkable similarities to development of vegan identity, and c) there are ways to support vegan identity exploration and development with students in practice.

This research adds to the small amount of existing scholarship on vegan college students as a minority population on college campuses. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the understandings and experiences of vegan college students at a large, public institution in the Southeastern United States, classified by Carnegie (2018) as a Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity, in order to recognize and present their experiences. To learn how they experience this chosen minoritized identity was to prioritize the sharing of accurate and unique information. No extensive qualitative explorations of their perceptions and experiences with veganism as a salient identity in college had been undertaken at the time of this study.

Significance of the Study

More in-depth and targeted scholarly research on vegan college students has application for student affairs professionals, staff, faculty, administrators, and others on campus who work

with students as well as is of interest to various stakeholders, including administrators, dining hall managers and chefs, and social justice advocates. This study on the lived experiences of vegan college students provides factual accounts of what it is like to be vegan in college and has helped generate meaningful suggestions for accommodating and supporting the vegan identity on campus. Like some other chosen minoritized identities, vegan students may be experiencing a lack of support for and awareness of their lifestyle choice. More detailed exploration about the choice of veganism as a dietary and lifestyle identity for college students can provide account of their lived experiences and make it more retrievable in scholarly research.

Often, work in student affairs brings us into contact with students who are told they do not fit in, are not personally acceptable, need to change, etc. Students who are struggling with these issues on top of identity exploration and formation can use even more care and understanding. We can support vegan and other college students using foundational student development theory tenets around identity exploration/formation.

Patton et al. (2016) provided inspiration for immediate action items that would be useful in helping and supporting students who are developing a vegan identity. We would better serve students to avoid fragmentation of the campus culture and their identities into purely dominant categories or whatever is the accepted norm. Instead, student affairs practitioners can move towards enhancing curriculum and developing opportunities for all members of the campus community to grapple with existential questions that engage the mind and spirit beyond conventional ways (Patton et al., 2016, p. 205).

This study also created an opportunity to provide a starting point for dialogue with other students, faculty, staff, administration, dining hall managers, chefs, members of the local community, etc. Not only can this raise awareness of veganism as an identity (in addition to the

plant-based diet movement), but it can assist in response to increasing interest in the topic of veganism, both in the general societal realm, as well on campus. Finally, having awareness of intentionality of choice around vegan ideology recognizes the personal nature of identity salience to students.

Theoretical Framework

Building on Kegan's (1994) seminal work on self-authorship as describing a shift in meaning-making from outside the self to inside the self, student developmental theorist, Baxter-Magolda posited that three dimensions of self-authorship are interconnected and correspond with epistemology (How do I know?), intrapersonal (Who am I?), and interpersonal (How do I want to conduct relationships with others?). The phases of the journey of self-authorship include following external formulas (relying on others for one's beliefs, how to construct identity, and how to guide social relationships), coming to a crossroads (transitional stage where one begins to see their own developing internal values as integral to sense of self as well as the demands experienced by roles and relationships with others) and securing self-authorship (uniquely able to express internal sense of authority and trusting the internal voice to interpret experiences). Baxter Magolda's (2014) longitudinal participants were still following external authorities when they graduated but began to question them not long after (p. 27), indicating many college students may not achieve full self-authorship before commencement. Though we would not expect them to be fully self-authored, many are likely on the pathways and primed to come to a crossroads as they experience leaving home for the first time, being responsible for their own choices, and being exposed to new and diverse people, places, and situations in the campus environment.

Self-Authorship and College Veganism

The aim of this study was to explore the understandings and experiences of college students who are vegan. Choosing a vegan lifestyle in addition to a vegan diet is an important event, born out of significance for those who feel strongly that the two should align. Choosing to be vegan, a non-dominant eating and/or lifestyle identity in a society built upon consumption of meat and use of animal products requires conviction, commitment, and often involves heavy scrutiny and judgment from others. Examining students' lived experiences around being vegan with the framework of self-authorship does not assume that they are fully self-authoring but can provide insight into this potentially controversial choice as a possible crossroads experience – where they are caught between relying on external information that eating meat is "…normal, natural, necessary, and nice…" (Piazza et al., 2015) and the development or growth of personal values that may be integral to their identity and sense of self that conflict with meat eating and animal use.

The demands that students experience in roles and relationships with others around dietary identity deserve to be displayed so that understanding what support they need in both their college experiences and their journey to self-authorship can be provided. Baxter Magolda (2008) theorized that "…personal characteristics and environmental context both mediate the evolution of self-authorship" (p. 273). As student development theory has indicated, students have a multitude of environmental contexts around them in a college setting and bring with them many personal characteristics when they arrive.

Research Questions

Thinking about the nuances between given/assigned identities and avowed/chosen identities prompted me to review the ways in which student affairs practice has obligation to

support the identity development of all students. As Baxter Magolda (2014) commented, "…the college experience inevitably calls for reconsideration of one's role and responsibility in the world" (p. 25). College students who are vegan are living with a chosen identity that goes against mainstream society and can be criticized without much public defense. If a student determines that their role and/or responsibility in the world is to do less harm and make compassionate choices around diet and lifestyle, but is not accepted for this personal reconsideration, confusion and frustration can become the norm. Therefore, the research questions for this study were:

1. How do college students who are vegan make personal meaning of that lifestyle choice?
2. How do students who are vegan perceive and manage the impact of this lifestyle choice during college, especially as it pertains to food and social interaction?

Subjectivity Statement

Following the suggestion of Patton et al. (2016), that I should "…assess [my] own developmental capacities and opportunities" and "…pay particular attention to understanding [my] privileged identities" (p. 337), this exercise was helpful to make connections between student development theory and the topic of vegan college students as research data. Enacting theory in practice can be a difficult task, especially if viewed as something to do "to" students, instead of in partnership with them. My interest in this topic stemmed from my chosen lifestyle as an ethical vegan. The review of literature indicated that male vegans are a minority among the larger population and further rumination on my personal experience aligned. Though I had no expectations, I was interested to see if my participant pool reflected this national trend based on my own personal observations of the vegan community. Working every day with college students and wanting to understand how they experience various aspects of higher education prompted me to investigate this topic further. Because I believe in the personal and subjective

nature of qualitative research, I agree with Roulston's (2015) assertion that "bias" cannot be removed or avoided. My unique experiences that have led to me this research also frame my role in it. I have attempted to provide trustworthy research components and authentic interpretation of observed data through non-selective observation and recording of information. The goal of this project was to uncover participants' experiences with living a vegan lifestyle while in college. I was critically reflexive to constantly examine any pre-dispositions in relation to the research being conducted. The identities that I brought into this research that may influence how I interpreted it are: woman, white, college graduate, middle-class socioeconomic status, higher education personnel, animal rights activist, and ethical vegan.

My Story

With two friends (male) in high school that were vegetarian and one in college (female) that was vegetarian, I was exposed to abstention of meat before I had any interest in it myself. When those specific time periods and friendships ended, none of the people were still vegetarian but I had become so. After living as a vegetarian for approximately five years, I made the intentional choice to become vegan after cognitive dissonance about living as a vegetarian for ethical reasons and the reality of continuing to consume dairy and egg products reached an unsustainable level for me. I had been vegan for seven years at the time of this study and was fully vegan in both diet and lifestyle (as intentionally as possible, though education is an ongoing process) from the time of transition. My aforementioned identities all have intersections in my life and as I have learned more about equity, diversity, and inclusion, along with social justice, I see that they also have intersections with my veganism. I believe that veganism should always be and always is intersectional.

Conclusion

Gaining more information about the daily lives and experiences that college students are having can have an impact on higher education as a whole when revelations about identity, support, and other needs are made. Studying the dietary patterns that have also become lifestyle choices for those who are vegan mirrors a larger trend of plant-based eating that is happening across the globe and becoming more predominant every year. As college is typically a time of developmental growth and identity exploration for traditionally-aged (18-24) students, investigating the effect that being vegan has on the higher education experience is useful to support their development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of the literature highlights that college-attending vegans are a relatively unstudied group and exploration of their experience may add to the understanding of other marginalized groups and respond to the hegemonic forces against which they operate (Hirschler, 1998). This literature review addresses veganism, identity and veganism, and college student vegans.

Veganism

If you asked several members of a specific group to define their group identity and they all answered differently, would you find that odd? Despite plant-based diets becoming increasingly common (statistics cite here), a macro/meso level issue is the fluidity of defining those diet and lifestyle characteristics. The Vegan Society (1979) defined veganism as:

> A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. (para. 5)

One of the overarching issues with research and discussion of plant-based diets (PBD) today is that many people do not adhere to this definition and consider themselves a vegetarian even if they occasionally or “rarely” eat meat or vegan even if they occasionally or “rarely” consume dairy or other animal products/byproducts. With the definitions of distinct states of being having become fluid, research on PBD in general suffers when there is no adherence to the true

definition of a word (Ruby, 2012) or action due to confusion and lack of clarity. Additionally, Cole (2008) found that descriptions of veganism in social research are often disparaging and negative and that this discourse "reproduces a hierarchical ordering of Western diets that places veganism in particular at the bottom" (as cited in Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016, p. 3)

Three reasons have emerged as most salient as to why people choose PBD and/or veganism: environmental, ethical, and health (Bosworth. 2012; Heiss & Hormes, 2018; Mann, 2014; Radnitz, Beezhold, & DiMatteo, 2015; Rosenfeld & Burrow, 2017; etc.). Those looking to make a positive impact on the conservation of natural resources and processes by choosing to eat plant-based diets are considering the harmful effects of mass factory farming - methane and depletion of the ozone layer (Hamerschlag, 2011; Walsh, 2013) as well as overuse of antibiotics (Walsh, 2012). Those who choose to be vegan for environmental and/or health reasons do not always adhere to a complete lifestyle change in which they abstain from using animal products of all types.

Vegans who choose to remain animal-product and byproduct free for ethical reasons normally have the highest level of abstention and strictness. As will be discussed later, they often have moral and value choices associated with their dietary pattern and choose to not only not consume animal products/byproducts but also purchase life and home items that are cruelty-free. Many are also involved in other social justice activism that purports all beings be free from oppression, pain, and suffering. Personal values and ethics are reasons for these vegans to adopt a lifestyle that goes against the dietary norms of society (Haverstock & Forgays, 2012).

Those who engage in PDB for health reasons may not technically be or consider themselves "vegans". Health-based vegans are often attempting to eat "clean", consume mostly or only whole foods, avoid disease, and live longer with less chance of life complication and/or

negative effects from animal-based foods. Often this way of following such methods of analyzing food from a nutrient-based (as opposed to ideological) standpoint has been advocated by such authors/doctors as T. Colin Campbell (*The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight-Loss, and Long-Term Health),* Dr. John A. McDougall *(The McDougall Plan,* Dr. John Robbins *(John Robbins's Diet for a New America- which associated meat eating with environmental damage),* and Dr. Dean Ornish *(Program for Reversing Heart Disease).*

There are also other reasons for choosing veganism- i.e. religion, necessity of medical diet, and more, though these are less-often cited by participants in research studies and therefore, probably also understudied. The categories are not mutually exclusive, and research has found that some people have more than one reason for being vegan at a time, at various times, and overall (Hirschler, 1998; Janssen, Busch, Rodiger, & Hamm, 2016). A review of some common themes associated with vegan diets can provide a broad sense of why understanding the lifestyle and diet choice is important for daily life.

Activism/Animal Rights

Animal rights and liberation is perhaps the topic within veganism that gets the most attention from the activism lens. An American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) poll showed that 94 percent of all respondents said animals raised for food should be free from abuse and cruelty (Walsh, 2016). Many ethical vegans feel so strongly about the humane treatment of animals (of all kinds – factory-farmed, entertainment, domestic pets, etc.), that they are moved to perform acts of education, protest, and awareness on behalf of this cause. Whether these acts are top-down moments of disruption, such as mass protests or marches or individual and concrete, such as having vegan stalls at cooking fairs or farmers' markets or leafleting/talking to passersby, vegans can choose their level of engagement. Ophelie (2016)

discussed how everyday life may be central to the production of activist spaces and the action of social movements. She argued that activism is not just those large-scale disruptions that call attention to a movement and that activism and everyday life should not be studied in isolation from one another but as mutually constructive in the creative of hemeratopias (alternative spaces) (Ophelie, 2016,). Cherry (2010), an author with multiple pieces about veganism in the literature base, investigated similarities in the animal rights movements in both France and the United States (U. S.) – both through interviews and document review – intent on discovering how social activists foster change beyond their personal, collective identity and how they change their target's mindsets/actions.

Education has begun to recognize the need for animal studies as stand-alone programs, such as the Animal Law & Policy program at Harvard Law School, which is committed to facilitating scholarship, fostering discourse, and bridging theory and practice (Lin, 2016). Walsh (2016), a Duke-educated author, donated one million dollars to the program because he hoped to make farmed animals central to cruelty prevention after learning that farmed animals are only protected by cruelty laws right before slaughter and are exempt from state cruelty laws. Critical Animal Studies (CAS) has also emerged as a field of study that opposes all forms of discrimination, oppression, and hierarchy (Best, 2009). Woven throughout the lifestyle of vegan activists is the emphasis on the need for liberation and the commonalities that bind various oppressed groups in our world today. Because activism is often coming from a place where action feels like the only realistic option, understanding why and how vegans engage in activity around promoting or supporting their lifestyle choice may be key to understanding why they are so often persecuted for choosing to be vegan.

Kahn (2011) used critical theory and counternarrative to document a "…summative exploration of [his] formal and nonformal educational experiences as a vegan academic working on animal standpoint theory" (p. 3). Lewis (2000) described the process of becoming a "humane educator" and how this discipline teaches that there is a compassionate way to relate to other species. The 2000 Summit for Animals (Lewis, 2000) brought together educators around the goal of children being taught humane values for the benefit of all species. Using the acronym SPEAK (Supporting and Promoting Ethics for the Animal Kingdom), humane educators can discuss different ethical issues and inform students about their rights (i.e., not participating in dissection in Biology).

The debate about how people classify themselves and their eating choices or patterns isn't just limited to the vocabulary of label or identifier word choice. Cook (2015) cited Van Dijk, (2010/2014) in communicating that "…language use cannot be analysed or accounted for separately from the social context of its production and reception, the intentions of the sender and the knowledge and attitudes of the receiver" (p. 592). In his interviews with vegan animal activists, animal rights workers, and hunters, he found that people advocate for different language to describe human and animals in interactions. Both discourses only mentioned about 100 animals out of the 8.7 million species that exist. His main concern was highlighting the contemporary discourse and the relation between language use, and social, economic, and ideological change. Escobar (2015) also advocated for the need for thoughtful and scholarly consideration of animal-human relationships, as well as because societies tend to value people more than animals, violence committed against animals is not taken seriously.

Carrie Freeman wrote her dissertation at the University of Georgia in 1993 using qualitative methods of textual analysis of over 100 national news stories published from 200-

2003 and found that the status quo of speciesism, defined as prejudice or discrimination based on species; *especially*: discrimination against animals and/or the assumption of human superiority on which speciesism is based (emphasis in original) (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), is maintained by representing farmed animals "…primarily as resources for human use through commodification, failing to acknowledge their emotions and perspectives, and failing to describe them as inherently valuable individuals" (p. i). She argued that social change for animals is more likely if the media begins to construct stories which respect both human and animal interest. Freeman (2012) continued this work by examining words and images in context to uncover themes and assumptions grounding the construction of ideas to determine how Animal Rights Organizations (AROs) align their values with those of the public. She found that they appealed to presumed values of compassion, respect for animals as subject and not objects and also brought in the other reasons for choosing veganism – healthfulness, environmentalism, and moral consistency.

McWilliams (2013) published a book on how two highly-visible cattle in the media inspired a national debate about eating animals – linking back to the notion that many carnivores may choose to consciously disassociate where the meat on their plates or in the grocery store is really coming from (Burrows, 2016; McWilliams, 2011). Rothgerber (2013), another well-published vegan author, even discussed the dilemma that ethical vegans often face about what to feed domestic pets. As many ethical vegans are advocating for the elimination of animal products in their own lives, it can be challenging to have to feed pets foods made with the same creatures one is trying to save.

Finally, animal rights activism is often not divorced from other types of activism – often minoritized populations are considered together (a controversial practice to be fair) in light of the systemic oppression that blankets society. Sunara Taylor (2011, 2013), notable disability rights

and vegan activist, thoughtfully examined the intersection of animal rights with disability studies, using her own experience of oppression, and being compared to animals, to make connections between animals and disabled people. She stated, "…some bodies are normal, some bodies are broken, and some bodies are food…" (Taylor, 2011). Linking back to some of the earlier argument, Taylor (2011) continued to push dialogue around the anthropocentrism of animal oppression by asking the question, "why [do] animals exist as such negative point of reference for us, animals who themselves are victims of unthinkable oppressions and stereotypes?" (p. 194). Hirschler (1998) found the vegans in his study felt being vegan itself is an act of activism due to the constant questions and critique.

Animal rights and activism are probably most closely tied to ethical veganism, but studies have also shown that sometimes people who begin a vegan diet for health or environmental reasons may be educated about the truth of animal cruelty in food production and cross over into being a multiply-motivated vegan (Bjornson, 2016; Chuck, Fernandes, & Hyers, 2016; Rosenfeld & Burrow, 2017) or at least acknowledge the effects of this systemic process on the world.

Beliefs, Morals, Values, and Philosophy

Many different types of people are vegan and hold intersecting identities that may or may not affect or be affected by their dietary choice. While veganism is becoming more widely criticized for being inaccessible to some (Adleberg, 2017; Harper, 2010), there are several works that reference how beliefs, morals, and values tie into the lifestyle choice. Adams (2017) called out to practicing Christians using a lens of poetry and poetics as a way to connect to animal suffering and argued that they should enact the values of compassion and kindness that they espouse by becoming vegan. Arora (2016), in a similar vein, explained that spiritually

progressive people should transfer their beliefs about nonviolence and compassion to their consumption of animal products/byproducts. One of the most difficult things about being vegan can be the commitment to practice abstention (for value rather than restraint reasons) that one may have admired prior to making the change but are often harder to live out than simply discuss or think about. Often, people who have virtues of non-violence or anti-harm are not vegan and veg*ns may question how that compassion is non-transferable to species beyond humans (probably need a citation).

Since Mohandas Ghandi addressed the London Vegetarian Society in November 1931 about the "importance of grounding vegetarianism on a moral foundation…" due to "…those vegetarians who most frequently fell back into meat-eating habits were those who merely possessed such habitual reasons and lacked a more personally satisfying foundation for their principles…" (Holdier, 2016, pp. 631-632), some scholars have considered veganism from a philosophical standpoint, which makes sense since most peoples' beliefs/morals/value systems stem from what they may not even know is their philosophy. Bruers (2015) used a foral-axiomatic approach and found that there are 20 axioms that are necessary to derive that veganism is a moral duty in life. If a person does not accept the conclusions of veganism, "…logical consistency requires that they be able to point out axioms on which they disagree" (Bruers, 2015, p. 271). Exploring hidden assumptions about vegans provides a framework to think about philosophical literature available on animal rights and veganism, tying back to the ethical reasoning for choosing to be vegan.

Remaining morally and/or philosophically distant from emotions associated with the treatment of animal for food production is a relatively easy way for humans to keep separate that which they choose not to acknowledge. Holdier (2016) highlighted philosophical arguments

made by Henry Stephens Salt and Aristotle to conclude that humans' emotional states can "mis-fire" to experience disgust because of something that does not deserve it or fail to experience disgust towards something that does deserve it (p. 639). Šedová, Slovák, and Ježková, (2016) explored the attitudes and behaviors of environmental studies students, connoisseurs of factual evidence about degradation of resources and climate change, towards meat-eating and found they used detachment, justification, careful language, promises for improved future behavior, and concealment as coping strategies to eat meat.

Relating back to the importance of language and semantics around PBD's and veganism, Reid (2017) explored the public perception of veganism (as opposed to vegetarianism) as ethically motivated and how vegans are often questioned about not only the reason for being vegan, but "…more pointedly, about one's views concerning any number of (apparent) consistency-threatening, conviction-challenging, 'hard cases' for one's professed beliefs" (p. 40). He extrapolated that the recurring theme of persecution towards vegans in conversation and otherwise is always the "logic of vegan convictions" (p. 41), though when vegans choose to question omni/carnivores about the same issue, it is laughed/brushed off as irrelevant.

Diet

Perhaps the most widely-publicized relation to veganism in current society and daily life is the dietary consideration of healthfulness. Vegans and those who follow plant-based diets are finding it easier and easier to purchase and consume products with relative ease, even at "normal" grocery and chain stores (Simon, 2017). Marketing from major companies is trending towards "plant-based" and some companies are even beginning to label items as "vegan" with widespread openness, even when they do not profess to be a plant-based or vegan line in totality (i.e. Coffeemate "natural" almond or soy milk creamers, Progresso soups, etc.). With the

development of new options and substitute/mock meats, cheese, eggs, and faux-dairy products, vegans have less trouble preparing food as they may have previously as omni/carnivores or historically.

Adise, Gavdanovich, and Zellner (2015) used quantitative methods and the law of similarity (sympathetic magic) to determine if college students would rate four comfort foods (chicken tenders, chocolate milk, meatballs and macaroni and cheese) as less familiar, and therefore be less willing to try them. once they found out it was not animal-based. There was no difference in liking for the taste of the foods between types and even though there were no vegans in the study, those who were told their food was vegan liked it significantly better than those who had animal food products!

Christie and Chen (2018) used natural experimental design (no random assignment to rule out other factors) to observe whether social modeling of food choice occurs for the main dish meal at a cafeteria, positing that people base their food choices based on those around them, even if they are not conscious of this decision. The order-matching of the person ahead in line was significantly higher than would be expected due to chance.

Corrin and Papadopoulos (2017) investigated how to shape future health promotion programs by more thoroughly understanding the attitudes and perceptions of vegetarian and plant-based diets. They found that people are more likely to reduce red meat consumption rather than avoid it altogether as well as the fact that most people have positive attitudes and beliefs about their own diets but negative attitudes and beliefs about that of others. They are also more likely to change to a diet similar to their own. Sales of plant-based food grew 8.1% in 2017 and exceed $3.1 billion, with plant-based dairy alternatives growing to account for 40$ of “dairy” beverage sales (Gallup, 2018), Even amongst the growing popularity and acceptance of plant-

based diets, there is still criticism of vegetarians and vegans. Heiss, Coffino, and Hormes (2017) revealed that there is also inconsistency in previous studies about whether or not veg*ns have disordered eating behaviors because of the "scarcity of knowledge about the prevalence and nature of eating-related pathology of vegans due to small samples sizes in studies comparing meat limiters to meat eaters…" (p. 130) and/or the grouping of vegans with other meat-limiter categories like vegetarians, partial vegetarians, etc.

Gender

Statistics indicate that more women than men are vegan (Ruby, 2012), possibly because vegetarianism and veganism are seen as "feminine". Harmon (2012) elaborated that masculinity and femininity are associated with certain foods so there is a gendered perception of plant-based diets. With societal expectations about gender associating meat with masculinity (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016; Harmon, 2012; Thirukkumaran, 2017; Jessen, 2013), may mean males are less attracted to veganism because of a suspicion they will not be able to build muscle. Veganism is often also marketed in mainstream society as a diet or weight loss tool, more forms of feminized oppression. Thomas (2016) replicated earlier research on gendered perceptions of people in comparison groups – vegetarians and vegans, vegans, and omnivores – as well as investigated possible mechanisms for differences in gendered perceptions for those who follow a meatless diet by focusing on reasons for choosing a vegan diet. Interesting he found that vegetarianism is no longer associated with lower perceived masculinity and that the "choice" to be vegan (versus "necessity") may be what leads to lower ratings of masculinity for males.

Carol Adams' (1999) book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat,* argued that veganism is a feminist issue because meat consumption and violence against animals are structurally related to violence against women, especially in the forms of pornography and prostitution. Hamilton

(2016) critiqued Adams' claims as unsubstantiated and said she silenced and excluded sex workers from the perspective. Kemmerer (2011) addressed both gender and social justice issues in her work and called women and animals "sister species". Harper (2010) put together a collection of essays from black female vegans about food, identity, health, and society, in which Philips (2010) discussed veganism from the theoretical framework of ecowomanism – the centering of the voices of women of African descent as they engage in issues of earth justice.

Jessen (2013) believed that women have additional challenges when expressing themselves about veganism, especially in the activism sectors, where support for intersectionality and opposition of violence can bring about negative interactions with fellow activists and elicit patriarchal oppression. She also discussed how many veganism/animal rights campaigns "…fall flat partly due to gender stereotypes that interpret female advocacy as overly emotional, irrational, and ignorant of the "necessity" of exploitation. As a result, the Nonhuman Animal rights movement has tended to glorify masculine tactics (rational persuasion and direct action) and downplay feminine tactics (intersectionality and nonviolence)" (Jessen, 2013). More research on specifically gendered issues within veganism is necessary and though not a focus of this paper, have much to offer the discussion around how gender affects lifestyle choices.

Identity

Identity development theory tells us that identity is fluid, developing constantly throughout our lives and that we all have multiple and intersecting identities. Veganism as a social identity has not been well-explored and could provide valuable information as to how vegans choose, maintain, and perform, among other topics. Chuck, Fernandes, and Hyers (2016) posited that veganism is a "politicized diet" because vegans engage in dietary practices that differ from the dominant food culture. Expanding on Cross' (1978) group identity development

theory, they discovered that most vegans explicitly or implicitly affirm that their diet is part of their identity. Haverstock and Forgays (2012) used quantitative methods to compare current and former pescatarians (eat fish/seafood products), vegetarians, and vegans on several variables and their goal was to obtain a sample with a wider range of backgrounds than had been previously studied. They assessed self-identity and found no relationship between length of time as an animal product limiter and higher self-identity score. Relating to the issue of whether being vegan is a social identity, Kremmel's (2006) findings aligned with Brekhus in that because meat-eating is a normative position in society, it is often treated as an unmarked category and not experienced as an identity. They further explored eating boundaries to understand vegetarian identity and participants' understanding of what it means to be vegan. Identity importance, social support and boundary work are vital components of vegetarian identity construction processes (Kremmel, 2006).

Understanding how social identity is created, maintained, and evolves is important when thinking about veganism as a dietary and lifestyle choice. Paxman (2016) used Hecht's communication theory of identity to explore how vegans communicatively negotiate their identity. Results indicated that vegans must "…engage in a variety of communication strategies (e.g. focusing on the positive) to thoughtfully craft an identity that will be well-received by others" (p. vi). Thirukkumaran (2017) studied school children in Canada in relation to how their identity is shaped and supported/unsupported in school and at home. He found that the student identity at this age was strongly connected to family, who in this particular study were very supportive of their children's dietary/lifestyle decision.

Rosenfeld and Burrow (2017) commented that consuming "…a vegetarian diet can make vegetarianism a social identity as much as it is a social category" (p. 79). Because this chosen

identity involves both internal and external constructs and processes, understanding the relationship between plant-based food choices and identity is important for self and for maintenance of identity with others. More nuanced examination of identity in relation to veganism is presented in sections to follow.

Lifestyle

There are many reported generalities about veganism as a lifestyle choice – wellness, health, personality type, etc. Research about the generalities of the vegan lifestyle does highlight some interesting perspectives. In investigating mood and factors that can affect mood, Beezhold (2015) found that vegans report less stress and anxiety than omnivores and tend to be older and more educated but have less social support than omnivores. Bosworth (2012), in a master's thesis, purported that vegans have an individual role to play in promoting veganism to non-vegans because they have the potential to attract others to the diet, help normalize the lifestyle and increase numbers for the overall movement.

Cherry (2015) described her own identity as a teenage vegan and member of the punk subculture and analyzed young people who were engaged in veganism as a lifestyle movement as opposed to just a dietary choice. Haenfler, Johnson, and Jones defined lifestyle movements as "…movements that consciously and actively promote a lifestyle or way of life as their primary means to foster social change" (as cited in Cherry, 2015, p. 57). Cherry (2015) found that youth subculture and social movements intersect in lifestyle movement activism in the "search for ethical consistency"; everyday actions and practices match your ideals and one focuses less on political mobilization and more on everyday choices.

Reviews of common arguments that claim eating animals contributes to a meaningful life and critiques of them were the focus of Ciocchetti's (2012) essay on the aesthetics of the eating

experience. As vegans are constantly questioned about their choices (Colb, 2013; Edwards, 2013), the explanation can be tiresome, along with social implications can cause guilt, stress, fear anxiety, shame due to having to cover, hide, deflect, or lie (Edwards, 2013). Because the dominant food culture conveys to vegans that their choices and decisions are bad, the stereotype is that they should "get over it" or keep it hidden so that it does not make non-vegans uncomfortable. (Edwards, 2013).

An interesting facet of external judgment of vegans is that those who abstain from eating meat due to religious reasons are often given more leniency when in reality, both are a choice (Edwards, 2013). Veganism as an intentional lifestyle choice can be controversial in society where dominant norms are mostly adhered to and dissention is open to scrutiny. Making this choice is often seen as deviant even though the choice is "…invisible unless the individual wishes the difference to be known, or until a certain social situation" (Lindquist, 2013).

Motivation

As previously described, motives for adopting a vegan diet can be the same as or different from motives for adopting a vegan lifestyle. Some studies have been done to determine what motivates people to become vegan (Hirschler, 2011;), how they learn to become vegan (McDonald, 2000; Stevens, 2015), and their motivation to maintain the vegan diet and lifestyle (Hirschler, 1998; Steele, 2013). Some have questioned if the motivation to become vegan is related to animal compassion and well-being, could that stem from childhood behaviors relating to domestic pets (Rothgerber & Mican, 2014)? Heiss and Hormes (2018) are studying the relationship between the variety of pets owned in childhood and vegetarianism in adulthood. All

their variables of interest were positively correlated with one another and indicate that the number of different types of pets owned in childhood is associated with the degree of restriction of animal products in adulthood.

Rosenfeld and Burrow (2017a) created a conceptual framework consisting of "…10 dimensions organized into three levels (contextual, internalized, and externalized) that capture the role of vegetarianism on an individual's self-concept" (p. 78). This framework is useful for studying the motivations of vegetarian identity and understanding plant-based food choices and is called the Unified Model of Vegetarian Identity (UVMI). They then, in a separate piece, provided a critical evaluation of studies that have been done on motivation using two conceptual frameworks – their own UMVI and the ethical-heath framework (Rosenfeld & Burrow, 2017b). They posited that redefining PBD into new categories of Motivations, Aversions, and Constraints could increase precision with which researchers are labeling the psychological constructs of eating. As discussed earlier, this may help with the issue of non-adherence to traditional definitions around vegetarian, vegan, and plant-based diets.

Because there was no available literature at the time, McDonald (2000) wondered how people learned about the lifestyle, learned to change their lifestyle, and learned to become vegan. She developed an empirical schema of elements of the vegan learning after testing Mezirow's (1991, 1995, 1998) transformation theory but finding it did not apply to the process of becoming vegan (McDonald, 2000, p. 2). Relating to why people are motivated to even try veganism or not, Reznickova (2010) conducted a vegan challenge with a pre- and post-test design where non-vegans were educated about and asked to eat vegan for a week to improve the human relationship with food and environment, her supposition being that a change in the current paradigm is needed.

Ruby (2012), in conducting a review of the literature available at that time, noted that Beardsworth and Keil (1992) proposed that vegetarianism is best measured as a continuum of categories and that motivations are not static, and can be added, dropped, or modified over time (p. 142). Interestingly, Janssen, Busch, Rodiger, and Hamm (2016) found that in addition to the "big three" (Ethics, Environment, and Health), their German study that identified motives of consumers following a vegan diet and their attitudes towards animal agriculture revealed two additional motives for begin vegan; social justice and aversion to capitalism/the food industry.

Finally, thinking about dietary choices based on motivation to consume or not consume certain products cannot avoid the eating ideology of carnism. The carnistic defense legitimates the process of eating animals and carnistic domination supports the killing of animals for their meat (Monteiro, Pfeiler, Patterson, & Milburn, 2017). Carnists perceive vegetarianism as a social and political threat, signifying that which is different is unwelcome in the dominant eating society. Monteiro et al. (2017) also found, using the Interspecies Model of Prejudice, that negative attitudes towards animals and perceiving them as less than humans is the root of development of perceiving human out-groups as inferior.

Race & Social Justice

Veganism is criticized for being elitist and aimed at/lived out by upper-middle-class white (Harmon, 2012; Ko, 2015) people. Vegan authors, activists, and athletes of color are supporting the movement through education, research, and policy. Putting into place food policy that makes vegan food accessible (Adleberg, 2017) to all types of people is the goal of advocacy work. A. Breeze Harper spoke at Middlebury College in 2014 on the intersections of post-race consciousness food justice and hip-hop vegan ethics – applying critical race theory and black

feminist perspectives to study black male vegans who were promoting veganism, gardening, social stability, diet decolonization and race consciousness through hip hop music. She was quoted as saying:

> It's about a lot of post-racial white vegans not really understanding how thug is being used in Thug Kitchen and why that's a problem, why there seems to be no solidarity in understanding that you can't just be anti-speciesist and a vegan, and pretend to live in a post-racial age or pretend that things like Ferguson and Travyon Martin don't affect black and brown communities who are trying to get food security, social justice, as well as racial justice…They don't realize [racism] has shifted to structural, systemic processes (John, 2014, no page because internet article?).

Harper (2010) called for essays from fellow black vegan women and published them in a book titled *Sistah Vegan*, where the politics of veganism were deconstructed from a black, feminist perspective on topics of food, identity, health, and society. PBD are being critiqued for not enough research on the intersectionality of race, class, sexual orientation, and other social justice issues with which they often share common values (Harmon, 2012). Harper's veganism follows the concept of "ahisma", which means harmlessness and non-violence towards all human and non-human animals as well as the resources of the Earth (Plaid, 2015).

Veganism is considered by many vegans as a social justice issue and should be recognized as "multispecies" (Coulter, 2016). Cherry (2006) highlighted that vegans are an ideal case for demonstrating the constraining and enabling aspects of cultural structures, especially when one can compare across differing social networks. In a book review of *Circles of Compassion: Essays Connecting Issues of Justice,* Johnston (2015) posited that human feeling of compassion are suppressed in order to see the animals we dominate, kill, and eat as separate and

different from us. This exclusion of the "other" is also necessary to perpetuate racism, elitism, war – "…the mentality of domination is necessarily a mentality of exclusion" (Johnson, 2015, p. 3). Jones (2015) added to the argument and felt that social justice movements themselves regularly ignore nonhuman animals even though the "…animal liberation movement has as its focus the elimination of institutional and systemic domination and oppression" (p. 467). Summing up why veganism as an ethical commitment to animal rights is a social justice issue was Melanie Joy's (2011) statement:

> Widespread ambivalent, illogical attitudes toward a group of others are almost always a hallmark of an oppressive ideology. Oppressive ideologies require rational, humane people to participate in irrational, inhumane practices and to remain unaware of such contradictions. And they frame the choices of those who refuse to participate in the ideology as "personal preferences" rather than conscientious objections. (para 5)

In sum, veganism as an ethical lifestyle choice is concerned with eliminating suffering and oppression and cannot be ignored as a social justice movement. Adleberg (2017) felt strongly that activists must integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the animal advocacy movement. Because many people in the U.S. alone face "…powerful structural and systemic constraints on what they can consume," advocating for food justice in addition to animal rights is a goal of the movement. Even if not equated to the exact same level as other social justice campaigns, common goals of ideology can be found.

Veganism and Identity

Any review of an identity theory must first outline the definition and parameters. Identity is a complex field of study and has varied sources of developmental origin – psychology, sociology, etc. Veganism is a real identity type, no less salient because it is a chosen (avowed)

identity as opposed to a given or ascribed one. A given (assigned) identity is defined as "…components of identity over which individuals have no choice but around which they must construct meaning" (i.e. race, ethnicity, biological sex) (Grotevant, 1992, p. 86). Grotevant (1992) distinguished a chosen identity as one that arises out of choices made available to a person in their social contexts. Guided by cultural identity theory (CIT), cultural identity enactment tenets state that ascribed identities are "…attributed, assigned, or labeled by others to one's groups" and avowed identities are enacted by an individual to represent themselves as a group member to others (Simmons & Chen, 2014, p, 21).

Wright & Adams (2015) conducted a study and subsequently published a book calling for the establishment of the field of vegan studies, positing that "…veganism and vegan identity, as well as the popular and academic discourse that constructs those categories, need to be explored, understood, and challenged" (p. 1). Veganism should be considered both an identity category and a practice to contribute to a changed politics of representation. Because one can adopt a plant-based diet without making a corresponding intentional vegan lifestyle choice, the manifestation, construction, and representation of vegan identity is of primary importance, "…particularly given the minority status that such an option has always mandated" (Wright & Adams, 2015, p. 6). Because it is commonly believed that "…identity is socially constructed and reconstructed" (Torres, Jones and Renn, 2009), how veganism is viewed as an identity in social relations does matter.

Claiming a vegan identity occurs when a person experiences deep salience between their choice to eschew animal products and their intention to live a compassionate lifestyle in all components. Many times, this congruence is reached when vegans have an ethical orientation and a concern for animal rights (Elorinne, Kantola, Voutilainen, & Laakso, 2016; Haverstock &

Forgays, 2012). Kremmel (2006) found that normative positions in society (i.e. meat-eaters) are often treated as unmarked categories, and therefore, not experienced as identities. Vegan identity is often shunned by general society because it is not the dominant and salient position.

Finally, performance of identity is an important part of development and formation. Some argue that performance is the only way identity is ever experienced and enacted (Paulus, personal communication, July 2018). Identity maintenance for vegans includes having to negotiate their identity and behavior depending on the context and reception (Paxman, 2016). Snijder and te Molder (2009) found similar patterns in that "…members of a group associated with ideological food choice construct identities for specific interactional tasks, like undermining some of the potential negative inferences about their eating practices" Their discursive perspective highlighted the notion of identity as being performed through talk and their participants demonstrated a) the need to make vegan meals seem ordinary and easy to make and b) preventing vitamin deficiency as routine. To make veganism seem uncomplicated, vegans often have to portray the "ordinariness" to protect veganism as an ideology (Sneijder & te Molder, 2009). Whatever the processes and mechanisms used to explore, perform, and internalize, veganism is a chosen identity.

Similarity of Development in Vegan and Religious Identities

Religious terminology provides some of the same confusion issues as does plant-based eating terminology. Often misinterpreted or conflated, words communicating beliefs about religion, spirituality, beliefs, faith, and more can be difficult to understand and claim, dependent heavily on use and context. Veganism could even potentially fit into the definitions of such tenets depending on the definer. For example, Patton et al. (2016), using research-based definitions to try to clarify differences among concepts, outlined Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's (2011) concept

of *spiritualty* as our sense of who we are, where we come from, and beliefs about why we are here. They also provide Fowler's (1996) definition of *belief* as "…conscious intellectual agreement with particular doctrines or ideologies" (p. 181), which could obviously be applied to the vegan lifestyle movement. Johnson (2015) even detailed an argument for veganism meeting definition of religion under the US federal law, supported by data that showed federal tests to determine if a belief is a religion and therefore, entitled to be protected under law! Survey questions revealed that ethical vegans have been the target of discrimination in areas such as employment, public accommodations and facilities, institutionalized persons, and crimes against persons and property, all of which would be protected if veganism was protected as a religious expression.

An individual may also experience spiritual identity (personal) in the context of a collective identity (group) tradition even though it is typically not associated with feelings of belonging to a valued group (i.e. I feel that my sense of who I am and why I am here is to provide compassion to all beings on Earth as a result of my collective identity as a vegan) (Patton et al., 2016). Veganism can be predominantly understood as a collective identity/social identity because it includes category membership, shared beliefs, perceived closeness to the other members of the group, and behavioral enactments (Patton et al, 2016) Like with other collective identity groups, vegan identity can vary in terms of acceptance of beliefs/tenets, endorsement of values, commitment level, and range of practices. The following sections detail several theories of faith identity development and easily-identified parallels for vegan identity development.

Smith's Model of Atheist Development. Perhaps the most salient corresponding model of development to veganism is Smith's (2011) attention to self-identified atheists. Just as meat-eating is normal and pervasive in American culture, so too is theism and those who reject the

idea of god experience similar difficulties as vegans in relation to criticism, questioning, and persecution. Smith put forth four components of the journey to atheist identity determination. I believe these have direct mirroring of what vegans who claim their diet/lifestyle choice as central to their identity experience.

First, the person comes to see themselves in a predominantly opposite position from the rest of society as *the starting point*. This can be difficult and because of the way that religion/meat eating doctrine and ideology is present in childhood, can make one feel like the idea was imposed upon them and they did not have the ability to choose if it fit into their life. Often, these beliefs are fostered through family and "cultural milieu".

Questioning begins when someone has interactions with different settings and contexts, leading to the start of experiencing doubts. Doubts, especially cultivated when exposure to diverse and questioning others happens, leads to process of "unlearning" of indoctrination of the previous life span. It also means educating oneself, learning to articulate concerns, and using new understandings to challenge ideologies (Patton et al., 2016).

The *rejecting* component encompasses the transition from exploration and questioning to actively and explicitly rejecting the status quo idea. Even though the person at this point knows that rejecting God/religion or meat-eating will be a contested decision, they enter a process of constructing an identity out of this rejection or negation. Thus, their identity begins to become shaped by the boundaries they create, particularly beliefs they no longer have and actions in which they no longer participate. This is a salient component of vegan identity development!

In the final component of Smiths model, *coming out*, full self-acceptance of identity takes place. The person is increasingly able to explain what it means for them to be what they have chosen (atheist or vegan), both internally and externally. They are able to handle tensions

between the stigmatized and deviant status of being atheist or vegan and their desire to acknowledge beliefs that contradict normalized notions (i.e. there is no god, eating animals is wrong). The increasing ability to claim who they truly are and what they truly value is empowering and they develop stronger self-acceptance and a new self-concept. It is not fair to say that this process will be smooth. It will likely elicit discomfort but perhaps the person is able resolve these feelings and look back on the entire journey as "affirming and liberating" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 198).

When Diet Becomes Identity: Lifestyle Choice

Because omnivorism/carnivorism is the dominant eating identity in the United States, diet is not normally recognized as a lifestyle choice (Hirschler, 1998). There is scarce research on people (or college students) who choose to model their lifestyle around a specific dietary identity. Carfora, Caso, & Conner (2017) investigated the role of eating identities in terms of understanding and changing red meat consumption. As many people who make dietary changes often start by trying to reduce or eliminate consumption of red meat for health reasons, this can be seen as a dietary change but is it necessarily connected to a lifestyle choice? Forestell, Spaeth, & Kane (2012) looked at vegetarianism in college females and whether or not they ate red meat as a measure of restraint.

Dietary choices have been examined peripherally, but not necessarily from a lens of intentional choice to maintain an identity or lifestyle movement. College students are often criticized for eating "unhealthy" food, which can relate to stress of transition to the new environment and challenges, as well as consumption of alcohol (Kelly, Mazzeo, & Bean, 2013) or are judged in terms of added weight-gain from unlimited access to and food choice in dining halls (Holmes & Mason, 2014). Harris (2017) performed a qualitative analysis of food diary

reflection papers to examine how college students explain dietary failures and use their life stage to account for poor choices. On the opposite end of the spectrum, McReynolds, Gillan, and Naquin (2017) determined that students with higher levels of knowledge about organic food correlated with higher positive perception, though age, college, and declared major had no effect on knowledge.

As previously mentioned, with college eating habits come with judgments, both from within and without. Pearson and Young (2013) examined how college students judged others based on their described eating patterns and gender. They found that males who chose a low-fat or good-fat diet were deemed to be more successful but less likeable and connected the "…fast-food, convenience world of college society, relatively high-fat eating is the social norm and may correspond to perceptions that a person is more likeable…" (Pearson & Young, 2013, p. 218). Eating habits and patterns can also be tied to influence from friends, family, and others with influence. Robinson, Otten and Hermans (2015) studied how individual differences in the need for social acceptance and self-control moderated whether young adults were likely to display similar dietary habits to their peers. Tarrant, Khan, and Qin (2015) reported that when exposed to a similar-age or older referent before reporting normative beliefs, attitudes and intentions concerning dietary behavior, exposure to the referent was positively correlated with stronger perceptions that eating a certain way was normative. Additional discovery about and with college students who choose to live their life according to a dietary identity is needed.

Veganism and College Students

College students who are vegan may be finding increased community on campus as increasing numbers of students (Attebury, 2012; Runkle, 2010) explore this dietary and lifestyle choice. While there is some available research on vegan college students, it mostly focuses on

interactions in and around dining halls and does not extensively highlight the lives or other experiences students may have having on campus during their college years that relate to veganism.

Dining Hall

When students come to campus, many purchase the offered meal plans and begin eating in on-campus dining halls and facilities on a regular basis. It makes sense that dining halls are a focus of what little research exists on college vegans since veganism is still emerging and the dominant food culture would suggest that there are plenty of options (i.e. salad bar) in a normal dining hall. Colleges and universities are offering more vegetarian and vegan choices in on-campus eateries than ever before (Dwyer, 2016; Howard, 2016; Pevreall, 2017; Starostinetskaya, 2015). The University of North Texas has had a 300-seat "all-vegan" dining hall since 2011 (Dwyer, 2016). Campus chefs at the University of Buffalo even undertook vegan eating themselves as a way to assess the student dining experience and understand what it is really like to eat vegan in order to develop vegan menus (Raise Vegan, 2017).

Though dated, Derricote and McWhinney's (1997) study provided analysis of the nutrient quality of foods offered for vegetarians and vegans in the dining halls and should remain a touchstone for campuses today when creating vegetarian and vegan options. PETA2 surveyed 1500 four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. and found that 62% or more serve vegan menu items on a daily basis (Dwyer, 2016). But what foods are being served specifically is important to understand. Having a salad bar could be "vegan" but what other supplemental foods are present for students who must eat at the dining hall for every meal? Because there are more plant-based convenience and regular food options available now than in the past, it might seem

that having more robust veg*n options would be easier. However, some of the those very foods are highly processed and still do not meet nutrient analysis of recommended daily values (RDA) for “optimal” health.

Other concerns with campus dining halls after consistency of product offering and nutrition is the lack of sense of community for vegan students as well as possible contamination of food in preparation areas (Harper, 2016) or mislabeling by undereducated staff who aren’t fully aware of the restrictions of veganism. Vegan students can more often find personal community and support systems on campus in student clubs, and then bring that community to the dining hall even if not openly represented with lots of vegan food options. Kaufman and Smith (2017) performed mixed-methods research at the University of Memphis that indicated students, faculty, and staff felt frustrated at the availability of vegetarian options on campus. While they were eventually able to find items to purchase using savvy and creative means, pricing, heathy options, and number of options were negatively perceived.

Campus Interaction

As veganism gains more popularity as a dietary choice for young people, the national media has started to reflect this as well and report on vegan college students. Ashley Hampton, for example, was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Lily who started a food blog, “Raw in College”, that gained national following and attention via the website, Instagram, an eBook of recipes, YouTube channel, and interviews with news channels and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) (Bjornson, 2016; Wroblewski, 2016). In addition to being vegan, she was a raw vegan but felt compelled to share her experiences because she was also like other students – in a sorority, interested in leadership, loved to travel, and enjoyed spending time with friends, etc. Ashley’s connection to other college students may be important in that she started

her journey for health reasons and "…then made that ethical connection with animals. I find that really making that connection is the best way to stay vegan" (Bjornson, 2016). Often veganism can be labeled as too expensive for college students, impossible to maintain, etc. Blogs and informal educators like Ashley, that are of the same population as college students, may provide an overall view into how veganism plays out on campus but have positive messaging as opposed to traditional negative messaging that is promoted about vegans.

Bresnahan, Zhuang, and Zhu (2016) used quantitative methods to investigate the extent to which veganism is stigmatized and whether negative emotion moderated stigma directed towards vegans and found that vegans do experience discrimination. Because their results showed that red meat symbolizes masculinity and power, veganism was seen as in direct opposition to these forms of dominance. They also used the Communal Food Hypothesis to determine if eating together expresses close community. When vegans usually have very few to no choices at a typical communal table, guilt and discomfort can be experienced on both the part of the vegan, (for not wanting to be a problem) as well as the carnivore (more in response to in-depth information processing about the situation of animals) (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016). Building from the concern for animals that many vegan college students feel, Izmirli and Phillips (2011) conducted a quantitative study comparing the relationship between consumption of animal products and attitudes towards animals at universities in Europe and Asia.

Identity

Student development theory literature tells us that college students can be in various stages of identity development during the traditional-aged college years. Vegan students who have chosen to pursue a lifestyle of compassion in addition to a non-human animal product-free daily practice may be experiencing identity challenges in addition to daily life challenges. Ortiz

(2011) explained that an important piece of supporting student development is to understand how social identity functions and to talk about issues of social justice, like marginalization and privilege, in all aspects of life. Vegan college students who identify as having radical ethical commitments on campus can feel unwelcome and unchallenged by their university community (Merriman & Wilson-Merriman, 2009) when issues like marginalization and privilege are ignored in relation to other species. Given that identity is fluid and changing, having a deeper understanding of self and how the choices we make affect others is why exploring all forms of oppression is vital to liberation (Ortiz, 2011).

Radbod (2012) highlighted the incredible passion of college students to pair their own interests and life choices with the goal of trying to help others and bring awareness to various forms of suffering. She detailed an alternative spring break trip created by a student to pair college students with refugees in Baltimore, MD. Because the student creator was a vegan, the trip meals were entirely vegan. Not only did this help participants experience some amount of "sacrifice" (as refugees do daily), it also helped the to identify more with their counterparts as refugee campus often have little to no access to meat and dairy products. The trip had been ongoing for at least three years at the time of publication and was still fully vegan.

Dietary identity in higher education is not a well-established research agenda or pressing campus issue but perhaps it should be. Jack Norris and Rania Hannan (n.d.), of the Vegan Outreach Group, found that leafleting about veganism on college campuses has educational impact by inspiring new avenues of thought and enlightenment about veganism and speciesism. How this affects the college student identity remains to be studied, especially in terms of those who may change their diet and/or lifestyle as a result of outreach. Parks and Evans (2014) were compelled to research and write about how institutions can both attract and accommodate

vegetarian and vegan (veg*n) students. Using phenomenological methods, they found that veg*n students perceive significant barrier in both dining and housing policies. The challenges that vegan students face are unique and they may not seem as pressing as other minoritized groups but administrations are not offering programming or resources to support students with PBD (Parks & Evans, 2014).

Self-Authorship Framework

Baxter Magolda (2001), defined self-authorship as "the internal capacity to construct one's beliefs, identity, and social relations, is crucial to successfully navigate adult life" (p. X). Self-authorship has been used to explore many aspects of college life, including leadership and social change on campus (Cohen, Cook-Sather, & Lesnick, 2013), first-generation undergraduate students (Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Jehangir, Williams, & Pete, 2011), African American first-year students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Strayhorn, 2014), self-authorship across cultures (Baxter Magolda, Creamer, & Meszaros, 2010), and using it to help navigate emerging adulthood (Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2016).

Other aspects of identity for college students have been studied using self-authorship as a framework, such as Torres and Hernandez's (2007) examination of the influence of ethnic identity on the process in Latino/a students, which indicated that the recognition and meaning-making of racism is a significant developmental task. Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, and Wang (2012) found the two kinds of dissonance that lead to self-authorship are identity dissonance and relationship dissonance, indicating the need to further understand the catalysts and processes for development. Using self-authorship as a lens to examine civic and political engagement, Iverson and James (2013) discovered that change-oriented service-learning led to an increased awareness of self in relation to others and communities.

Many of the faith-based development structures previously described have the "coming to a crossroads" (Baxter Magolda, 2009) moment – the tipping point where elements are unsustainable in balance and must shift. Providing the necessary balance of challenge and support as this occurs for vegan students, when they understand plans laid out for them (parents, family, society, etc.) to "naturally" (Piazza, Ruby, Kulik, Loughnan, Luong, Watkins, & Siegerman, 2015) and unquestioningly be meat eaters may not/do not work. We can help reinforce the message that they do not have to be defined by external others in terms of diet and/or lifestyle.

Perhaps most salient recent work not already reviewed in relation to the concept of self-authorship and veganism in college is the work of Alyssa Bryant (2011), who researched evangelical Christian students and their path to self-authorship. Because religious identity is socially-constructed and chosen, much like vegan identity, common aspects of self-authorship can be seen in the experiences and how "…key dimensions…manifest in lives contextualized by a specific…community and worldview" (Bryant, 2011, p. 20). Through this study, Bryant's (2011) participants revealed parts of their path to self-authorship that could share common space with other chosen social identities like veganism or atheism, such as: changing nature of dialogue with others is focal point of journey towards self-authorship in Stevey stages; asking "What makes one thing right or wrong and which is right for me?"; recognizing and problematizing normalized behaviors or patterns and learning to express guiding values authentically in interpersonal relationships; and independent verification of claims about truth as opposed to relying on others' opinions and struggle and becoming aware of the "trappings" of external formula following.

Conclusion

The overall body of literature on the topic of veganism is relatively small considering how long it has existed and been a priority for students from all types of higher education and from various countries around the world in which to engage. Literature on the differentiation of the vegan lifestyle choice experience for college students is even smaller. As the focus on veganism in the plant-based-diet-movement is growing in popularity (Berger, 2018; Fox, 2017; Hancox, 2018; Nguyen, 2017), understanding the experiences of vegan college students on campus is important. As a minoritized group by choice of dietary pattern, college vegans have valuable perspectives to add to campus culture, and not just about dining halls. To truly understand what their lived experiences and unaddressed needs might be, hearing their stories is necessary.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Using a constructivist, qualitative epistemology, this phenomenological study sought to uncover how vegan college students experience campus life and identity. The constructivist viewpoint highlights that subjective meanings are often negotiated socially and historically and formed through interaction with others (Creswell, 2014). This study utilized Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), a mixture of descriptive, interpretative, and hermeneutic methods. The purpose of IPA is to understand how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. It also strives to understand commonality of the human experience; how something is understood in a given context and from a shared perspective. As described by Johnson and Christensen (2014), this is, "…a part of the experience that is common or consistent across the research participants" (p. 446).

Students may experience the phenomenon of being vegan in college in unique ways and they may also experience commonalities across cases. This study sought to uncover both personal experiences and any common essences for vegan college students. Because phenomenology is an extensive discipline that could and has constituted many of its own lengthy discourses and published works, the following sections provide a broad, brief, and purposefully accessible overview of the key assumptions of phenomenology, the emergence of IPA from the original tradition, and key scholars influential for IPA. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the understandings and experiences of vegan college students at a large, public institution in the Southeastern United States, classified by Carnegie

(2018) as a Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity, in order to recognize and present their experiences. The research questions were:

1. How do college students who are vegan make personal meaning of that lifestyle choice?
2. How do students who are vegan perceive and manage the impact of this lifestyle choice during college, especially as it pertains to food and social interaction?

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is an extremely wide and varying philosophical theory and research methodology and many scholars use it differently or even disagree on how it should be used, with which topics, etc. Prasad (2015) introduced scholars to the field of qualitative research by communicating that Husserl's (1960) philosophy of phenomenology "undergirds all interpretive research in the social sciences" at some level (p. 13). Though it started out as a philosophical movement, phenomenology has evolved into both a high-level theory and a research methodology. As a research methodology, phenomenology has grown and changed throughout history, both in scope and practice, and with expansion into different academic disciplines. Because all qualitative research attempts to interpret the world from a human viewpoint, phenomenology assumes that any experience of reality is possible only through interpretation – we are the beginning and end of the essence of "lived" experience. It is the study of structures of experience or consciousness. Phenomenological study attempts to examine first-person experience before reflection or processing has occurred.

Key Assumptions

Husserl (1960) believed that "reality" exists in human consciousness itself and that the experience of any reality is only possible through interpretation. He idealized that the material reality of things comes into being through acts of social interpretation and meaningful sense-

making. These interpretive acts constitute targets for scholarly research. Phenomenology suggests that the construction of the social world around us is only possible because of our ability to attach meaning to objects, events, and interactions. The ontology (study of what is) of phenomenology can depend on which scholar you are following or which version of the theory you are using but generally refers to the study of consciousness. Researchers using this tradition are looking to discover the "essence" of an experienced phenomenon. Kvale (1996) described clarifying in phenomenological interviews/research both a) that something appears and b) the way it appears in participants' first-person perspectives because we each hold individual meaning about our world. The axiology (values) of phenomenology reflect the personal experience as the ultimate qualifier. The epistemology (what constitutes knowledge) of phenomenology is that personal experience is the fundamental source of knowledge. Phenomenological researchers use varying interview techniques (semi-structured or unstructured) according to what branch of the theory they are using. Many use reduction as a technique when analyzing interview transcripts to effectively reduce the information to the "essence" of the experience (Wolff, 2002). The research questions that are typically asked in phenomenological studies have to do with the essence of an experience, whether personal, collective, or both. This framework allows researchers to pursue detailed responses to questions that compare and contrast experiences, elicit what parameters of an experience exist (if any), and discover what experiences are like with variables included or not included, etc. Phenomenology also makes use of bracketing or bridling – attempting to suspend or contain inherent or learned assumptions/beliefs about the natural world to see the essence of structure. Many phenomenological researchers attempt to discover what participants directly experience in their everyday lifeworld.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis looks at how major life experiences contribute to sense-making in individuals (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is phenomenological in that it is attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of the participant but recognizes that that becomes inevitably an interpretative process for both researcher and participant (Smith et al., 2009, p. 37). When the activities of everyday life start to take on significance, often when something important happens, IPA methods focus on investigating and understanding this change. One of the main goals of studies using this methodology is to focus on the reflections that people have when they are involved in a major life experience – when they start to think about the importance of what is happening to them. An event of major significance to one person may not be of major significance to another – thereby reflecting the individuality of personal lived experience and ideas of Merleu-Ponty. When one engages in a substantial amount of time thinking about, feeling, and reflecting on this event or situation, they are working through what it means to them.

IPA is informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation – i.e. a researcher trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them), and idiography (being concerned with the particular as opposed to the nomothetic (group or population level)). As was Heidgger, "IPA is concerned with examining how a phenomenon appears and the analyst is implicated in facilitating and making sense of this appearance" Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). IPA's usage of idiography in the particular is a) sense of detail and, therefore, depth of analysis and b) understanding how particular experiential phenomena (event, process, relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context. This is why IPA uses small (ideally three, but up to six, participants – Smith et al., 2009,

p. 106), purposively-selected, and carefully-situated examples (p. 29). IPA does not try to avoid generalizations but is more cautious about how they are developed and situated within the context of the data.

The goal of IPA research undertakings is to reveal details about the experiences of participants. As such, IPA will often examine both similarities and differences between cases, as well as overall commonalities. IPA uses small samples sizes to allow for these similarities and differences to emerge through detailed conversations about lived experience. The IPA researcher should strive to conduct the research in a way that allows the experience to come about in its own terms – not being limited to "predefined category systems" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32) Moving from the existential philosophy of phenomenology to the practicality of conducting research in our modern world, IPA focuses on the "thing itself" as the lived experience and "…not the philosophical account of lived experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33)

IPA offers detailed, nuanced analyses of particular instances of lived experience. Successful IPA research is both empathetic and questioning – the simple word "understanding" captures this – we are attempting to understand both in the sense of 'trying to see what it is like for someone' and in the sense of 'analysing, illuminating, and making sense of something' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 36). Successful interpretation is primarily achieved by reading from within the text which the participant has produced (p. 37). It should be possible to analyze each of each participants' account for both shared themes and their distinct voice and/or variations on those themes.

Influential Phenomenological Scholars for IPA

There are many scholars, versions, and branches of phenomenology in modern practice. Emerging researchers can be influenced by any of those former theorists, versions, and branches

as well as their discipline and their own axiology, ontology, and epistemology. IPA owes a debt to the following scholars for establishing and expanding upon the importance and relevance of the focus on experience and its perception (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). The latter scholars (Merleau-Pointy and Sartre) moved away from descriptive only work "…towards a more worldly and interpretative position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directiveness of our involvement in the lived word – something which is personal to each of us, but which is a property of our relationships to the world and others, rather than to us as creatures in isolation" (Smith et al., 1999, p. 21).

Husserl. The most prominent scholar in the study of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician and philosopher. He believed in the rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear and was a proponent of the reductionist technique; reducing the world as it is considered in the natural attitude to a world of pure phenomena. Husserl advocated the most positivist form of phenomenology in that while we do not deny things their ontological existence, "…what is of paramount importance is how we order, classify, structure, and interpret our world, and then act upon these interpretations" (Prasad, 2015, p. 13).

Husserl believed that humans' predisposition to ordering everything we experience into our "pre-existing categorization system" can get in the way of understanding something as experiential content of consciousness itself (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009, p. 12). For this reason, he thought we should reflexively move from our *natural* attitude (everyday experiences) to a *phenomenological* one by turning our view inward to examine our perception of objects instead of the objects themselves. This sounds easier in theory than in practice. Because we take for granted our way of experiencing the world and actions, objects, perceptions, within it, we may not actually reflect on those actions, objects, or perceptions. Husserl thought this careful

reversal of experience-making required intentionality between things and awareness of these things. He even provided a method for achieving this phenomenological attitude through a process known as bracketing.

Bracketing. Bracketing is an attempt to put taken-for-granted ways of living to the side so that one can concentrate on the perception of those ways of living. According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), bracketing has roots in mathematics as in separating out, or treating separately, that which is in brackets. Instead of things as they exist in the world, bracketing forces forward the acts of consciousness about things in the world (thinking, perceiving, remembering, judging, etc.) Bracketing is often misunderstood as trying to pretend that experiences with a topic outside of a study do not exist at all or that one has no preconceived notions or thoughts, which is impossible. Husserl detailed several reductionist lenses through which to view experience so as to constantly "…lead the inquirer away from the distraction and misdirection of their own assumptions and preconceptions, and back towards the essence of their experience of a given phenomenon" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 14). Again, Husserl's ultimate goal in understanding a phenomenon was to establish what is at the core of the subjective experience of a thing – what is the essence, idea, or *eidos*.

Reduction. "Eidetic" reduction consists of several techniques to get at the essence of the thing – especially underneath the subjective perception of individual manifestations of that type of object. For example, consider a chair. Husserl would suggest using 'free imaginative variation' to think about all of the possible instances of a chair. One has had variant experiences with chairs since a young age so will probably have that data from which to draw without much extra thought but imagining all of the variants are what help focus thought on the reduction of the essence of what constitutes a chair. Is a table also a chair if it can hold enough weight to be sat

upon? Does a chair necessarily have arms? What makes something a chair or not a chair by the known boundaries of objectivity and can one imagine unique or new examples of the thing – the chair? By composing a list of the essential elements of a chair, one is establishing its essence and determining what practical and emotional features it holds for everyday life and lived experiences.

Husserl's work with phenomenology was so conceptual that he wanted to move beyond just reflecting on conscious to try to understand what it was itself – what supports and makes possible human consciousness of anything at all – called "transcendental" reduction. He wanted to bracket the content of consciousness in order to gaze in wonder at consciousness itself. IPA as a phenomenological process stems more from the eidetic process of trying to focus on experience itself and describing its "particular and essential features" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 14) than from this possibly impossible attempt to understand consciousness itself. For IPA, Husserl's work contributed the notion of focusing centrally on the process of reflection. Because lived experience is the essence of life, the aim of IPA to attempt to "…capture particular experiences as experienced or particular people" is indebted to Husserl's "attentive and systematic examination of the content of consciousness" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 16).

Heidegger. Martin Heidegger, one of Husserl's students, advocated a more interpretivist version of phenomenology, grounded in the lived world – people, things, relationships. He advocated for the use of hermeneutics as a method based on the ontological view that lived experience is an interpretive process and felt that Husserl's phenomenology was too theoretical and abstract. He also proposed that consciousness is not separate from the world of human existence and investigated the meaning of *being*, and "being in the world." Heidegger felt that understanding is a reciprocal (not solo) activity.

Dasein (there-being) is Heidegger's unique term for the experience of human "being" and was the subject of his major work, *Being and Time* (1962/1927). He was exploring the question of existence itself from a worldly perspective. He felt relatedness to the world is a fundamental part of our constitution (Smith et al., 2009). Our being in the world is always in relation to something, therefore, interpretation of participant's meaning-making is central to phenomenological inquiry. Heidegger's shift from Husserl's approach is often cited as the "…beginnings of the hermeneutic and existential emphases in phenomenological philosophy" (p. 16).

Merleu-Ponty. Moving to a more post-positivist interpretation of phenomenology was Merleu-Ponty. His goal was to rediscover the first experience a person has with a phenomenon, called primacy of perception (Racher & Robinson, 2003 as cited in Dowling, 2005, p. 134). Merleu-Ponty advocated reduction to reach the original awareness. He developed the idea of origins – that it is ok to view our personal experiences in a new light relying on the categories of reflective experience (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality). What he shared with Husserl was the notion that the commitment of phenomenology is understanding more about the human experience of being-in-the-world. Where he differed, and shared more overlap with Heidigger, was that context matters. Because we exist in a body that ties us to the essence and origin of all our experiences in the world, it also means that we interpret phenomena through that body. Merleu-Ponty indicated that this also means we can never truly understand the experience of another person because we are not in their body and that position in the world is theirs alone, just as ours is ours (p. 19 – IPA). This has significance in the IPA tradition because our body ends up shading the fundamental character of how we experience and know the world. Merleu-Ponty's contributions to the practice of phenomenology affected the trajectory of the field of

study by moving to the more practical and relational than the abstract and logical arguments of Stevey philosophy.

Sartre. Sartre extended the work on existential phenomenology. He also stressed the developmental and processual aspect of human being in that we are "…always becoming ourselves and that the self is not a pre-existing entity to be discovered…" but that the "…self is an ongoing project to be unfurled" (Smith et al., 1999). Sartre thought the nothingness of life is just as important as the things that are present in terms of who we are and how we see the world around us. Because the experience of being human is more about becoming than being, he believed that individuals have the freedom to choose and are, in essence, responsible for their actions. Sartre extended the concept of worldliness that Heidegger also espoused by fixing the point of personal and social relationships on the presence and absence of relationships to other people (p. 20).

Research Site

Research for this study was conducted at a large, public institution in the Southeastern United States, classified by Carnegie (2018) as a Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity. The institution was in a suburban area with a population that would be vastly smaller without the university. Statistics were not available on the dietary lifestyles of the college population as most collected demographic data in higher education does not include dietary preference. The Dining Services unit of the institution provided detailed lists of foods suitable for vegans on its website as well as a short FAQ answer for those who considering becoming vegetarian or vegan.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

The population from which participants were drawn at the university were college students who were vegan. For the purposes of this study, vegan was defined as choosing

intentionally not to consume any animal products for food or commodity (not even occasionally or as a "cheat"). This study aimed to understand a specific type of experience and not all persons would have been able to detail their experiences with veganism in college if they were not, in fact, vegan. Because the purpose of this study was to understand and describe a particular group, college vegans, in depth, the selection procedure was homogeneous and "…focus[ed] on candidates who share[d] similar traits or specific characteristics" (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Participants were recruited through publicly-displayed fliers around campus, emails sent to appropriate student list-servs and Facebook groups, and direct communication with/solicitation of the animal rights student group on campus. Participation in the study was voluntary and took place during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Because veganism itself is often a direct adoption of a specific ethic that one respects and values and hopes others will also respect and value, I wanted to carefully consider ethics of interacting with my participants. In my demographic survey, I did my best to design for any and all entry of options (including text entry) as to not restrict categories to dominant norms (i.e. race/ethnicity, gender, etc.). Participants were given instructions to freely discuss all details about their experience with being vegan. They were advised as part of IRB and informed consent that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could exit at any time with no repercussions. I also wanted to acknowledge the power and privilege that my being an employee of the university they attended may have put onto our time together during interviews. I checked with each one to be sure they were comfortable doing the interview on campus. I also shared my story with them about being vegan and studying student affairs and how my learning experiences prompted me to investigate this further as a social identity that is not often talked about. Even sharing the same avowed social identity, I realized that their ethics and experiences may not fully

converge with mine. This did happen and I discuss it in both my example of bracketing comments and in the Discussion sections.

Pertaining to the previously discussed issue of the definition of veganism, a clarification was added to the demographic survey to ensure that potential participants understood this study was seeking those who are fully vegan, as a result of my first (wonderful) interview where it turned out the participant was not fully vegan because they ate fish and seafood several times a year under certain conditions. The revision asked participants to confirm or deny the following statement:

> *I am fully vegan (meaning I do not intentionally consume or use animal products or byproducts in my everyday life.) This means I do not eat any fish, dairy, cheese, or other animal products,* ***even occasionally****. I do not have "cheat" meals or days where I consume animal products or byproducts. I may have clothing, shoes, beauty, or home products from before I was vegan that I continue to use but I do not actively purchase animal-product items now.*

I reissued the recruitment materials (one flier) but already had eight participants and several others interested at the time of clarification so re-recruitment was not necessary. The edit to the recruitment text was communicated to those who had expressed interest in participating and they were asked to acknowledge their agreement with it as part of their demographic survey. If they had already filled out a demographic survey, I emailed them the new verbiage and asked them to verify that they still met the qualifications. All acknowledged that they did either on the survey or via email.

Participants

I received a lot of interest in participation in the study in a short period of time (relative to college student schedules and announcement/information overload), which was very exciting. Thirteen students responded to the recruitment materials. Aiming to stay within the already-enlarged number for an IPA study, I chose to limit the interviews to 10 participants. Two participants missed their interview and were unable to reschedule or did not follow up, which allowed me to accommodate two others who had responded after the maximum had already been reached. I did not want to turn away prospective participants or not be able to interview everyone who had contacted me. Because I felt students were probably not given many chances to talk about this social identity in this way, it felt terrible to exclude anyone. I even emailed my committee chair and asked if there was any possible way to "interview" them digitally – i.e. through a chat type forum that would produce a "transcript" of our conversation, or by turning the interview protocol into an "asynchronous" interview where they responded in their desired level of detail in writing. We determined it would be best to limit the research to the original format of in-person interviews so as not to be overwhelmed by information and unable to dive deeply into their experiences in analysis.

The final sample was comprised of eight female and two male undergraduate students. Primarily, students were white and had been enrolled in college for several years at the time of the study. The majority were vegetarian before becoming vegan. Many participants were part of the campus animal rights student group, though this was not captured as part of the demographic information. Only one student had experience with someone in their family being vegetarian or

vegan while they were growing up, though one mentioned that her older brother also tried veganism with her when she did as a high schooler. Participant demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Year in College	GPA	Vegan for (years)	Veggie Before Vegan?	Veg/ Vegan Family Member?
Annie	Female	22	White	Fifth +	3.78	1 year, 3 months	Yes – 3 years	No
Dylan	Male	21	White	Third	3	3	Yes – 3 years	No
Callan	Female	20	White	Third	3.65	1 year, 10 months	Yes – 2 years	No
Lily	Female	18	White	First	N/A	2.5	No	No
Pam	Female	20	White	Third	3.7	1.5	Yes – 3 years	No
Sarah	Female	22	White	Fifth +	3.45	3	No	No
Jesse	Female	21	White	Fourth	3	1.5	Yes - 1.5 years	No
Carol	Female	19	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	Second	3.76	4	Yes – 3 years	No Answer
Anna	Female	21	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	Fourth	3.67	1	Yes – 2 years	Yes – sister in 2015
Steve	Male	21	White	Third	3.33	3 years	No	No

Data Collection

Following the method of phenomenological interviewing for IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), the semi-structured, one-to-one interview format allowed me to establish rapport and empathy, allowed a greater flexibility of coverage, and allowed the interview to go into areas that participants co-constructed, while providing rich data. Interviews took place face-to-face with each participant and were scheduled ahead of time. Though one aspect of semi-structured

interviews is that they can "…last for a considerable amount of time…and become intense and involved…" (Smith & Osborn, 2008), mine ranged from 25 to 50 minutes in length, Participants were asked semi-structured questions that encouraged them to focus on the unique experience they have had with being vegan in college and describe it in detail. Questions were asked in basic language and framed so that a college student could easily answer. I had prompts prepared to probe for more information during questions I anticipated may prove more challenging (See Appendix A for Interview Protocol).

The number of participants for this study was 10, larger than the ideal sample size (three to six) suggested for IPA (Smith et al., 2009), but enough to satisfy the typical number of interviews (between four and ten) to provide "…sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants, but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated" (p. 51). Smith et al. (2009) also cautioned against simply seeing a higher number of interviews as being indicative of "better" work due to the fact that successful analysis requires time, reflection, and dialogue, all of which can be inhibited with larger datasets, especially among less experienced researchers (p. 52).

IPA guides the researcher to ask questions about people's understandings, experiences, and sense-making activities and to situate these within specific contexts rather than between them. In other words: *How do people in situation X understand process Y?* The interview protocol (Appendix A) provides questions that helped me understand how vegan college students understand, experience, and make sense of their veganism. The research questions are restated for clarity and connection in the interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Because "…the phenomenological researcher is interested in describing the fundamental structure of the experience (essence) for the whole group of participants," (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 448) the features of being a vegan college student that are experienced in common and individually were explored and analyzed. The analytical goal of IPA is to direct "…attention towards how our participants' attempts to make sense of their experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79). Meaning is central, and my goal was to understand the complexity, not frequency, of meanings for participants. Even though IPA is most concerned with participants' lived experiences and resulting meaning-making, the "…end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking…" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80).

Data analysis occurred throughout the study, as early as data collection stages, with reflection on my preconceptions about veganism and attempts to bracket them so that I could grasp the full, experiential world of each participant. Next, a six-step process of analyzation occurred. Step One consisted of transcription and recollection. First, the interviews were transcribed using advanced speech recognition software services from *Trint*, *Spext*, and *Temi*. I studied transcription services in a digital qualitative research course and read articles about manual transcription versus automated so I was interested to use this research project as an opportunity to sample these services. I utilized various speech recognition transcription services to see which one was able to output the most accurate version of the actual interview (*Temi*, incidentally). The services also provide an opportunity for transcription without a third party hearing the data, which protects privacy. While I did not perform the initial transcription, I did listen to each interview to manually correct the speech recognition transcript output, as it is never 100% accurate to what was actually said. This listening provided an additional opportunity to

reflect on the interview and hear the voice of the participant again. While a verbatim record of the data-collection event (interview) is required by IPA, transcription does not have to include all "…prosodic aspects of the recordings" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 74). Smith et al. (2009) suggested the act of transcription is interpretive and that transcribing information (pause length, non-verbal utterances, etc.) which will not be analyzed is pointless. The intent of transcript analysis is to interpret the meaning of the content.

The continuation of step one consisted of reading and re-reading the transcripts (and listening to audio recordings of interviews) to connect me to each participant and ensure that they became the focus of analysis. I also jotted down or made digital memos of powerful recollections I had from the interviews or while reading the transcripts in order to bracket them off. For example, when I was writing my notes about the experiences of each participant, I noticed commonalities and differences to my own story and process of becoming vegan. I knew I had to find a way to vent those feelings and recollections so that they did not cloud my thinking while engaging in this personal journey with the participants. I also found myself asking some questions of the data, which led to other questions, and then others. I wrote these down so that I could a) make myself aware of my role in the process of interpretation and b) to check back later to see if the data provided any details that may answer or support them. Some sample bracketing notes were:

- Identity theme: *Do they understand what identity is? Do I? Did I ask this question right? How does this tie to lifestyle?*
- Social relations theme: *My experiences with social relations around veganism seem so different because I know almost no one who is vegan. And I didn't then either. How do community, support, and social stuff fit together? Should I divide*

them or should I see if THEY divide them somehow – are they naturally divided when I interpret their experiences?

- Specific Event: T*oday my participant told me about their major and how the department has made some of the activities involving animals optional. However, they chose to participate and rationalized it to me by explaining that seeing a hurt animal was tolerable in that instance because it was "stressed". It was really hard for me to sit there with a straight face and not react because in my mind I'm thinking – "The only reason that animal was "stressed" was because humans took it and put it in an unfamiliar environment to study or tag or whatever.* ☹"

IPA suggests using the idiographic approach to analyze the first case before moving to others, if there is more than one participant. Step Two began with annotation by highlighting (on the paper transcript) interesting/significant responses from the participants' experience and perspective on their world. I also jotted down comments around descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual ideas at this time. Descriptive comments focus on content – words, phrases and explanations that indicate what matters to the participant. Taking what was said at face value and highlighting important things that make up the participants' worlds was key in this step. For example, many participants used similar words and phrases to describe how they feel perceived by others – crazy, judgmental, hostile, preachy, pushy, etc. I noted these and thought about how their frequency and weight for the students. Linguistic commenting notes what type of language was used. Does the produced transcript reflect how each participant presented content and meaning? Linguistic comments can include ways in which language and content seem connected through use of metaphor (may have potential for discussion of more conceptual meanings), use of pronouns, laughter, repetition, tone, and more. I did not have as many linguistic comments as

the other types but did mark where the participants were repetitive – often around how strongly they felt about spreading vegan outreach but shut down due to the unpopularity of the overall lifestyle and movement.

Conceptual comments may result in further questions on the part of the researcher and attempts to interpret the transcript at a conceptual level. There may be a shift in this part of the analysis to the participants' "…overarching understanding of the matter they are discussing" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 88). Smith et al. (2009) also indicate that this part of the process may include personal reflection because interpretation drawn at this stage will likely involve the researcher's own experiential or professional knowledge. I reflected on the conceptual themes that were presented by the participants. Though I had made every attempt to bracket my preconceptions and feelings about this subject matter, it is obviously important to me as a shareholder of the avowed social identity. Thematically, I saw concepts of adoption of a lifestyle reflected back that did align with some of my experiences as well.

Step Three was to return to the start of the transcript and work again to document emerging theme titles in a concise manner (phrases that aim to capture the essential quality of what was described). Themes are recurring patterns of meaning (ideas, thoughts, feelings) throughout the text. Themes are likely to identify both something that *matters* to the participants (i.e. an object of concern, topic of some import) and convey something about the *meaning* of that thing, for the participants. There was no requirement to produce themes – though the number of themes that emerged indicated the "richness" of a passage/section of the transcript. A sampling of rough themes I came up with in this step are identity, motivation, accessibility, stereotypes, desire for community/to be heard, preparation/planning, recommendations, navigating feelings,

how to react to others, etc. While IPA traditionally uses the margins of the paper for this process, I used separate pieces of paper to record my rough themes to be able to have enough space to write and process.

In Step Four, I looked for connections across the emerging themes. Because the themes were currently just in the order in which they appeared in the transcripts, mapping them and how they fit together was a key step in this stage of analysis. Connections can typically be found through abstraction (putting like with like and developing a new name for the super-ordinate theme), subsumption (when an emergent theme acquires super-ordinate status as it brings together other related themes), polarization (finding oppositional relationships by focusing on difference instead of similarity), contextualization (identifying the contextual or narrative elements of the themes), numeration (indicates frequency with which themes appear throughout the transcript), and/or function (viewing themes as a distinct way the participant is presenting themselves during the interview). Most of my work in this phase was connecting thorough abstraction and numeration. Many participants communicated similar experiences in different terminology and different presentations. Again, I used separate pieces of paper for this process. While I have been exposed to digital software for qualitative research, I do not have expert skill and I felt more connected to flipping through the transcripts and making notes from them since I had started the process with paper.

Step Five consisted of restarting these analytical processes with the next participant transcript until each was complete. Finally, Step Six is where I attempted to identify patterns across all of the cases in the study (again, using handwritten notes on paper). An interesting aspect of IPA is the "double hermeneutic" that occurred as I attempted to make sense of the participants making sense of their experience (Giddens, 1982). In IPA, strong analysis aims to

balance phenomenological description with insightful interpretation and grounds these interpretations in the participants' accounts for authenticity and transparency. Because I was not sure any of these participants had ever been asked to talk about this social identity before in an educational setting or in any detail, the double hermeneutic was of particular interest to me. I have found, for myself, that being asked to explain my reasoning or choices aloud can be both exhilarating and daunting. If not being asked to speak about it specifically, I am not sure that participants would fully understand the nature of the "avowed" portion of this identity, how it is a social identity, and how to make sense of their experiences in the larger context of both college and their lives.

Qualitative Strength

Amid scrutiny to produce research that "measures up" in a quantitative fashion, qualitative research methods offer the chance to highlight high quality and important work from a justification other than comparison. My goal in this section is to demonstrate the quality of my study by describing the rigor and usefulness. In qualitative research, "Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

This study aimed for trustworthiness by presenting a robust review of literature related to veganism and college students from available scholarly and public sources. Though I had a committee supporting me, I was the sole researcher, and therefore did not check interpretations or themes, nor have discussions with anyone else regarding my findings and analysis. I asked questions and engaged in peer debriefing with several committee members but I did not rely on them to take part in the research study as co-investigators. I attempted to acknowledge my

subjectivity from the beginning of the work, both in writing in this document and in thought processes and design. I also practiced reflexivity by constantly thinking about my experience and identities that came into this research project with me under the tenets of IPA. If another researcher who was not vegan re-created my study, they may arrive at completely different conclusions. While traditionally studies should aim for enough clarity of description that results could be repeated, this potential "…differing analysis may provide the insight, engagement, and nuance that is necessary to better understand a particular social science phenomenon" (Rose & Johnson, 2018). I attempted to provide a detailed account of my analysis procedure so that it could be followed step-by-step if desired in a replication study.

I highly value authenticity and I aimed to be as authentic as possible in this work. I was honest with the participants about my own background, including some of my questions and concerns around the lack of research in this area. I chose a subject matter that is uncommon to the field of student affairs, though certainly it is welcoming under-researched topics to better serve students as each day passes. In my findings section, participants experiences are quoted verbatim in to support my analytic interpretation (Smith et al., 2009) so readers can experience exactly what they said in their own vocabulary and with their own authenticity. Using multiple data sources (different participants) with the same method (interview technique) contributes to internal validity since each brought their different experience and perspective to the resulting data. Collecting and being able to produce a trail of evidence for another to follow logically presents opportunity for an independent audit (Smith et al., 2009, p. 183), ensuring that the account produced is a credible one. Though the aim of an independent audit is not to confirm or claim [T]ruth, it provides a number of ways that the project is legitimate and ensures transparency.

Conclusion

It has been suggested in previous research (Parks & Evans, 2014) that supporting vegan students on campus is the responsibility of administrators. That they are they are the solely responsible party or only support system that is needed is doubtful but remains a topic for further consideration. This study used a constructivist, qualitative lens and interpretative phenomenological methods to describe college students' experiences of being vegan.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Most noticeable during the interviews for this project was how excited the participants were to have someone ask them to talk in detail about their veganism. They all had interest in the topic, obviously, but it seemed like they may not have had much opportunity to talk about it freely most of the time. The act of being heard, valued, and listened to was overwhelmingly significant. The students were all willing to share what they wish people knew about college vegans in the hopes that they may make it easier for another vegan college student to consider trying it out, as well as just to inform the general population at large. Jesse commented, "…this is something that I don't get to talk about a lot…". Pam communicated that she had a hard time finding research on veganism for a project in her psychology class so knew she wanted to participate if she had the opportunity. Steve said that he thought it "…would be interesting to just kind of share and be heard I guess" (L17-18). Table 1 detailed the participant demographics.

Introductions: "I love the vegan life!"

To best understand the experiences of the participants as vegan college students, I first asked them to tell me about how they became vegan, which serves as a powerful introduction to their unique selves. Though I did not ask for specific details about their motivation, almost all ended up sharing their reasons when telling the story. Many described how they first went vegan for one reason (i.e. health) but then ended up adopting one or more of the other mainstream reasons (environmentalism, ethics) in addition. Some motivations were deeply personal. Their stories provide a robust introduction to the participants.

Anna shared that after seeing graphic footage of a cow being abused and hearing about how the dairy industry is built on rape of animals from vegan author and speaker, Jenny Brown, it really "got to her" and "stuck with her", especially being a victim of sexual violence herself. Lily also witnessed factory farming footage and felt a "shocking…impact" that led her to want to become vegan. Evidence of the cognitive dissonance that they experienced upon learning about how animals are produced for food will be discussed in greater detail in following sections.

Steve and Sarah shared intimate details about having severe intestinal pain and issues that led them to try being vegan for health reasons and both had dramatic improvement in symptoms. Annie read *The China Study* and felt that "…it just made more sense to do it than not do to it" and that her health reason is immediately backed up by the ethical implications – "it just makes more sense to me having those together. Carol felt motivated by health reasons initially and Jesse felt she could not really say exactly why she decided – "it just clicked" and after watching a vegan YouTube blogger, she became vegetarian and eventually vegan. Dylan, Carol, and Callan all felt that becoming vegan was in line with their beliefs and that those beliefs required a change in action. Dylan commented that, "Veganism is the moral baseline of what I should be doing…causing no actual extra harm is the least I can do".

Several participants, including Lily, Callan, and Pam also mentioned that they went vegan after coming to college because the freedom to make their own decisions and choices better accommodated being vegan, both in daily practice and a more understanding/forgiving environment (lack of misunderstanding or support from family). The general process, for them of family life in high school, including shared family meals, limited kitchen space, and lack of decision-making in purchasing groceries and personal care products, made being vegan either difficult or impossible. Most families were not outright critical but many did not understand

and/or felt it was “unhealthy” (Jesse). Pam felt it was easier to wait until she was able to buy all of her own groceries to commit to veganism and Callan also specifically stated that buying her own groceries was a key component. Dylan also mentioned that his participation in this study, was in part, to contribute to the understanding of motivations to “…better encourage other people to do it also.” Regardless of the initial motivation, almost all participants mentioned more than one of the “Big Three” (ethical, environmental, health) reasons as to why they are still vegan. How those values and choices guide their vegan lifestyles has manifested differently and is visible through changes they have made in their practice over the time that they have been vegan.

The experiences of college student vegans in this study clustered into themes based on meaning-making and the ways in which they described being vegan in college, especially as it pertained to their social lives and the impact of food. Specifically, the first theme, growth through change, emerged as they made meaning of finding that their reasons for being/staying vegan evolved from whatever initially prompted them to try it. This included subthemes of progression in both reason/motivation for being vegan and from making simple diet changes to choosing full lifestyle practices. The second theme that was revealed was identification of a vegan identity. The third theme revolved around stereotypes and behaviors predicted from an ascribed identity. It included in manifestations of how others treated and viewed them for being vegan (crazy and other negative identifiers) and the balancing act of talking about being vegan. The fourth theme revealed how social interactions shape their lives as college student vegans, including various markers of positive community/support and numerous strategies for managing negative interactions. Finally, the impact of food is discussed – including the social nature of eating and food, preparation/planning, and accessibility.

Growth Through Change: "It was a learning curve."

Changes in their veganism over time happened for each participant differently but the majority reported that there had been changes. Some, like Pam and Callan, mentioned that they moved from eating primarily vegan "convenience" or "junk" foods to being more informed about cooking and nutrition. Pam also mentioned that one aspect of her veganism that had changed was accommodating the desire for fresh, healthy food on a college student budget. Dylan volunteered that as his vegan diet evolved, he began to eat more fruits and vegetables. Moving beyond just the static dietary changes required the participants to think more deeply about why they had become vegan in the first place and when change was occurring for them, processing how it affected them both internally and externally.

Reason/Motivation

As previously mentioned, most participants felt that they had a primary motivation for wanting to become vegan – whether that stemmed from seeing a vegan YouTube blogger and being impressed or curious or hearing an animal rights activist speak and feeling discomfort with their current lifestyle. Pam, Carol, and Steve felt that for whatever reason their veganism began, it was added to by other motivations upon learning more from vegan peers and resources. Steve knew that his health improved greatly when he started but once he started doing research, acknowledged that "…it really started to evolve into…this other aspect of being vegan not just for myself but like for other living beings" (L55). Carol felt skeptical about admitting that her initial reason was health and fitness related and commented, "…as you keep researching more, you fall in love with the cause for animals…and then you learn about all the environmental reasons" (L18-19). Pam went vegan mostly for environmental reasons but after not eating meat for a time, started to feel the pull towards the animal rights/ethics side of the choice. She added,

"…[O]nce you realize how easy it is to not eat animals, it feels a lot worse when people do…". (L51-52). Education and research as part of the vegan lifestyle are normally ongoing, as one meets other vegans and finds a community of like-minded individuals with which to practice and share. Evolution of reasons for choosing and maintaining a vegan diet can stem from these conversations and sharing.

From Diet to Lifestyle

Changing from the dominant eating norm to veganism can be difficult to adjust to. Many of the students talked about transitioning over time from meat-eating diets to vegetarian to vegan. Others committed almost wholly on the spot or did not have as much transition time. Regardless, many mentioned that one way in which their veganism changed was by moving from solely a dietary goal to a completely lifestyle decision. Mostly this happened in the form of educating themselves about products and purchases other than food and choosing items without animal products or byproducts.

Annie commented that she "…tried to keep changing more and more things about my life…and trying to change the way I buy things in general even if they're not animal-based products…to reduce my environmental impact overall" (L44-48). Jesse actually used the word "lifestyle" to describe how her veganism has changed, stating " I've made it a goal for myself to try to get better," and calling it a progression of "…getting more and more fully into the lifestyle…" (L19-22). Several of the female participants mentioned changing in terms of the way they purchase bath and body products. Anna said she thought about "cosmetics or clothes" and how she was still working to learn more after only having been vegan for a year. Callan and Lily also mentioned vegan makeup. Lily and Sarah both spoke about vegan and cruelty-free shampoo and conditioner, cleaning products, and clothes, adding "I've definitely tried to make…my whole

existence vegan at this point…" (Lily, L59-60) and "I have transitioned to be…more conscious about other items in my life besides food." (Sarah, L62-63).

The group overall presented aligning accounts about how their veganism has led to changes in other areas of their lives and has progressed from simply avoiding animal products in food to being more conscious consumers in all aspects of their lives.

Vegan Identity: "One of the first things I would say about myself."

All participants except Dylan had a visible reaction when I asked them if they felt like veganism tied into their identity and communicated that it meant a lot (Pam), was very important to them (Lily, Anna), and was a big part of their identity (Jesse, Sarah). Carol made me laugh with her response of, "Oh yeah! Are you kidding me?!". There was an interesting mix of reports of it feeling so "normal" that they didn't even think about it (Annie) to being "constantly aware of it" and trying to make others around him more aware (Steve). Others described it as part of their identity as outright fervor and passion of it being a conscious choice (Sarah). Students mentioned that veganism "shapes what I do/how I do things" (Annie), "my actions reflect my veganism" (Annie), and that it is "speaking my truth"
(Carol).

Here again, some participants described it as part of their identity in the transition they have made since becoming vegan. Steve described it for him as "…when you've been in a routine with being vegan and it more so becomes a lifestyle…you can't just stop living that life…" (L336-337). Several talked about it being one of the first ways they would describe themselves (Pam) as well as one of the first ways others would describe and/or introduce them (Carol). Sarah shared that most of her friends and activities outside of school and work revolve around being vegan and that she now looks for people with those same interests. Steve said that

his veganism in relation to his identity is not something he can turn on and off and Sarah acknowledged that it has given her a sense of self-discipline and follow-through in other areas of her life. Annie mentioned that her veganism has influenced people close to her and that they "…have started changing their habits without me really intervening at all" (L155). The adoption of veganism as a lifestyle and social identity may have greater effect by modeling action than talking about it.

Stereotypes of an Ascribed Identity: "Play Nice Vegan or Angry Outraged Vegan"

Grotevant (1992) distinguished a chosen identity as one that arises out of choices made available to a person in their social contexts. Guided by cultural identity theory (CIT), cultural identity enactment tenets state that *ascribed* identities are "…attributed, assigned, or labeled by others to one's groups" and avowed identities are enacted by an individual to represent themselves as a group member to others (Simmons & Chen, 2014, p, 21). A clear connection to the general, if not personal, vegan identity, for participants was consistent throughout their interview responses in relation to how their decisions, actions, and words play out with other people. Being a vegan in college for the participants meant dealing with questions and judgments from and interactions with other people.

We're Not All Crazy

The prevailing report from the students was descriptions of what they are presumed to be by others. Sadly, almost all of the adjectives they used to convey how they feel they are perceived were negative. Judgmental, crazy*, shaming*, critical, pushy*, preachy, in your face, angry, talks all the time, and aggressive were descriptors and some were used by more than one participant(*). The assumptions about vegans often affected behavior because the college vegans felt like they cannot just be who they are. They also reported an interesting dynamic that often

affects those passionate about a cause that is unpopular – it is annoying and frustrating to witness hypocrisy in others around beliefs and actions but because of a negative stereotype, they do not free to call others out with that frustration.

Pam reported that she has been surprised how many people respond positively to her veganism but that some people think she is "…gonna be crazy" even though it is not necessarily that they have a problem with veganism itself. She continued by saying, "I think they think I'm going to have a problem with them because they're not vegan…like be judgmental or criticize them for their choices" (L104-107). Jesse also had mostly positive interactions with non-vegans but did say that sometimes during her outreach activities with the animal rights activist group on campus, she expected someone to try to agitate her "…maybe the people that have negative opinions just kind of avoid us…" (L92-93).

Talking About It

There is also an interesting dichotomy for vegan college students because their veganism, on one hand, reportedly allows them to have closer connection with others who are like them, but on the other, drives many non-vegans away because of the purported stereotyping. Dylan commented that it is "…difficult to talk to people without it seeming like I'm just trying to be right and they're wrong..." but that even just asking questions instead of "…monologuing about how it is morally reprehensible…" can backfire because "…some people still take inquiring questions as aggression even when it's not intended to be" (L110-140). Sarah described her experiences as a choice between being the "…nice friendly, play-nice vegan…or the angry, outraged vegan" (L123-124) and that how vegans react to situations often gives other people an idea of who you are. Others echoed this sentiment and indicated that they often have to keep

"…talking about it to a minimum unless people ask…" (Lily, L155) due to the "pushy" stereotype about vegans talking about their veganism all the time.

Anna shared that she was "…very vocal about it at first because you get so passionate…and you want to tell the world your decision and why…but then that like dies down because you realize not everyone wants to hear it" (L87-90). Callan said she tries not to be a person who brings up her veganism as the first topic in every conversation but that she will be "…very serious and blunt when…talking about it" (L110) if it does eventually come up. Steve also communicated that he does not often volunteer that he is vegan but when it does come up, he experiences the routine (for vegans) stereotypical comments such as, "That must be so hard!" and "I could never give up cheese".

Many participants conveyed that, often, nonvegans just do not understand the diet or lifestyle or both and the stereotypes can creep in from that ignorance and not from a place of real hatred. While some participants mentioned that they will get genuine questions of curiosity or wanting to be more informed, many said that others do not want to hear about veganism or expect that as a vegan it is the only thing you will talk about all the time. Carol referenced one of the common stereotypes in that her community with other vegans has made veganism easier because they "…get what I'm talking about. And I don't sound like a crazy person" (L30-31). There are memes on social media about vegans talking about being vegan all the time. The issue of not being able to speak out authentically in support of a movement in which one believes in order to not jeopardize that movement was striking.

Social Interaction: "So, you lose some, you win some."

Understanding the social life of college vegans was a goal of this study, both to understand how/if the vegan identity affects social relations and to understand how vegans

process social relations in a way that may be different than they did previously. Not surprisingly, participants indicated that they have both positive and negative social interactions around being vegan. Because college is a time of exploration, including in social boundaries, roles, relationships, connections and more, understanding the impact that the lifestyle choice of veganism has on these opportunities is important. It also turned out to be meaningful for every participant.

Positive Community and Support

While it was discussed previously and will be discussed further that interaction with others (nonvegans) can often bring feelings of guilt, frustration or anger, many participants reported positive benefits in terms of their social life as a vegan college student. Dylan felt that veganism is a positive experience that allows him to connect to other people. The themes that best captured the positive impact of veganism on social interactions revolved around like-mindedness, support, and opportunities for new relationships.

Like-Mindedness. Most participants talked about the positivity of finding a community of other "like-minded" (Sarah, Jesse) people with similar values, interests, activities, and ethics in veganism. Many participants were members of the same animal rights student group on campus and cited this as a source of support and community. Meeting other vegan students was also beneficial when they were learning and needing support as new vegans. Once they felt the happiness and support that vegan peers had to offer, they began to choose activities and friends based on those similarities. Callan stated that she had very few close friends that ate meat and that most of her vegan and vegetarian friends "…just happened through having similar interests…and ethics" (L78). Several other participants reflected in agreement about how exciting it was to find other vegans and then be able to network because of the same values.

Making it Easier. Being about to connect with other vegans or supportive players in a positive manner made being vegan easier for participants. Dylan described how being part of the animal rights group on campus made being vegan easier "…just because you know people that share your experiences" (L36-37). Steve spoke at length about being the only vegan in a campus club and navigating situations in which he felt isolated but that being able to go and eat with some club members who were vegetarian provided some relief. He said, "[I]t was cool to know that there was that other group of people…not necessarily vegan but like were close enough that we could eat at a similar restaurant…and I guess fit in…I bonded with them" (L199-202). Jesse mentioned that the support network of the animal rights group was super helpful and encouraging because she "…didn't really know anyone else who was vegetarian so it was really hard to motivate…" (L26-27).

More/New Social Opportunities. Some participants mentioned how becoming/being vegan gave them the opportunity to make new friends and meet new people who were similar to themselves. Annie talked about how her veganism "…opened up some fun new opportunities for [her] non-vegan friends…" like eating at vegetarian/vegan restaurants and how "…they got to experience something they would not have tried otherwise". She also spoke about opportunities to connect with the online vegan community via following and direct messaging Instagrammers and admitted that if she was in a pinch and needed someone to talk to, she would feel comfortable reaching out in that way.

Sarah described that one of her opportunities to meet other college vegans came from participation in student groups outside of the animal rights one on campus, commenting, "…I actually know a lot of vegans in that group [student drug policy advocacy group] too…a lot of my experiences being a vegan in college has been like very hand in hand with drug policy" (L39-

42). Dylan also reference this same drug policy group in relation to the fact that on campus, veganism is "barely a presence" (L188) other than in "…student groups that are promoting liberal causes" (L189). Sarah also talked about how her veganism impacts people she is not friends with, mentioning that "…it sparks an interest or curiosity…I can at least kind of educate them some…" (L240-241). Perhaps providing new social opportunities for college vegans can move in both directions in terms of meeting people, making friends, and/or engaging in conversation around what veganism entails.

Supportive Others. Though several participants mentioned that their families were not supportive, whether due to ignorance about veganism or a strong attachment to meat-eating culture, several did have familial support and that feels important to share. Even if not initially supportive, family members may learn more about veganism as a student moves through it and understand what supportive actions they can enact to help, if not be outrightly in favor of. For example, Steve said that his mom "…really got behind it…like behind wanting to help me out…" (L73) and that when he went home to visit, she would go to the store and get him some tofu. Callan talked about her mom's support of sending her to back to college with "…a whole bunch of groceries because she knew I was going to start being vegan" (L68-69). Annie shared that some of her family is better at being understanding and supportive than others. For example, she said her mom "…is very accommodating…75 percent of the stuff we made last Thanksgiving was vegan. We made specific vegan things that everyone could enjoy like a green bean casserole and Tofurky roast" (L339-341). The power that supportive others, especially family members, have to life up a college student who is vegan cannot be understated.

Managing Negative Interactions

Sadly, participants also talked about the negative social effects of being vegan in college. As previously mentioned, when the passion for new vegans dies down upon discovering that many nonvegans do not want to hear about it, it seems this almost turns into a desire for invisibility after some time. Participants mentioned feelings of not wanting to draw attention to themselves – whether that be during conversations (not bringing up their veganism) or during ordering food at restaurant (having the waitress come to them so they don't have to ask for accommodations across a table full of other people – "like my little specific needs I'd rather not like broadcast to everyone else" L 327-328: Annie). They talked about having to learn how to navigate social situations, issues of feeling like they fit in and the ability to bond with others in a non-familiar social situation, especially if they need or want accommodations during that experience. More than one participant mentioned how many people seem to be ignorant about veganism and may ask questions that can throw them off-guard (Sarah – "Does that mean you don't fart?" L228; Callan - "Like what about fish? Fish is not really an animal." L183; Pam G. – "How do you get your protein" L214-215). From judgment to shame to outright shunning, the college student vegans in this study were all able to connect some aspect of their social lives to negative experiences. While almost all mentioned some negative effects about being vegan overall in college, a few shared stories of personal loss relating to friendships. Other themes around negative social interactions that arose were lack of support from nonvegans and lack of respect around the choice.

Loss of Friends/Strain on Relationships. Students mentioned being surprised at the loss of valuable personal friendships due to their choice to become vegan. Anna spoke in detail about "cutting/blocking off" some friends after becoming vegan when they talked about how it was a

burden to not be able to go out to eat at certain places and started avoiding inviting her to social meal outings because they knew she would not have options. When I probed how that made her feel, she responded, "…unimportant. Not valued as a person or a friend really…just kind of tossed to the side" (L142-143). Jesse also mentioned that she felt "…at times it's [veganism] a little bit inconvenient almost to them [friends], which is kind of like this unspoken thing between us" (L74-75).

Carol had a similar story in that her group of high school friends kicked her out of their group message when she started sharing information after attending the animal rights student group and feeling emboldened because there were others with whom she had commonalities. She shared that the boys were the ones who kicked her out, claiming "…meat is macho" (L106) and that eventually some of the girls added her back in. She commented further that she was shocked how easily they shut her out, stating, "I feel like a lot of them started looking at me differently because I spoke up about something that I believed in and they don't like that" (L107-108).

Non-Supportive Others. Lack of support is a negative interaction that participants felt from various sources in their social lives. As mentioned previously, this may be with lighthearted "jokes" that still needle and question the choice to be vegan, or it may be bold and flippant remarks meant to provoke and inflame. Several students mentioned their family or extended family being unsupportive. Jesse stated early in her interview that her family was "meat-centric" and that her parents were "kind of very opposed" to her becoming vegan (L7-8). This lack of support meant that Jesse often had difficultly "dealing" with her family but because they lived out of state, she said that she did not see them that often except for holidays (often still controversial because they are food-centric!). Steve also mentioned that he "…grew up in a family that ate a lot of meat…". Some, like Annie, reported that even in the best of situations (for

her, church choir and classes with very close peers) where people know she is vegan and are mostly supportive, they still poke fun at her in a "lighthearted" way via stereotyping around the standard American diet, suggesting she needs "…some protein like steak or beef or something…". From jokes by friends to outright criticism by naysayers, college vegans seem to face opposition in almost every environment other than community with other vegans.

Anna communicated that being in an animal-related major, her veganism "…always seems to work its way into the conversation…and can get contradictory…" because hunting or activities involving non-human animal use are a big part of many other students' identity. Carol said explicitly when asked what has made being vegan in college harder for her that "…the social aspect is always the hardest part. People ask questions not because they want to learn but because they want to get something out of you." (L38-39).

Lack of Support/Respect. Steve described an interesting situation he experienced in regard to a lack of respect around his choice to be vegan in terms of being a member of student club on campus that collected dues and often purchased food with them but did not provide him vegan options even though aware that he was vegan. This "never being included in the norm" is often cited by college students who chose to write or share about their life as a vegan (DeMent, 2017). They cited lack of budget or ability to provide vegan food but he felt his membership in the club and contribution of funds meant that he should experience the same respect as others and be provided with even simple snack foods like hummus and carrots. He communicated that he was also accused of "caring more about food than his major" when he tried to bring it up informally and that while he understands "...it's a hard idea to understand for some people…", that the lack of support can be isolating in that setting.

Annie conveyed how lack of support and true understanding of how hard it can be for vegans to honor their beliefs in the face of the majority of society not wanting to know about it, affected her personally in another way. After seeing graphic footage from animal rescuers in the Carolinas, she felt she had a duty to share how situations of large-scale animal destruction are handled. She asked a trusted friend for advice and was told that basically there is no way to do it without making other people uncomfortable. I asked how that lack of support for something she had so much passion to share made her feel and she responded:

> It kind of felt like I was being shut down for wanting to share something I thought was very important. So sometimes it's tough to bring up things I'm passionate about regarding veganism because I worry that it won't go over well or it's like too much. It paints a bad light on me for sharing. (L211-214).

Even though she loved and trusted this person, their opinion and support of her mattered. She told me that she did not end up sharing the images after being unable to reconcile how to do it "tactfully". When I probed further to ask if she felt her responsibility as a vegan was to care about tact, she responded "Yes," linking back to the way that college student vegans feel they have to act and behave to help further the movement and not harm it due to stereotypes and mis-labeling.

Veganism and Food: "Publix has like four kinds of vegan cheese!"

If one were to Google search memes or jokes about vegans, there is a high chance that something derogatory will come up about how vegans cannot stop talking about their veganism or their vegan food. In her new stand-up comedy special, *Relatable*, Ellen DeGeneres (2018) said, "I'm not really vegan. I say it for the joke," despite having actually been truly vegan for eight years prior. Because all vegans, regardless of motivation, have food patterns in common, it

is not surprising that food is a realistic and opportunistic topic of conversation, even for celebrities. I specifically asked my participants about food because I wanted to know how being vegan in college affects food dynamics but I suspect that even if I had not, our interviews would not have progressed without discussion of food. Dietary identity will always revolve around food choices to a large extent. Participants spoke about and processed their veganism in terms of food according to how if affected their social interaction, the need for preparation, and the accessibility of vegan options in todays' society and their immediate contexts.

Social Connections

All of the participants in this study recognized that their social life was impacted in terms of food. Jesse perhaps summed up the overarching sub-theme best when she commented, "it definitely can like separate you…because eating in America is like such a social activity…" (L61-62). Sarah also spoke to this when she said, "I feel more distant from other people on campus…like food is a big part of like college culture and like going to get food together" (L390-391). Planning and preparation will be discussed in the following section but came up repeatedly as strategies that must be employed before trying to enjoy a social situation. Anna shared that "…out in social events, there's almost no options," which makes it very difficult. She still felt that veganism is "…accepted and accommodated" (L197) in the area but noted the need to do research beforehand. Sarah connected two of the primary areas of study for me, social experiences and food with her statement, "…food has become more of a social thing to me," (L204-205) explaining that instead of just thinking about food alone now, she thinks about it as people she is going to cook with or eat with and other ways if affects her social life.

Dylan talked about how many people think that it is hard to be vegan and have a social life because of the difficulty in finding things to eat or going out to eat but said that he is able to

find something to at almost anywhere, and if he cannot, he will skip a meal. I used a probing question to inquire if he felt that the social relationships were important enough that he would skip the meal in order to have the experience with other people and he confirmed that he would. Family-wise, Dylan also shared that his is supportive and will eat at vegetarian or vegan restaurants or be "…considerate enough to be sure there's at least going to be something" he can choose (L178-180). Because most of Callan's friends were vegetarian and vegan, she said that the social nature of food for her means that they almost always eat at the same places where they know they have options. Lily referenced her friends not wanting to eat meat in front of her and that "It's always a struggle to go out together" (230) with friends. She explained that she just kind of "…makes whatever they want work…" (L234). When I pushed further, she said that close friends (including high school friends from band who knew her and her diet well) would speak up for her in terms of there not being vegan options at the selected establishment.

As mentioned, Jesse actually brought up the social nature of food on her own before I even asked about it. She summarized, "[I]f you want to go out and eat with people, you're either like being dragged somewhere you can't eat or where you have to be like the person that's like, can we do here instead and then you feel kind of bad" (L63-65). I heard other participants echo this sentiment of guilt around asking for options and wanting to be the cause of least trouble so as not to incite some of the unpleasant feelings or conversations that had experience with being vegan. Annie shared that she is used to asking for substitutes or accommodations but that "…maybe 10 to 20 percent of the time there's always something that goes on and it's tough not to feel like an inconvenience when you're with other people" (L316-317). Steve spoke about

being out to eat with family or friends at a place where food options are limited and how they not only affected his meal choices but also his state if he wanted to partake of alcohol in that situation, especially without food.

Pam felt that her veganism had not hindered her social relations in terms of food and Carol said that with so many available options, she was almost always able to get some kind of food with friends and that her friends normally asked but she would almost always do whatever they wanted and then find what she could eat accordingly – like fries and a salad (joke but standard vegan dining out diet) or ask the wait staff "…depending on how bold I'm feeling that day" (L161).

Preparation

Though a few participants mentioned not needing to plan in as much detail since they had become used to veganism after the initial learning curve, almost all mentioned the need for some preparation, or at the very least, in certain circumstances. Pam said that a lot of planning goes into her meals but partially because she is considering budgetary decisions and also likes to eat a certain way. Dylan felt that he did not spend a lot of time or energy on thinking about food because it is now his "habit" (L200).

Jesse communicated that research is one of the initial biggest difficulties into becoming vegan in college. If a student is on meal plan, they may have an easier time due to labeling (Lily, p. 9) but at first it takes effort to understand how veganism is possible. She also talked about research in terms of figuring out how to be vegan "…in a fairly inexpensive way as well" (L 133). Sarah told a story about how her and some vegan friends spent extra time making vegan snack food of fried eggplant with marinara sauce before a road trip to Washington, D.C. so that they would be well-prepared. Travel was brought up by several participants (Annie, Steve,

Sarah) in relation to the most need for preparation and planning whereas restaurants were mentioned most in terms of prior "research". Anna talked a lot about having to research restaurant menus and available options beforehand and how that differed from before she was vegan, "…beforehand you don't even have to think about Oh, can I even eat here?" (L190).

Annie also talked about researching menus ahead of time and also asking about available options before events. She mentioned that these practices do "…kind of limit spontaneity and sometimes going to certain events" (L280-281) but that she now just knows to eat ahead of time. She also shared that in order to be more prepared and feel "…welcome in any situation" (L338), she will now bring vegan food to share with others so that she knows she "…has something substantial to eat" (L334-335) and acknowledged that it has gotten better as she learned how to navigate certain situations. Perhaps the most striking comment Annie made about preparation as a college student vegan was, "[I]f you get yourself in a situation where you're getting desperate, then it's easier to break some of your…" trailing off to tell a story about how when she first became vegan, if she got too hungry, she would eat something with honey when there was no other option. She closed by stating, "If you don't prepare, like you're going to put yourself in a bad situation" (L351-352).

Because Steve was a transfer student, his research and preparation was mostly relegated to worrying about what options would be like when he got to campus. Steve, like Annie, talked about eating beforehand and said he no longer really worries about options "…unless there is like a recruiting event…like I just automatically assume there's nothing" (L299-301). He also shared how his girlfriend, who is also vegan, had experienced accommodations by her college where she was sometimes provided with a special dietary vegan meal, which was both surprising and appreciated. Another interesting story from Steve was about how cities are easier for vegans,

but situations like hiking on the Appalachian Trail, which he did as a vegan, take much more preparation because people just don't know about veganism and will assume you can eat things that you can't ("…well we can but there's this fish and these eggs…you can eat those, right? They haven't been introduced to that" [veganism] L68-70). Sarah's interpretation of research and preparation went beyond just food to spending "…hours reading and thinking"(L340) about other interconnected issues with veganism like workers' rights, food deserts, and impact of fast food on the diet of low-income families. Carol shared this byproduct of research and also mentioned how her participation in the animal rights student group "…opens your mind to all kinds of like equality and other issues…intersectional…" (L25-26).

Accessibility

One of the overwhelming sentiments that I heard the participants processing and revealing was that being vegan is easier for them than perhaps it was in the past for others due to the accessibility of options, choices, products, and information. Coming to college and having the ability to buy, choose, or cook their own food was important to almost all participants and stated as something that made being vegan easier for them. The accessibility to make their own decisions regarding purchases, cooking, and eating felt less restrictive to even those whose families were as supportive as possible when they still lived at home. Callan mentioned buying her own food. Lily, who was vegan in high school and had difficulty eating at the cafeteria there, said "…now that I'm in college…I choose my own things in general…It's easier for me …" (L59-62).

Participants all felt that the town had numerous food options for vegans and that this accessibility made it both easier and more enjoyable to be a vegan student. Both restaurants and grocery stores seem to have more vegan and plant-based options than ever, both food and non-

food related. Annie talked about the joy of being able to go to numerous stores in one town and get not just a wide variety of groceries but also specialty vegan items for celebrations or special occasions and bakery items. Callan shared that her hometown was very small and the grocery stores were only just starting to get vegan products at the time of this study so being in a college town and having "…like unlimited amounts of grocery stores is definitely helpful" (L39-40). Carol agreed, saying, "[Y]ou walk into Publix and there's like four types of vegan cheese!" L36). Participants also mentioned many vegan-friendly restaurants in-town with either specific vegan options or the ability to customize.

On-campus food resources mentioned included various dining halls as well as convenience options like point of access stores, chain restaurants, coffee shops, and vending machines. Dining halls at the institution had clearly-labeled food for both vegetarian and vegan students. Lily felt at ease in the dining hall and comfortable trusting the "V" labeled items, while Steve struggled to get familiar with the options in and nuances of different dining halls around campus when he was new. Overall, the accommodating nature of the options for vegans around campus was touted as a positive and a source of ease and comfort for the participants. Point of access stores had begun carrying more specifically-labeled vegan items in the time preceding this study and even vending machines almost always had "plain Lays" (Callan, Pam) for students if they were away from the other food options.

The final accessibility piece that participants reported on was the amount of resources that exist that are supportive for a vegan at any stage, even pre-veganism exploration. Annie, Carol, and Jesse mentioned the copiously available Internet resources, including social media sites like Instagram and video-sites like YouTube that helped them when they were investigating and learning about veganism. Dylan, Callan, Anna, and Lily mentioned the wealth of knowledge

that is available in the vegan community, both from on-campus support systems like the other students in the animal-rights activism group or from the general vegan community, like documentaries and presentations. They all felt strongly that other students who are considering veganism should reach out and use these and other avenues to be more aware of what transitioning looks like (helps!), what questions to ask of other and yourself, and how to have confidence in your decision but also be gentle with yourself as you learn.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from interviews with vegan college students about how their lives, practices, choices, and experiences. Themes revealed that vegan college students make meaning through learning and through processing their identity from both internal and external views. They also contributed stories and accounts to display how they respond and react to their choice to be vegan in college especially pertaining to their social lives, which included both positive and negative interactions and food realities like the need for preparation and accessibility.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Veganism as a social identity is no less salient because it is chosen (avowed) as opposed to given. Grotevant (1992) distinguished a chosen identity as one that arises out of choices made available to a person in their social contexts. Guided by cultural identity theory (CIT), cultural identity enactment tenets state that ascribed identities are "…attributed, assigned, or labeled by others to one's groups" and avowed identities are enacted by an individual to represent themselves as a group member to others (Simmons & Chen, 2014, p, 21).

This study explored how college students who have chosen to be vegan experience effects of that lifestyle choice, especially around social interactions and food. Ten undergraduate students at an institution in the Southeast participated in qualitative, phenomenological interviews on this topic. Findings revealed that they make meaning through the process of learning and changing as vegans, as well as through establishing a vegan identity and negotiating stigma and perceptions from others. They also have distinct interactions, both positive and negative, with others around their veganism. Food obviously has an impact on their daily lives, which can manifest as the need for preparation and planning or the ease of available choices now that veganism and plant-based living has become more mainstream. The importance of this research is to add yet another chosen social identity identifier to the multitude of identities college students bring to campus that must be validated, regardless of dominance in society or prescribed/perceived "normality."

College students who choose to be vegan and hold that as an avowed identity deserve to have that choice respected and understood. Previous research has shown that the process of becoming vegan and incorporating this into one's identity can mimic the process of and possibly even the classification/protection of a religious identity. If dietary identity can indeed transcend simple food choices into an overall lifestyle process, beginning to recognize and support this in children and young adults can lessen stigma and deconstruct/challenge societal norms that claim otherwise. The chance for my participants to have a captive listener was obviously welcomed; they felt heard, supported, and valued. It was difficult to leave out any part of their stories or consider which findings and themes were "less important" because nuances that would go unnoticed by someone who is uneducated about veganism, feel monumental to put out into the world of scholarly, qualitative research.

Discussing how they made meaning around their veganism and how it impacts their lives was fruitful, I believe on both sides. As previously mentioned, the hermeneutic circle that occurred as I made sense of the students making sense of their veganism was highly valuable. I believe it may have been the first time some of the participants had ever processed their decision to choose a vegan social identity with someone in a non-casual (with friends or other vegan peers) or non-educational (trying to tell someone else what veganism entails) conversation. Even though the questions I asked were about high-level topics like food options, friends, and college contexts, I could sense that they began to understand how avowing a vegan social identity creeps into all aspects of identity and life – almost all mentioned family members, the past, and the future.

One of the most important takeaways from this study for me was the impression that the participant students were developing resiliency around understanding how their choices affected

not only themselves but their interactions and relationships with others. While mention of the word resiliency in terms of college students is often used around personal rebounding from personally-negative situations or characteristics, in this sense I saw students beginning to understand how to be resilient in the face of scrutiny in a larger sense of connectedness to the world. The belief is also emerging and gaining salience in their everyday lives and social identities but to be able to recognize personal worth and deservedness of respect signaled to me that whether they were aware of it, their choice to be vegan contributed to the development of resiliency.

Connections to Previous Research

Previous scholarly work suggests college vegans may have an easier time finding community on campus as the number of people that are trying out this diet and lifestyle increases (Attebury, 2012; Runkle, 2010). The participants in this study communicated that they very much need and appreciate the community and support they were able to find with other vegans in the college setting. Due to recruitment strategies, almost every participant mentioned being a part of the animal rights activism/awareness student club and many mentioned the support of people there as vital to their veganism. Other vegan students provide someone to talk to that they knew would listen and not judge, someone to feel community with, and someone who would not ask purposefully inflammatory questions or expect you to educate them from start to finish about veganism. Because their choice to be vegan often resulted in participants being ostracized or shunned by peers or former friends due to feelings of guilt or annoyance about the inconvenience of eating or dining out, this sense of community held importance not only around food but also around continuing to learn how to be a better vegan.

Participants in this study provided information from their campus consistent with the assertion that colleges and universities are offering more vegetarian and vegan choices in on-campus eateries than ever before (Dwyer, 2016; Howard, 2016; Pevreall, 2017; Starostinetskaya, 2015). While vegan options are not so mainstream that there is an all-vegan dining hall or café, every eatery on campus (including fast food or "store" type locations) had at least one vegan option for students. One student (Anna) who transferred from another institution even shared how much better this institution was at accommodating vegans in comparison to her former, which predominantly had salad and sometimes cheese pizza for (would not have been suitable for a vegan). Another positive result was that my participants had no trouble finding vegan options on campus, contrary to what Kaufman and Smith (2017) found in their mixed-methods project.

The success that Ashley Hampton found with her "Raw in College" Internet presence (Bjornson, 2016) was echoed in how many of the participants came to veganism from watching and learning about it through bloggers, YouTube videos, and recipes. Several commented specifically how veganism does not have to be "too expensive", even for college students, and that learning more is the best avenue to understand healthy and affordable cooking and eating.

Perhaps the most discouraging overall theme expressed was that they do seem to experience discrimination and negative stigma (Bresnahan, Zhuang, & Zhu, 2016) based on their dietary and lifestyle choice. Both criticism and negative questioning from others and internal guilt and shame at not wanting to inconvenience other people, especially in relation to social food outings or communal meals came through as they processed their veganism. However, like Radbod (2012), several participants made meaning of their veganism in trying to process how that passion for ethical and just treatment of animals can extend to other oppressed populations.

This higher-level view of what it means to choose veganism showed that an awareness of suffering on one part can lead to increased awareness overall and perhaps activism in other areas.

Veganism and Self-Authorship

As student development theory has indicated, students have a multitude of environmental contexts around them in a college setting and bring with them many personal characteristics when they arrive. The aim of this study was to explore the meaning-making strategies and experiences of college students who are vegan. Avowing a vegan lifestyle in addition to a vegan diet occurred for my participants when they understood that veganism is more than just simple food choices and has connections to other aspects of life. Choosing to be vegan in a society that normalizes meat-eating requires conviction and commitment and can involve negative scrutiny/judgment, which can be even more difficult when added on to the normal trials and tribulations of identity exploration in the college experience.

Baxter Magolda (2008) theorized that "…personal characteristics and environmental context both mediate the evolution of self-authorship" (p. 273). One of the most interesting aspects of performing this research was hearing both of those elements revealed during interviews – personal characteristics and environmental context. When I set out to examine students' lived experiences around being vegan with the framework of self-authorship, I did not assume that they would be fully self-authored but hoped they could provide insight into this potentially controversial choice as a possible crossroads experience – where they may be caught between relying on external information that eating meat is "…normal, natural, necessary, and nice…" (Piazza et al., 2015) and the development or growth of personal values that are integral to their identity and sense of self that conflict with meat eating and/or animal use. While I listened and tried to make sense of the students making sense of their own understanding about

their veganism, I believe the "Coming to a Crossroads" stage of self-authorship was indeed most manifested for most participants. This is a transitional stage where one begins to see their own developing internal values as integral to sense of self as well as the demands experienced by roles and relationships with others. Baxter Magolda (2014) summarized, "The crossroads space is filled with tension between external influence and the growing internal voice as young adult work to make their own way in the world" (p. 28). The themes that arose during analysis indicate significance in the three epistemological areas of self-authorship – the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, values, identity, and social relations, "…thus taking responsibility for one's actions and life decisions, not simply relying on the advice or actions of others" (Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013, p. 868).

Beliefs (How do I know?)

Making meaning of knowledge through change. The students in this study all recognized that they were of two vantage points. In the first, they processed that they were unaware of what they did not know about not eating meat. I connected this to the normalization of meat-eating in our society and the fact that until anyone learns to question, they will continue to uncritically follow this particular external formula because it is not experienced as an identity as an unmarked category (Kremmel, 2006). In the second vantage point, the students realized that there was another way to think about diet and life practice around eating animal products and that they could begin to trust their internal voice that was telling them it did not feel right. From that point, on, they were unable (or unwilling) to go back to vantage point one. They continued their process of learning by educating themselves further about veganism and changing small habits either rapidly or over time. Steve mentioned that he started feeling "on his own" (L29) that he did not want to eat meat anymore and as he did more research, he liked "…this other

aspect of being vegan not just for myself but for other living beings" (L55). Lily acknowledged the impact that "shocking" (L11) footage had and how she knew she wanted to be vegan because it made an impact on her. Anna spoke about realizing that she did not want to continue taking part in something she felt was so wrong, commenting "I'm contributing to this and I shouldn't be" (L14). However, an interesting example presented itself during Anna's interview where she talked about her career and professionalism as a wildlife studies major coming before her veganism. She explained a situation in which students were prepared for the fact that captive deer would ram themselves against fencing and begin to bleed. She acknowledged that the animal was hurting "…but it's not on purpose" (L66) and that she participated anyways to put her "…education and professionalism first"(L60). This was difficult for me to hear in the moment because of my own practices around veganism and struck me again during analysis as a way that external formulas are still very forceful in the life of a college student. The messages from external others is often that career should have first priority in life in terms of financial support and happiness. Even though she showed great interest in her crossroads moments at other times during the interview, it sounded to me like Anna fell back on those external others as to what was "right". She was very adamant in both her tone and by repeating the statement several times during the interview. I did not probe her as to how that conflict made her feel because I felt I heard it in her voice and in her urgency to have a firm, resolute statement about priorities. All of the student participants used their process of learning to change how and what they knew about themselves and their beliefs in relation to making choices about what to consume.

Identity (Who am I?)

Once each participant had made the decision to change their diet and lifestyle after becoming more informed and wishing to stop being associated with the normalized practice of meat-eating, they began to process how that changed/was changing them as people. Not only was there acknowledgement of how their own identity shifted as a result of becoming vegan (almost all except Dylan felt it was a major part of their identity), but recognition of the fact that perception of your identity by others will have an effect on the way you manifest that identity. To "…craft a sense of identity that honors and balances their own and others' needs…" (Baxter Magolda, 2014, p. 25) still seemed difficult for the participants. They understood that their identity was affected by their avowing of veganism, yet they were still struggling to find a way to enact this identity freely due to the nature of others' judgments (ascribed identities) of the personal vegan identity as something that could damage the overall practice of veganism on the large scale.

The dissonance around this issue of identity as you see yourself and as others see you seemed to lie in the fact that they *are* trying to balance the needs of others in tandem with their own, it just seems to matter "which" others that term describes. Vegan students are honoring and balancing the needs of non-human animal others (in addition to human others) and this seems to be so threatening to some critics of veganism that it has perpetrated down to the actionable level. The way that participants felt veganism tied into their identity was strong, as previously discussed. Carol mentioned that her veganism is"…my favorite part about myself. I think it's cool" (L52) and that its often how people introduced her to others. Pam shared how when she is asked to give an interesting fact about herself in classes, that sharing her veganism "is always my thing" (L98). However, I still felt a struggle for dominance, as this important identity was

described simultaneously as something they would introduce right away and as something they would not bring up unless others did so as not to annoy people or "talk about it constantly". For me, this tied back to Paxman's (2016) idea of identity maintenance for vegans entailing having to negotiate their identity and behavior depending on the context and reception. The building blocks of self-authorship seemed to be available for these participants and I could see evidence of some internal foundations taking place but it was also apparent that learning how to solidly construct their identity in that way is an ongoing process at this stage for these college students.

Social Relations (How do I want to construct relationships with others?)

The hermeneutic circle was very present for me as I processed the participants processing how their relationships with others have changed since choosing to become vegan. I felt like maybe they had never been asked questions about how their relationships had changed around their veganism. It was clear that they had feelings about it and had processed it internally to some degree, as they were able to easily detail (especially more with the negative) interactions that held significance for them. Thinking about how food choices and the social nature of food affected their relationships was a little less meaningful but they still made connections around how others treated them because of food issues.

Anna and Carol both shared in detail that their veganism had cost them relationships with former friends but I also heard them processing what it meant to realize that relationships were something for which they could have their own expectations – around respect, behavior, and inclusion. Anna, when talking about how her friends started avoiding her and not inviting her out to eat anymore, commented, "…And you know, I know my value. I'm like OK well, if you don't want me there than it's fine. I don't want you guys in my life either" (L143-144). Carol was kicked out of a group chat of high school friends when she started sharing her passion for what

she was learning about being vegan. She was disappointed and acknowledged that she probably "…hot some vulnerable soft spots" (L119) for them. When I asked her if they were still friends despite that damage to their relationships she said, "I'm still friends with them but I don't text them in the group message as much as I would have in the past because I don't feel like my opinion is welcome" (L131-132). I could see the point where the students had figured out that while their veganism may have cost them previous friendships, they were also learning how to navigate both old and new relationships in terms of prioritizing themselves, their needs, and beliefs. They were starting or continuing to take responsibility for their choice to be vegan and understanding what outcomes that might have for social interactions.

All participants acknowledged what effect positive community and social relationships with other vegans had on them, demonstrating that they felt more content having chosen their own path with the knowledge of what each had to offer. Baxter Magolda (2014) described how "…the internal voice begins to emerge when external others encourage it to come forward or when relying uncritically on external formulas stops working" (p. 30) and I think my participants felt that encouragement piece (sometimes in addition to the external formulas dimension) when they discovered the social support from other vegan students existed.

Methodological Choices

My methodological choices intentionally bound this study to a specific context. Here, I acknowledge the edges/boundaries of those choices. Participants in this study were undergraduate students only. Interviewing graduate student vegans about their experiences may have provided a different overall representation due to differences in ages, life statuses, and/or length of time as a vegan. Self-authorship and/or experiences around social interactions or food may also look different for vegan graduate students. Students who may primarily, but not

exclusively, eat a vegan diet could have valuable information to share about how students who are investigating or beginning this lifestyle experience college. This study only collected information from students at one institution and used qualitative methodologies. A multiple-institution study using quantitative and/or mixed methods could provide a more accurate and up-to-date overall picture of demographic information about the college student vegan population.

Investigating methodologies for any research study is one of the first important choice a researcher makes. I was actually very interested in doing a study about college students who were vegan using quantitative measures because there is not much available data in the scholarly literature about the frequency with which college students are now vegan or vegetarian. Having some idea of the size of this population seemed important before delving into their specific experiences, even if just to refer the reader to what general population characteristics are being discussed. Limitations with this methodology were present in that obtaining a large enough sample size would require using participants from multiple universities, obtaining institutional IRB for said institutions, and varied recruitment strategies that may still prove ineffective from a distance.

My initial methodological choice was to use narrative inquiry. As I delved into the scholarly literature on narrative techniques, I felt uncomfortable with the idea of "re-presenting" or "re-constructing" stories that I felt had never been even initially presented or constructed by their authors for consideration. The base of a body of literature about college student vegans, for me, should include their experiences as they have presented and interpreted them. Thus, the choice to utilize phenomenology became clearer. I also value other qualitative methodologies and would be interested in pursuing more study on this topic with them but felt they were not right for this project. For example, an ethnographic and longitudinal study with college students

who are vegan over the duration of their college career would likely provide robust detail about the variety of experiences they have (academic, social, food-related, outreach, etc.) as well as how those experiences change over the life cycle of enrollment in college. It may also illuminate how the students themselves change and how veganism as an avowed social identity is maintained, performed, redefined, and more.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to gather information and stories from vegan college students to better understand, qualitatively, their experiences. Sharing and validating veganism as a purposefully-chosen social identity, much like a religious identity, requires education/awareness and realization that traditional and dominant norms do not define or represent every college student. Students who have chosen to be vegan either upon entrance to or during college have taken control of one of their identities that they, most likely, have been receiving messages about their entire life. Supporting that choice and recognizing the difficulty of both accepting and standing up for a change that goes in opposition to the societal norm is important. Given that identity is fluid and changing, having a deeper understanding of self and how the choices we make affect others is why exploring all forms of oppression is vital to liberation (Ortiz, 2011).

Understanding what support students need around dietary identity is not a mainstream issue in student affairs but should be basically understood by practitioners and administrators so that further exploration is not needed only on a situational basis once it arises. Because students have to negotiate many aspects of college (availability, physical locations, academic conversations, social interactions, etc.) in terms of their dietary choices and identities,

discussions about dietary identity can and should be included when talking about other socially-constructed identities. This way, the support that students need in both their college experiences and their journey to self-authorship can be provided.

What student affairs practitioners can contribute to this conversation is a) being educated about veganism and b) providing the necessary balance of challenge and support for students who are navigating this identity change and indicate movement on the path to self-authorship. We should also help reinforce the message that students do not have to be defined by external others in terms of diet and/or lifestyle (or anything else really but that is another dissertation!). It is going to be difficult sometimes to have to tell family or friends that you are vegan. Questioning external formulas is not always easy or comfortable. The thoughts, feelings, and experiences of students who are vegan will contribute to their environments and contexts.

Ortiz (2011) suggested an important piece of supporting student development is to understand how social identity functions and to talk about issues of social justice, like marginalization and privilege, in all aspects of life. As evidenced in this study, students who become vegan go through a learning and meaning-making process that supports the identification of both how their choices manifest for their own life as well as how their choices affect others. Several identified that they became more aware of interconnected issues of oppression and suffering after becoming vegan.

It has been suggested in previous research (Parks & Evans, 2014) that supporting vegan students on campus is the responsibility of administrators. While I believe that administrator support is vital to widespread understanding and acceptance, I know that supporting students behind the scenes is often left to student affairs professionals with whom they interact most frequently and more authentically. Practical implications for daily practice for student affairs

professionals are simple – be aware that vegan college students exist, be willing to listen, be willing to acknowledge them as a specific population that may need additional support, and be knowledgeable enough to talk openly about veganism! The impact that I saw even just being able to talk about it bring indicated to me that talking about it can be immensely helpful. Like other non-dominant practices or topics, simply talking about it can bring awareness and make it less "abnormal". In terms of physical practice, consider always providing a vegan option if you are hosting an event or activity involving food, especially on campus.

Another way that practitioners, faculty, staff, administrators, and interested others can support the avowed vegan identity in college students is to become learning partners. Baxter Magolda (2009a) posited that learning partners support internal voices by being respectful and affirming of thoughts and feelings. In this way, students learn that their voice and experiences have value regardless if they are the dominant norm and/or widely accepted. Even if the majority of those wanting to support vegan students are not vegan themselves, listening with respect and trying to understand instead of questioning, arguing, or convincing otherwise will show vegan college students that their internal voice and choice are valued as a unique part of a complex whole. Learning partners can also support development of the internal voice by encouraging students to think about ways they can learn and grow from each experience they have. As many participants in this study shared, vegan college students will have both positive and negative experiences and interactions because of their avowed social identity. Development of skills to take each of those experiences for what it is and move on to the next one more informed and prepared can strengthen their trust in their internal voice.

Student affairs and other campus professionals as learning partners can challenge students as learners to develop self-authorship by helping them to see that decisions are always complex

and the easiest or most obvious answer/decision is not always the best. For vegan college students, this may mean discussing how they came to veganism in light of their disappointment at a friend or a peer rejecting it. The decision may not have been complex for them (or it may have been) but the easiest path of being angry and disappointed may contribute to them losing a relationship or the possibility to engage that person in deeper conversation about issues interconnected with veganism. They also communicate that their (learner's) personal voice is the most important to which to listen. Many vegan students may already be working at this skill without even knowing it, as they rationalize and justify in excess outwardly. Finally, "…encouraging participants to share authority and expertise, and work interdependently with others to solve mutual problems" (Baxter Magolda, 2009a, p. 251 as cited in Baxter Magolda, 2014) is the goal of a learning partner when helping the learner develop skills towards self-authorship.

Future Research

More research about vegan college students can add to the body of knowledge, in tandem with the overall societal knowledgebase also increasing as the movement gains more awareness and visibility. Both quantitative and qualitative research should be performed in order to present both statistical analysis and the stories and voices behind numbers. Trend data is becoming more popular around plant-based topics but keeping the personal lived experiences of those in the forefront will ensure that the normalcy of dietary identity and lifestyles is more widespread.

Research with college students who are vegan according to other demographic traits like biological sex and race may provide more detailed information about how students experience veganism differently. One issue that was not really mentioned, other than in passing by Steve,

but would be interesting to investigate in future projects, was the reputation of the campus in providing vegan food options at campus-sponsored events – like recruiting, orientation, student activities, school or college events, club meetings, etc.

A participant whose experience was excluded from this study due to indicating that they ate seafood several times a year at the end of their interview (hence, not a vegan according to working definition), provided a valuable and detailed account of being vegan and unaccommodated in the Greek system. Future research should explore opportunities and constraints for students who are part of a very structured system, like Greek Life or military training perhaps, where veganism may not be recognized or accommodated at all, even if students have clearly identified that it is part of their identity and lifestyle.

Conclusion

Even as I have been completing this dissertation, more headlines about veganism have continued to appear on mainstream news channels, websites, and social media. Instagram last week featured stories that a vegan burger food truck in Atlanta, *The Slutty Vegan*, became so popular that they had lines of 500+ people waiting in line for up to five hours to get a burger (VegNews, 2019) and have expanded to a brick and mortar location to accommodate more customers. These crowds included celebrities like Snoop Dog and Tyler Perry. While veganism and plant-based diets continue to gain popularity and mainstream societal status every year, the effect of this dietary and lifestyle choice on college populations is relatively understudied. Of course, celebrities being involved in a lifestyle movement can lend increased visibility – Beyonce and Jay Z have been longtime vegans and encouraged their fans to give it a shot by participating in “Veganuary” in 2019, though she has also come under scrutiny for her veganism (Fegitz & Pirani, 2017)

Publicity and sexiness aside, understanding and hearing the voices of young people as they avow this social identity that will have direct impact on their lives, identities, and interactions with others is vital. Exploring in more depth how dietary identity and intentionality around making that diet a lifestyle is important to recognize and validate that some in society do not adhere to the standard American diet/traditional norms. This study considered the lived experience of college students who are vegan in order to provide detailed accounts of what it is like to be a vegan in college. The goal was to present their experiences to add to the body of knowledge around this topic in student affairs and to present suggestions for supporting veganism as an avowed identity in college students, even though it is not the typical identity that is focused on in such circles.

I want to close with the student participants' voices. I asked them what they would want other people to know about college students and veganism and their responses showed hope, even in spite of the odds they themselves have faced. Carol said, "There's not only one way to be vegan" L179). Lily shared that she felt "…college is definitely the time to do it because…there is definitely more of a vegan presence at colleges," (L311-312) circling back to the importance of community and support. Annie felt strongly that people should know, "It's really not so bad but…definitely is all about how you like reach other people with it. And how you act with it" (L391-392). Steve wanted others to know that "…there are ways to make it not so hard and not have it break your bank," (L359). Sarah also shared this sentiment, saying, "…that's kinda a really big misconception that a lot of peers have is that it's hard or there's not like options" (L367-368).

Anna declared that there are endless sources for interested parties to do research and that she'd "…strongly advise to not do it all at once. I feel like the reason being vegan is so easy for

me is because I made the transition" (L234-238). Pam wanted others to know that "…there are a lot more vegans in college than one might think" (L240-241) and that even though a lot of people might write it off as too expensive or hard, "…truthfully, you can do it right now…even if you do eat in the dining hall for every meal of even if you don't have a lot of money to spend on food. It's totally doable." (L244-245).

Callan wanted to focus on the relative ease of veganism and commented, "If you are paying attention to your purchases and to the things that you enjoy eating, a lot of the times what you are eating is vegan." (L208-209). Dylan followed suit and said that what he would like to convey about veganism in college is that "It's easy, it's really easy. It makes a big difference in your environmental footprint. It's much, much more merciful for animals." (L206-207). Finally, Jesse summed up the overall consensus of the group nicely by stating, "…keep in mind it's a very personal journey…You shouldn't feel like you have to go all in at once. It can be kind of easy to beat yourself up…but I think it worked out a lot better to just do it when it was more accessible to me" (L147-151). Veganism has been avowed by people of all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, ability levels, and locations and will continue to make its way in the world, regardless of opposition.

"You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you didn't know." – *William Wilberforce.*

"It's not hard to make decisions once you know what your values are." - *Roy E. Disney*

REFERENCES

Adams, C. J. (1990). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Adams, C. J. (2017). The poetics of christian engagement: Living compassionately in a sexual politics of meat world. *Studies in Christian Ethics, 30*(1), 45.

Adise, S., Gavdanovich, I., & Zellner, D. A. (2015). Looks like chicken: Exploring the law of similarity in evaluation of foods of animal origin and their vegan substitutes. *Food Quality and Preference, 41*, 52-59. doi:10.1016/j.foodqual.2014.10.007

Adleberg, T. (2017, April 24). How can we integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the animal advocacy movement? Animal Charity Evaluators. Retrieved from https://animalcharityevaluators.org/blog/how-can-we-integrate-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-into-the-animal-advocacy-movement/

Arora, A. (2016). Justice for just us? spiritual progressives and carnism. *Tikkun, 31*(1), 30.

Barber, J. P., King, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2013). Long strides on the journey toward self-authorship: Substantial developmental shifts in college students' meaning making. *The Journal of Higher Education, 84*(6), 866-897.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student Development, 49*(4), 269-284.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2009). A theory of self-authorship development. In *Authoring your life: Developing an internal voice to navigate life's challenges* (pp. 321-346). Sterling, VA: Stylus Press.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2014). Self-authorship. *New Directions for Higher Education, 166,* 25-33.

Baxter Magolda, M., Creamer, E. G., & Meszaros, P. S. (2010). *Development and Assessment of Self-Authorship : Exploring the Concept Across Cultures*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Baxter Magolda, M., & Taylor, K. (2016). Developing self-authorship in college to navigate emerging adulthood. In J. J. Arnett (Ed.) , *The Oxford handbook of emerging adulthood* (pp. 299-315). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Berger, S. (2018, January 31). NFL players' surprisingly new performance hack-going vegan. *CNBC.* Retrieved from https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/31/why-nfl-players-and-other-athletes-are-going-vegan.html

Best, S. (2009). The rise of critical animal studies: Putting theory into action and animal liberation into higher education. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies, 7*(1), 9-52.

Beezhold, B., Radnitz, C., Rinne, A., & DiMatteo, J. (2015). Vegans report less stress and anxiety than omnivores. *Nutritional Neuroscience, 18*(7), 289.

Bjornson, G. (2016, April 10). Meet Ashley Hampton: The vegan blogger behind "Raw in College". *USAToday Online*. Retrieved from http://college.usatoday.com/2016/04/10/ashley-hampton-raw-in-college-blogger/

Bosworth, B. (2012). *Spreading the word: Communicating about veganism* Retrieved from http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu:80/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1112064188?accountid=14537. doi:(Order No. 1519541). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1112064188).

Bresnahan, M., Zhuang, J., & Zhu, X. (2016). Why is the vegan line in the dining hall always the shortest? Understanding vegan stigma. *Stigma and Health, 1*(1), 3-15.

Bruers, S. (2015). The core argument for veganism. *Philosophia, 43*(2), 271-290. doi:10.1007/s11406-015-9595-5

Bryant, A. N. (2011). Evangelical Christian students and the path to self-authorship. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *39*(1), 16-30.

Burgess, S., Carpenter, P., & Henshaw, T. (n.d.). Eating on campus: Vegan, vegetarian, and omnivore stereotyping. Retrieved from http://www.oneonta.edu/academics/research/PDFs/SRS2014-Burgess.pdf

Burrows, D. (2016, October 16). Do you eat meat? What about animals? Scientists slice open a carnivore's paradox. *Food Navigator.com.* Retrieved from https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2016/10/17/Do-you-eat-meat-What-about-animals-Scientists-slice-open-a-carnivore-s-paradox

Cherry, E. (2006). Veganism as a cultural movement: A relational approach. *Social Movement Studies, 5*(2), 155-170.

Cherry, E. (2010). Shifting symbolic boundaries: Cultural strategies of the animal rights movement. *Sociological Forum,* (3), 450.

Cherry, E. (2015). I was a teenage vegan: Motivation and maintenance of lifestyle movements. *Sociological Inquiry, 85*(1), 55-74. doi:10.1111/soin.12061

Christie, C. D., & Chen, F. S. (2018). Vegetarian or meat? Food choice modeling of main dishes occurs outside of awareness. *Appetite, 121*, 50-54. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.10.036

Chuck, C., Fernandes, S. A., & Hyers, L. L. (2016). Awakening to the politics of food: Politicized diet as social identity. *Appetite, 107*, 425-436. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.08.106

Ciocchetti, C. (2012). Veganism and living well. *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics, 25*(3), 405-417. doi:10.1007/s10806-011-9307-5

Cohen, J., Cook-Sather, A., Lesnick, A., Alter, Z., Awkward, R., Decius, F., & ... Mengesha, L. (2013). Students as leaders and learners: towards self-authorship and social change on a college campus. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, *50*(1), 3-13. doi:10.1080/14703297.2012.746511

Colb, S. F. (2013). *Mind if I order the cheeseburger?: And other questions people ask vegans*. New York, NY: Lantern Books. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzgwMTA4NV9fQU41?sid=7ed2fa67-9c28-494a-9d65-c83036874043@sessionmgr4006&vid=13&format=EK&rid=1

Cook, G. (2015). 'A pig is a person' or 'you can love a fox and hunt it': Innovation and tradition in the discursive representation of animals. *Discourse & Society, 26*(5), 587-607.

Corrin, T., & Papadopoulos, A. (2017). Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of vegetarian and plant-based diets to shape future health promotion programs. *Appetite, 109*, 40-47. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.11.018

Coulter, K. (2016). Beyond human to humane: A multispecies analysis of care work, its repression, and its potential. *Studies in Social Justice, 10*(2), 199-219.

de Boer, J., Schösler, H., & Aiking, H. (2017). Towards a reduced meat diet: Mindset and motivation of young vegetarians, low, medium and high meat-eaters. *Appetite, 113*, 387-397. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.03.007

DeMent, R. (2017, October 14). Why your vegan jokes aren't funny. *Her Campus at Sonoma State.* Retrieved from https://www.hercampus.com/school/sonoma-state/why-your-vegan-jokes-arent-funny

Derricote, M. M., & McWhinney, S. L. (1997). *Analysis of the foods offered for lacto-ovo vegetarians and vegans in a university's student cafeteria.* Poster Session. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 9*, A40.

Dowling, M. (2005). From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological differences. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 4*(2007), 131-142.

Edwards, S. (2013). Living in a minority food culture: A phenomenological investigation of being Vegetarian/Vegan. *Phenomenology & Practice, 7*(1), 111.

Elorinne, A.-L., Kantola, M., Voutilainen, S., & Laakso, J. (2016). Veganism as a choice: Experiences and food strategies in transitioning to a vegan diet. In *Food futures: ethics, science and culture* (pp. 421–426). Amsterdam: Wageningen Academic Publishers. https://doi.org/10.3920/978-90-8686-834-6_64

Escobar, S. C. (2015). Recognizing the 'other:' issues of animal–human relationships and animal rights in crime and justice. *Contemporary Justice Review, 18*(4), 391-394. doi:10.1080/10282580.2015.1093746

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim. R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), pp. 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fegitz, E., & Pirani, D. (2017). The sexual politics of veggies: Beyoncé's "commodity veg*ism". *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/14680777.2017.1358200

Fox, K. (2017, December 17). Here's why you should turn your business vegan in 2018. *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/katrinafox/2017/12/27/heres-why-you-should-turn-your-business-vegan-in-2018/#4cb085ed2144

Freeman, C. P. (2013). Stepping up to the veggie plate: Framing veganism as living your values. In E. Plec (Ed.), *Perspectives on human-animal communication: Internatural communication* (pp. 93-112) New York, NY: Routledge.

Gallup Poll (2018, August 1). Snapshot: Few americans vegetarian or vegan. Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/poll/238328/snapshot-few-americans-vegetarian-vegan.aspx

Grotevant, H. D. (1992). Assigned and chosen identity components: A process perspective in their integration. In G. Adams, T. Gullotta, & R. Montemayor (Eds.), *Adolescent identity formation*, pp. 73-90. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Hamerschlag, K. (2011, July 5). Meat eater's guide to climate change and health. *Environmental Working Group.* Retrieved from https://static.ewg.org/reports/2011/meateaters/pdf/report_ewg_meat_eaters_guide_to_health_and_climate_2011.pdf?_ga=2.232128159.1692629143.1530801664-1661301856.1530801664

Hamilton, C. (2016). Sex, work, meat: The feminist politics of veganism. *Feminist Review, 114*(1), 112-129. doi:10.1057/s41305-016-0011-1

Hancox, D. (2018, April 1). The unstoppable rise of veganism: how a fringe movement went mainstream. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/apr/01/vegans-are-coming-millennials-health-climate-change-animal-welfare

Harper, A. B. (2010). *Sistah vegan: Black female vegans speak on food, identity, health, and society*. New York, NY: Lantern Books. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzgwMTA1MV9fQU41?sid=7ed2fa67-9c28-494a-9d65-c83036874043@sessionmgr4006&vid=15&format=EK&rid=1

Harper, C. (2016, August 9). The trials and tribulations of the college vegetarian. Retrieved from http://genprogress.org/voices/2016/08/09/44551/trials-tribulations-college-vegetarian/

Harris, D. H. (2017). Just the "typical college diet": How college students use life stages to account for unhealthy eating. *Symbolic Interaction, 40*(4), 523-540.

Harris Poll. (2016). *Vegetarian Journal, 4*. Retrieved from https://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2016issue4/2016_issue4_harris_poll.php

Haverstock, K., & Forgays, D. K. (2012). Research report: To eat or not to eat. A comparison of current and former animal product limiters. *Appetite, 58*, 1030-1036. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2012.02.048

Heiss, S., Coffino, J. A., & Hormes, J. M. (2017). Eating and health behaviors in vegans compared to omnivores: Dispelling common myths. *Appetite, 118*, 129-135. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.08.001

Heiss, S., & Hormes, J. M. (2018). Ethical concerns regarding animal use mediate the relationship between variety of pets owned in childhood and vegetarianism in adulthood. *Appetite, 123*, 43-48. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.12.005

Hirschler, C. (1998) *An examination of vegan's beliefs and experiences using critical theory and autoethnography.* (Unpublished Master's Thesis). State University of New York at Brockport.

Hirschler, C. (2011). "What pushed me over the edge was a deer hunter": Being vegan in North America. *Society & Animals, 19,* 156-174.

Holdier, A. (2016). The pig's squeak: Towards a renewed aesthetic argument for veganism. *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics, 29*(4), 631-642. doi:10.1007/s10806-016-9624-9

Holmes, W. B., & Mason, R. (2014). Obesity and the college dining commons. *Journal of Applies Economics & Policy, 32*(1), 26-44.

Iverson, S. V., & James, J. H. (2013). Self-Authoring a civic identity: A qualitative analysis of change-oriented service learning. *Journal of Student Affairs Research & Practice*, *50*(1), 88-105. doi:10.1515/jsarp-2013-0006

Izmirli, S., & Phillips, C. J. C. (2011). The relationship between student consumption of animal products and attitudes to animals in Europe and Asia. *British Food Journal, 113*(3), 436-450.

Janssen, M., Busch, C., Rödiger, M., & Hamm, U. (2016). Motives of consumers following a vegan diet and their attitudes towards animal agriculture. *Appetite, 105*, 643-651. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.06.039

Jehangir, R., Williams, R. D., & Pete, J. (2011). Multicultural Learning Communities: Vehicles for Developing Self-Authorship in First-Generation College Students. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, *23*(1), 53-73.

Johnson, L. (2015). The religion of ethical veganism. *Journal of Animal Ethics, 5*(1), 31-68.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2013). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Johnston, J. (2015). Eating animals: A social justice issue? Retrieved from https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Publications/SJ-NewsletterWinter2015.pdf

Jones, S. R., & Abes, E. S. (2013). *Identity development of college students: Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Jones, R. C. (2015). Animal rights is a social justice issue. *Contemporary Justice Review, 18*(4), 467-482. doi:10.1080/10282580.2015.1093689

Kahn, R. (2011). Towards an animal standpoint: Vegan education and the epistemology of ignorance. *Epistemologies of ignorance and the studies of limits in education.* (p. X) Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Kaufman, M., & Smith, T. (2017). Perception of vegetarian dining by college students in a university setting. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, 117*, A60-A60. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2017.06.184

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kelly, N. R., Mazzeo, S. E., & Bean, M. K. (2013). Systematic review of dietary interventions with college students: Directions for future research and practice. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 45*(4), 304-313.

Kemmerer, L. (2011). *Sister species: Women, animals, and social justice*. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=20&sid=7ed2fa67-9c28-494a-9d65-c83036874043%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=569637&db=nlebk

Kremmel, S. (2006). *Understanding eating boundaries: A study of vegetarian identities.* (Unpublished Masters' Thesis). University of South Florida.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lewis, J. (2000) Back to school: Becoming a humane educator. *The Animals' Agenda, 20*(4), 48.

Lindquist, A. (2013). *Beyond hippies and rabbit food: The social effects of vegetarianism and veganism.* (Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis). University of Puget Sound.

Mann, S. E. (2014). *More than just a diet: An inquiry into veganism.* (Unpublished Undergraduate Senior Thesis). University of Pennsylvania.

McDonald, B. (2000). "Once you know something, you can't not know it": An empirical look at becoming vegan. *Society & Animals, 8*(1), 1.

McWilliams, J. (2011, July 12). How 'conscientious carnivores' ignore meat's true origins. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/07/how-conscientious-carnivores-ignore-meats-true-origins/241828/

McWilliams, J. (2013). *The politics of the pasture: How two cattle inspired a national debate about eating animals*. New York, NY: Lantern Books. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzgwMTA4MV9fQU41?sid=7ed2fa67-9c28-494a-9d65-c83036874043@sessionmgr4006&vid=30&format=EK&rid=1

Merriman, B., & Wilson-Merriman, S. (2009). Radical ethical commitments on campus: Results of interviews with college-aged vegetarians. *Journal of College & Character, 10*(4), 1-10.

Monteiro, C. A., Pfeiler, T. M., Patterson, M. D., & Milburn, M. A. (2017). The carnism inventory: Measuring the ideology of eating animals. *Appetite, 113*, 51-62. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.02.011

Norris, J., & Hannan, R. (n.d.) Leafleting and booklet effectiveness. Vegan Outreach. Retrieved from https://veganoutreach.org/leafleting-and-booklet-effectiveness/.

Nguyen, S. (2017). The rise of vegan culture. *Harvard Magazine*, July-August. Retrieved from https://harvardmagazine.com/2017/07/the-rise-of-vegan-culture

Ophélie, V. (2016). (Extra)ordinary activism: Veganism and the shaping of hemeratopias. *International Journal of Sociology & Social Policy, 36*(11), 756-773. doi:10.1108/IJSSP-12-2015-0137

Ortiz, A. (2011). Humane liberation: Incorporating animal rights into critical pedagogy. *Vermont Connection, 32*, 66-77.

Ostfeld, R. J. (2017). Definition of a plant-based diet and overview of this special edition. *Journal of Geriatric Cardiology, 14*(5), 315.

Parks, R. L., & Evans, B. A. (2014). Dietary identities in higher education: Attracting and accommodating vegetarian and vegan students. *College and University, 89*(3), 12-23.

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J., Evans, N. J., & Forney, D. S. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Paxman, C. G. (2016). *Vegan voices: Communicatively negotiating a food-based identity.* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). University of Iowa.

Piazza, J., Ruby, M. B., Kulik, J., Loughnan, S., Luong, M., Watkins, H. M., & Seigerman, M. (2015). Rationalizing meat consumption. The 4Ns. *Appetite, 91,* 114-128.

Pizzolato, J. E., Nguyen, T. K., Johnston, M. P., & Wang, S. (2012). Understanding context: Cultural, relational, & psychological interactions in self-authorship development. *Journal of College Student Development*, *53*(5), 656-679.

Prasad, P. (2015). Crafting qualitative research: Working in the postpositivist traditions. London, UK: Routledge.

Radbod, Y. (2012). Through the eyes of a refugee vegan spring break trip. *Vegetarian Journal, 31*(1), 35.

Radnitz, C., Beezhold, B., & DiMatteo, J. (2015) Investigation of lifestyle choices of individuals following a vegan diet for health and ethical reasons. *Appetite, 90,* 31-36.

Reid, A. (2017). Veganism and 'the analytic question'. *Between the Species: An Electronic Journal for the Study of Philosophy & Animals, 20*(1), 38-58.

Reznickova, A. (2010). *The vegan challenge: Through veganism to a paradigm change.* (Unpublished Undergraduate Course Project). Smith College.

Rosenfeld, D. L., & Burrow, A. L. (2017). The unified model of vegetarian identity: A conceptual framework for understanding food-based choices. *Appetite, 112,* 78-95.

Rosenfeld, D. L., & Burrow, A. L. (2017). Vegetarian on purpose: Understanding the motivations of plant-based dieters. *Appetite, 116*, 456-463. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2017.05.039

Rothgerber, H. (2013). Research report: A meaty matter. Pet diet and the vegetarian′s dilemma. *Appetite, 68,* 76-82. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2013.04.012

Rothgerber, H., & Mican, F. (2014). Research report: Childhood pet ownership, attachment to pets, and subsequent meat avoidance. the mediating role of empathy toward animals. *Appetite, 79*, 11-17. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2014.03.032

Ruby, M. B. (2012). Vegetarianism: A blossoming field of study. *Appetite, 58*(1), 141-150.

Šedová, I., Slovák, L., & Ježková, I. (2016). Coping with unpleasant knowledge: Meat eating among students of environmental studies. *Appetite, 107*, 415-424. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.08.102

Simmons, N., & Chen, Y. (2014). Using six-word memoirs to increase cultural identity awareness. *Communication Teacher, 28*(1), 20-25.

Smith, J. M., (2011). Becoming an atheist in America: Constructing identity and meaning from the rejection of theism. *Sociology of Religion, 72*(2), 215-237.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research. London, UK: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology* (2nd ed.), 53-80. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sneijder, P., & te Molder, H. (2009). Normalizing ideological food choice and eating practices. Identity work in online discussions on veganism. *Appetite*, *52*(3), 621–630. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2009.02.012

Speciesism, (n.d.). Merriam-Webster Dictionary online. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/speciesism

Steele, K. (2013). *The vegan journey: An exploration of vegan experiences with vegans from Burlington, Vermont.* (Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis). University of Vermont.

Strayhorn, T. (2014). Making a way to success: Self-Authorship and academic achievement of first-year African American students at Historically Black Colleges. *Journal of College Student Development*, *55*(2). 151-167.

Taylor, S. (2011). Beasts of burden: Disability studies and animal rights. *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences,* (2), 191. doi:10.5250/quiparle.19.2.0191; 10.5250/quiparle.19.2.0191

Taylor, S. (2013). Vegans, freaks, and animals: Toward a new table fellowship. *American Quarterly, 65*(3), 757-764.

The Vegan Society, (1979). Definition of veganism. Retrieved from https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism

Thomas, M. A. (2016). Are vegans the same as vegetarians? The effect of diet on perceptions of masculinity. *Appetite, 97,* 79-86.

Torres, V., & Hernandez, E. (2007). The influence of ethnic identity on self-authorship: A longitudinal study of Latino/a college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *48*(5), 558-573.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Identity development theories in student affairs: Origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 577-596.

Walsh, B. (2012, January 5). Farm drugs: The FDA moves to restrict (somewhat) the use of antibiotics in livestock. *Time Magazine Online*. Retrieved from http://science.time.com/2012/01/05/farm-drugs-the-fda-moves-to-restrict-somewhat-the-use-of-antibiotics-in-livestock/

Walsh, B. (2013, December 16). The Triple Whopper Environmental Impact of Global Meat Production. *Time Magazine Online*. Retrieved from http://science.time.com/2013/12/16/the-triple-whopper-environmental-impact-of-global-meat-production/

Wright, L., & Adams, C. J. (2015). *The vegan studies project: Food, animals, and gender in the age of terror*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Wroblewski, J. (2016, March 14). Ashley Hampton inspires food revolution through vegan blog. *The Badger Herald*. Retrieved from https://badgerherald.com/artsetc/2016/03/14/ashley-hampton-inspires-food-revolution-through-vegan-blog/

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Recruitment Email

Greetings:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Diane Cooper in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled *Supporting Veganism as an Avowed Identity in College Students.* The purpose of this study is to understand experiences with being vegan in college from your perspective. Your academic advisor/college is contacting you on my behalf.

You are eligible to take part in this study if you have been vegan for at least one year and are an undergraduate student. Your participation will involve an interview about your experiences with being vegan and should take between 30-60 minutes. There are no expected risks from your participation in this study. Potential benefits are that you can help researchers and university stakeholders understand how you experience/d veganism and how it affects/ed you during college.

If you would like to participate or need more information, please contact me, Rose Tahash, at 706-542-4725/email: roselane@uga.edu or Dr. Diane Cooper at 706-542-4120/email: dlcooper@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Rose Tahash
Doctoral Student, College Student Affairs Administration Program

Note: If you receive follow-up recruitment emails and would like to opt out, please email me at roselane@uga.edu so I can ensure no further contact is made.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM
Supporting Veganism as an Avowed Identity in College Students

Dear Participant:

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Diane Cooper
Counseling and Human Development Services
706-542-4120/email: dlcooper@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study
This study is exploring the experiences of college students who are vegan. The purpose of this research is to understand how and what you experience as a vegan college student and how those experiences affect you. This lifestyle choice and chosen (avowed) social identity are not well-documented in scholarly research at this time. You are being asked to participate because you are an undergraduate student at UGA and have been vegan for at least one year.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

- Take part in a one-on-one interview with a researcher
- Commit to a time frame of 45-60 minutes for the interview
- Talk about your experiences with veganism
- Allow the researcher to audio-record the interview for efficiency and accuracy in data analysis/reporting

Risks and discomforts

- We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits

- The findings from this study may help faculty, staff, and other professionals at the University of Georgia understand how you experience college as a vegan in the hopes of improving the experience for other vegan college students.

Audio/Video Recording
Audio recording will be used during this interview to be sure that the researcher can listen to your answers fully in the moment without being distracted by taking many handwritten notes. The recordings are needed in the research to transcribe for data analysis. The audio recording will be archived after transcription for six months in case any additional information needs to be reviewed and will then be destroyed.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____I do not want to have this interview recorded.
_____I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality
The data collected from you will include information that identifies you indirectly (use of codes). Pseudonyms will be used to protect your privacy and confidentiality. Identifiable data will be used only by the research team and stored on a password-protected hard drive until the completion of the project. Only the researchers directly involved in this project will have access to identifiable data.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Diane Cooper a professor at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Diane Cooper at dlcooper@uga.edu or at 706-542-4120. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form and have had all of your questions answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Vegan College Student Research Study Info

Start of Block: SURVEY INSTRUCTION

Start of Block: Student Recruitment Block

Q1 Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. What follows are questions that will help provide demographic and background info for the study. Your real name/identifying info will not be used in results. Please be aware that I am seeking to examine vegan college students using the strict definition of the term. Please read the following example statements and provide your response below.

CLARIFICATION STATEMENT ADDED AFTER FIRST INTERVIEW: *I am fully vegan (meaning I do not intentionally consume or use animal products or byproducts in my everyday life.) This means I do not eat any fish, dairy, cheese, or other animal products,* ***even occasionally****. I do not have "cheat" meals or days where I consume animal products or*

byproducts. I may have clothing, shoes, beauty or home products from before I was vegan that I continue to use but I do not actively purchase animal-product items now.

- ○ Yes (23)
- ○ No (24)

End of Block: Student Recruitment Block

Start of Block: Block 2

Q2 My name is:

- ○ First Name (1) _____
- ○ Last Name (2) _____

Q3 My UGA email address is:

- ○ Email Address (1) _____

Q4 My gender is:

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Non-binary/third gender (3)
- ○ Prefer to self-describe (4)

_____

- ○ Prefer not to say (5)

Q5 My age is:

_____

Q6 I identify my ethnicity as (please select all that apply):

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- ☐ Asian (2)
- ☐ Black or African American (3)
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (4)
- ☐ Multi-racial: Please self-describe (5)

_____

- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6)
- ☐ White (7)
- ☐ Other (specify) (8)

_____

- ☐ Prefer not to say (9)

Q7 I am an undergraduate student in my _____year of college at UGA.

- First (1)
- Second (2)
- Third (3)
- Fourth (4)
- Fifth or Beyond (5)

Q8 My GPA is:

_____

Q9 My home city and state are:

_____

Q10 I have been fully vegan for... (Please state approximate length of time in years)

_____

Q11 I was vegetarian before I became vegan.

○ Yes (please specify how long) (1)

_____

○ No (2)

Q12 Someone in my family was vegetarian or vegan when I was growing up. If your answer is yes, please share who and for how long if you are comfortable.

○ Yes (please share who and for how long if you are comfortable) (1)

_____

○ No (2)

End of Block: Block 2

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Questions

1. How do college students who are vegan make personal meaning of that lifestyle choice?

2. How do students who are vegan perceive and manage the impact of this lifestyle choice during college, especially as it pertains to food and social interaction?

Opening

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and why you were interested in participating in this study.

Personal/Identity

1. Please tell me about your process of becoming a vegan.
    a. Have you changed the ways in which you are vegan over time?
        i. In what ways? What has made it easier? What has made it harder?
2. Can you tell me what place veganism has in your life at the moment as a college student?
3. What personal experiences have you had since coming to campus relating to veganism?
    a. Probe: Think back to your first day or week on campus at UGA as a vegan. What happened? What were your thoughts and feelings during that experience?

Social/Impact

2. Can you tell me about a recent time when veganism came up between you and college friends or peers?
    i. What happened?
    ii. How did you feel?
    iii. How did you cope?
3. Describe your experience with being vegan on campus in relation to your social life.

Food/Impact

4. What have been your experiences being vegan in college in terms of food?
    a. Probes: Tell me about access. Tell me about relational nature of food.
5. What kinds of vegan food experiences have you had outside of dining halls?
6. What was/is your impression of the campus environment relating to veganism and food?
7. How much time/energy have you spent thinking about or planning for vegan food-related issues since arriving at UGA?