

Becoming Vegetarian: An Analysis of the Vegetarian Career Using an Integrated Model
of Deviance

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to explore the nature of a particular food consumption pattern using a number of different deviance theories in order to outline the career path of vegetarianism. Using semi-structured interviews with 45 practicing vegetarians from two regions of the United States, the career path of the vegetarians was developed around David Matza's (1969) theory of becoming deviant. Within each stage of Matza's classic work, more specific theories were applied to explain the friction between vegetarianism and the more socially-accepted practice of meat eating within the United States. The framework of the stages includes the affinity for, affiliation with, and signification of vegetarian ideology and practice. Each stage within the theory is also a stage in the development of the vegetarian identity. The more specific theories utilized to explain phenomena within each particular stage attempt to show a progression from initially being interested in the ideals and practice of vegetarianism to becoming and verbalizing as a mature, practicing vegetarian. Finally, the vegetarians interviewed were asked to give the prognosis for the future of vegetarianism.

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CHAPTER ONE

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the potential friction of a particular food consumption pattern, vegetarianism, and the normative food habits in the United States. Among certain segments of people in the United States, vegetarianism is seen as a marginalized food practice. Nonetheless, the number of adults who engage in this practice in the U.S. is estimated between 2.3% and 6.7% of the population depending on how you sample and how you phrase questions regarding the elimination of meat from one's diet (Haddad & Tanzman 2003; Stahler 2006).

During the 1990s, there has been a "discovery" of the sociological aspects of food consumption (McIntosh 1996). Physical anthropologists and physiological psychologists have long integrated the relation of food habits to culture and/or biomedical practices (Sobal 1992). The sociological interest in food consumption has been gaining prominence as sociologists of food have begun to investigate the relationship between food and societal forces. Sociologists of food have utilized applied and/or clinical processes to answer questions regarding nutritional practice (Sobal, McIntosh, & Whit 1993). Vegetarianism as a particular food consumption pattern has recently become of interest to sociologists. Although contested, research into this practice has been dominated by those who have attempted to examine this behavior from the theoretical lens of vegetarianism as a form deviant behavior.

Consistent with this approach, the overarching structure of the dissertation will be grounded in the 1969 theory developed by David Matza in his classic text, *Becoming Deviant*. Matza's work emphasizes the importance of social interaction within the

evolution of the early stages of the deviant career. This theory provides the overall construct where other more specific theories can be employed to explain vegetarianism. Matza's theory was chosen because of its versatility and overall compatibility with many theories within the symbolic interactionist paradigm.

Based on in-depth interviews, this dissertation examines the pathways to and understanding of vegetarianism from the perspectives of a sample of those who self-identify as vegetarians. This dissertation investigates the entering and being stages of the noninstitutional deviant career of vegetarianism. Vegetarianism has historically been (Spencer 1995) and continues to be (Stiles 1998; Maurer 1997; Willard 1997; McIntosh 1996; Beardsworth & Keil 1992 & 1997) regarded as a marginal, or deviant, food option. Within the existing literature on vegetarianism, there has not been a study to date that has investigated vegetarianism as a form of deviance that has a particular sequential, or career, pattern. Beardsworth and Keil (1992) state that their study of vegetarianism in the United Kingdom looks at the careers of vegetarians, but no where in the research do they adequately tie together the issue of the "vegetarian career".

This dissertation can contribute to the literature on sociological theory in three ways. First of all, this study plans to employ a sequential model (i.e. Becker's model of career deviance) rather than a simultaneous model (i.e. quantitative/statistical model) to study the disvalued phenomenon of vegetarianism. Secondly, this research will attempt to address Howard Becker's (1963) contention that there are not enough studies on differing forms of deviance. Thirdly, this investigation will delve into the lives of people who opted for a particular deviant lifestyle. This last purpose will address Becker's second concern about the paucity of information about deviants' lives.

In order to meet the general goals of the dissertation listed above regarding the dilemmas posed by traditional deviance research and theory, specific objectives need to be achieved. First of all, the research agenda will attempt to identify the factors that would lead one to consider the path of vegetarianism. The essential question surrounding this objective becomes what are the circumstances that drive one to become vegetarian? Secondly, the research must include a query into the entrance stage of the deviant career. In this instance, the recruitment and socialization process of vegetarians must be revealed. Next, the investigation must provide a description of how vegetarians feel, both currently and initially, while participating in social interactions with others such as family members, friends, and peers among other acquaintances. This objective includes the examination of the accounting mechanisms that persons with disvalued identities utilize to negotiate their identity in a positive light. Finally, this dissertation will attempt to separate the phenomenon of developmental vegetarianism, or early-stage vegetarianism, from mature, or long-term vegetarianism. The eating patterns and motives differ and shift during the maturation process of vegetarians. This last objective is unique in that there has not been a study to date to look at the maturation of accounting mechanisms within a particular form of deviance.

Matza's theory of becoming deviant is versatile enough to provide the structure that aids in the contribution to the sociological literature in deviance on the three points Becker (1963) outlines above. Matza's theory also provides organization to meet the objectives necessary to attain the three goals put forth by Becker. As part of the symbolic interactionist paradigm, the stages of Matza's work attempt to supply a framework for those who decide to enter and sustain a deviant identity. The theory is divided into three

stages: affinity, affiliating, and signification. Affinity can be introduced as the attraction one has toward a deviant activity. The affiliating stage occurs when the novice deviant acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to become the deviant in question. Finally, signification is the point where the person has become what the deviant behavior suggests. In this case, signification is the point when one acknowledges, pursues, and is able to defend their vegetarian behavior.

Within each stage of Matza's theory, more specific theories will be utilized in an attempt to reveal the process by which someone becomes vegetarian. The affinity stage incorporates work from the sociology of religion. More specifically, a portion was adapted from the theory of conversion to deviant religious organizations proposed by John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965). The affinity stage for vegetarianism employs the first portion of their predisposing conditions that makes conversion to a deviant religious organization possible. This first step in the Lofland-Stark model is the development of tension. Vegetarians experience different types of tension that previews the future conversion to the lifestyle.

The next stage, affiliating, is essentially the stage where one becomes involved in the deviant activity and is the stage where one begins to become socialized as a deviant. This stage in the study of vegetarianism will be divided into two parts, the initial decision to become vegetarian and the socialization process into vegetarianism. The explanation of this stage also has taken a concept from the Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion. Where affinity is essentially a predisposing condition, affiliating is aligned with the second part of their theory, situational contingencies. Once tension builds with a person who is contemplating vegetarianism, the point at which the decision to become

vegetarian is very essential. Different types of turning points will be outlined using the Lofland-Stark model as a framework as well as a theory of conversion to vegetarianism as proposed by Alan Beardsworth and Theresa Kiel (1992). The second part of the affiliating stage can begin to be explained by the Lofland-Stark model. Group affective bonds are another central theme of their situational contingencies that lead to deviant religious conversion. However, these bonds are built within a process of learning from those who already exist in the group. The Lofland-Stark model does not adequately address the learning portion of the group affective bond. Cynthia Snow and David Phillips (1980) argue that the group affective bond and the subsequent learning are the most important portion of the Lofland-Stark model. Matza (1969) suggests that the affiliating stage resembles most closely the theory of deviant socialization as proposed by Edwin Sutherland in his theory of differential association (1947). The problem with Matza's suggestion is that differential association has evolved into another more accepted theory over the course of time since Sutherland's last publication of the theory. Ronald Akers (1998) developed an alternative theory to differential association that incorporates much of the essential concepts of Sutherland's theory, but also extends the theory into a distinct learning model. The focus of social learning theory as proposed by Akers is on the sources of learning. Therefore, the sources of vegetarian socialization will be outlined as the second part of the affiliating stage.

The final stage of the theory of becoming deviant is signification (Matza 1969). Signification entails the deviant building an identity around the deviant behavior. Vegetarianism is no different. Vegetarians differ in eating patterns and reasoning for their decision to become and to continue their vegetarianism. Lawrence Nichols' (1990)

typology of accounts regarding deviance was utilized to show the maturation process of vegetarians regarding eating patterns and arguments for participating in the lifestyle.

There is a paucity of research regarding the development of the vegetarian lifestyle, and none specifically employing deviance theory to explain conversion. Beardsworth and Keil (1992 & 1997) provide the most comprehensive explanations regarding the conversion to the vegetarian practice. Beardsworth and Keil tend to focus on the idea of conversion instead of recruitment in the initial adaptation of vegetarianism. Their first study (Beardsworth and Keil 1992) focused on the time interval of the conversion process, i.e. whether the conversion was abrupt or gradual. The second study (Beardsworth and Keil 1997) was part of text on the sociology of food and investigated meat eating as well as vegetarian issues. Another comprehensive work on vegetarianism is Donna Maurer's (1997) doctoral dissertation looking at vegetarianism from the framework of a social movement. Her work consistently referred to vegetarianism as marginal or deviant as a lifestyle choice. However, Maurer does not address the issue directly. Maurer did attempt to outline the themes that led to the expansion of the vegetarian movement since the late 1960s in the United States. The last study solely focusing on the causes of vegetarian conversion was completely by Beverly Stiles (1998). This study resembled Beardsworth and Keil's work but attempted to gain a larger sample size and used more of a quantitative survey design. The larger sample was collected from Internet discussion groups that centered on the vegetarian lifestyle in the United States. Stiles' findings were consistent with those of Beardsworth and Keil (1992). The problem that arises with vegetarianism is that it is a marginal lifestyle choice. None of the studies attempted to look at vegetarianism from the lens of it being a deviant behavior choice.

Why do people choose to be outside of the mainstream regarding their dietary choices? Utilizing deviance theory may fill in some of the gaps that these other studies did not attempt to answer.

This study attempts to gain an understanding of the behavior of vegetarians through interviews. Interviews with people who consider themselves vegetarian would be considered an effective way to gather a detailed amount of data within a reasonable amount of time. Samples were collected using a snowball sampling technique because there are not any easily attainable databases or contact lists of vegetarians that would lead to a well-constructed probability sample. Also, snowball samples are widely accepted in the study of deviant due to the marginally of behaviors that many scholars of deviance investigate. To make the study more applicable, two snowball samples were collected: one in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and one in the southwest region of the United States. Each sample has a minimum of 20 members for a total of 45 practicing vegetarians. Each interview was transcribed by the interviewer and the total process of data collection and transcription took approximately 14 months.

This dissertation contains seven additional chapters. The next chapter presents a review of the literature involving historical, philosophical, and social scientific inquiries into vegetarianism and traditional western dietary practices. The third chapter will explain in more detail the methodology used to gather the information for this study. The fourth chapter will outline the tensions the individuals had before converting to vegetarianism. The tensions are essentially what Matza (1969) described as the affinity stage of his theory of becoming deviant. The fifth and sixth chapters take on the middle stage of Matza's theory, affiliating. In order to affiliate or become socialized as a

vegetarian, there has to be a decision to actually become a vegetarian. Chapter five discusses the turning points that one goes through to decide to convert to vegetarianism. Chapter six outlines the sources of socialization for novice vegetarians. Akers' (1998) work on the social learning of deviant behavior is the theory behind the types of socialization sources. The seventh chapter deals with the vegetarian identity that develops during a vegetarian career. This chapter is the final stage of Matza's theory, signification. At this point, the person is practicing vegetarianism and his reasons for the practice. This chapter attempts to look back at the initial eating patterns and reasoning as well as the current eating patterns and reasoning of the vegetarians interviewed. Nichols' (1990) typology of accounts regarding deviance is the framework for the reasoning of the vegetarian lifestyle. Finally, the last chapter describes the interviewees' prognoses from their own vegetarianism as well as their views on society and vegetarianism. Also, the final chapter will tie together the work revealing how the participants of this study became vegetarian.

CHAPTER TWO

The Case for Vegetarianism as Deviance

Vegetarianism, like any other behavior that violates social norms, is rooted in the context of the society in question. This chapter assembles the literature that supports the argument for vegetarianism violating the normative prescription of meat consumption in the United States. Statistically, vegetarianism does meet the criteria of deviation within the overall population of the United States. However, vegetarianism also meets the criteria of more traditional forms of deviance and the subsequent stigma for practicing said forms of deviance. This chapter is broken down five connecting sections. First of all, an outline of the social norm of meat eating must be discussed. The United States has a unique history regarding meat playing a central role in the population's diet. The next section presents a brief social history regarding the origins of vegetarianism in Western societies as the U.S. vegetarian movement took its cue from European vegetarian culture. The third section outlines the scholarly work on deviance that is pertinent to this dissertation. The final two sections argues for studying vegetarianism from a deviance perspective as well as presenting an argument for vegetarianism as a form of positive deviance. Once this theoretical positioning of this work is presented, the methodology used in this study will be outlined in chapter three.

The Norm of Meat Consumption in the United States

The foundations of U.S. agriculture can be traced back to the agricultural practices of the American Indians. The Native American population never truly had an adequate food supply (Drache 1996). The tribes of the Native Americans spent the vast

majority of their time foraging, raising, and hunting for food. Meat, especially wild game, in this environment was incredibly important. According to Drache (1996), wild game was second to only maize in importance to the Native Americans of the eastern and coastal areas. Drache estimates that for a settlement of 100 people only 5 to 10 of the men were hunters. In order to support this settlement, a minimum of 100 deer skins were needed annually for tepees and clothing. Each hunter would have to kill one deer every other day in order to keep the village provided with meat. Drache points out that it took four pounds of meat to satisfy the appetite of the average Native American every day.

The arrival of the European settlers did nothing to quell the taste for meat. The first settlement at Jamestown in 1607 devoured all of the meat they brought over from England with them in order to survive that first winter. However, by 1633, the supply of domestic livestock improved. The numbers of hogs and cattle grew to the point that the colonists were able to send livestock back on return trips to England (Drache 1996).

During this time in early American history, the meat of choice was pork. Hogs were the most adaptable of all kinds of livestock. The hogs' ability to live in a woodland environment as well as its talent for scrounging for food such as nuts and acorns gave the pig an advantage over other domestic animals (Ross 1980). Cattle, on the other hand, were present, but its meat was not employed very often. Cattle held its place in colonial life by producing dairy products such as milk and butter. Cattle were also necessary for traction. However, which is still true even today, cattle represented wealth, and beef was considered an occasional treat (Ross 1980). It was not until the latter half of the 19th Century that cattle supplanted hogs as the most important domestic animal.

Pork also held an advantage over beef because of the ways in which the early Americans packaged the meat. Curing, pickling, and salting were the primary ways to store meat, and one of the reasons pork became so popular is that it actually becomes more flavorful after these preserving practices (Ross 1980). The preservation of meat played an important role for the early American. Bread and meat were the standbys during the cold winter months (McIntosh 1995). McIntosh (1995) continues by noting that only the well-to-do actually had fresh meat, the most notable being beef. The ordinary citizen ate salted pork, fish, Indian-meal bread, and dark bread. This basic dietary pattern with meat as the central entrée began during the colonial period and still exists today. Van Syckle (1945) agrees saying that the diet of the early American had remained constant into the 20th Century with meat, sweets, and white flour being the dominant choices for food.

Dietary patterns began to shift in the 1870s from pork being the mainstay to that of beef (Ross 1980). This change to beef began with the expansion of the American West. Completion of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1869 opened the door for the transportation of food and other essential products from coast to coast (McIntosh 1995). In 1870, the refrigerated railroad car was introduced in order to ship food from the Midwest to the coasts (McIntosh 1995). The introduction of the refrigerated boxcar shifted the focus during this time from pork to beef. The refrigerated boxcar allowed dressed beef to be shipped fresh. Pork could not compete because hogs had never been bred to produce fresh meat (Ross 1980). Rifkin (1992) notes that the railroad system and the technological advances that came with it laid the groundwork for beef to dominate well into the latter half of the 20th Century.

By the time the 20th Century did roll around, most Americans had plenty of food. In fact, most people ate more food than necessary. Obesity and digestive problems were commonplace (McIntosh 1995). The social problem with overeating led the people of the United States to adopt the “core” eating pattern that has remained until this day.

Originally, W.O. Atwater, the director of the U.S. Government’s Food Administration (today this agency is known as the Food and Drug Administration), stated that Americans ate too much food and spent too much of their income on food-related items. He felt that most Americans consumed large amounts of fats and sugars (Van Syckle 1945). These findings led to the development and eventual adoption of the “core” eating pattern for the United States. According to Levenstein (1988), the core eating pattern looks something like this:

Breakfast

Citrus fruit or juice
Dried Cereal or
Eggs and Toast

Lunch

Meat sandwich
Soup
Salad

Dinner

Meat (entrée)
Potato side
Vegetable side
Simple dessert

The beginning of the 21st Century has seen the continuation of the “core” eating pattern as well as the development of the fast food industry. The fast food industry is said to have begun in the 1940s when White Castle went into business. The fast food industry typically features meat products such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and chicken products (McIntosh 1995). Shields and Young (1990) state that the fast food industry accounts for 40% of the all the money spent on meals away from home. Rifkin (1992) points out that the hamburger came into the national spotlight in 1904 at the World’s Fair in St. Louis. Ever since, the hamburger is “fast becoming the trademark for 20th Century American life” (Rifkin 1992 p.261).

As one can see from this very brief section, meat has been the traditional American foodway. Willard (1997) points out that even though Americans are slowly moving away from red meat. The practice of meat eating in general has not declined. It has only shifted from red meat to more poultry products. The influence of the American lifestyle has driven the world's consumption of meat to an all-time high.

The Origins of Western Vegetarianism

The origins of voluntary vegetarianism must not be confused with the fact of the existence of involuntary vegetarianism. Involuntary vegetarianism may result from poverty or scarcity of animal products. The ideals that vegetarians promote can only exist where there is an overabundance of food. Religious taboos concerning meat avoidance also falls into the category of voluntary vegetarianism because one would not worry about what sanctions would be levied when one is attempting to accumulate food (Spencer 1995).

The foundation of vegetarianism can be said to have begun at nearly the same time, around 500 BC. Both Buddha in India and Pythagoreas in Greece expounded the vegetarian ideal that linked the forbidden nature of killing all forms of life and the belief in the transmigration of souls. However, it is Pythagoreas we are interested in here because he is such an important figure in the history of vegetarianism and environmentalism that he could easily be referred to as the father of western vegetarianism (Gregerson 1994). In fact, vegetarianism was known as the Pythagorean diet until the 1840s. The basic premise behind the ideology that became known as the Pythagorean diet was not to kill anything that has had life (Hughes 1980). In Pythagorean

philosophy, there is a unity between the elements and the creatures that exist within the elements. This balance then forbade the practitioners of the Pythagorean diet from eating the flesh of slaughtered animals as well as holding an occupation that involved violence such as a butcher or a soldier. Pythagoreans even forbade the eating of beans because they were considered life giving.

Early Christian forms of vegetarianism came about as a way to live an ascetic lifestyle. The abstinence from meat was a way to mortify the body from carnal sensations while at the same time purifying the soul (Spencer 1995). This is also consistent with doctrine that true insight would come as the body was deprived of the pleasures of the flesh (Willard 1997). The ascetics viewed food and drink as for sustenance not for passion and pleasure (Spencer 1995).

Sociological Perspectives on Deviance

The fact that the people I interviewed questioned the validity of vegetarianism as deviance only reflected a larger debate within the discipline of sociology. In fact, this debate has become somewhat contentious among the top researchers in deviance. A number of sociologists claim that the study of deviant behavior is arguably the most contested of all the subdisciplines in sociology (Clinard & Meier 1999; Thio 1998). The problem basically lies in what sociologists consider deviant. For example, some sociologists argue that deviant behavior consists of any violation of a social norm whereas others insist that deviance is a norm violation that must be accompanied by disgust, anger, or disapproval towards the transgressor (Thio 1998). However, the study of deviance has its roots in basic sociological theory. Originally, the study of deviance

provided insight to social phenomenon, and that insight granted the discipline of sociology with information that could assist social scientists with their goal of understanding society (Becker 1964). Simply, for a sociologist to understand what is considered “normal” in a society, one must study what is abnormal or deviant.

Howard Becker (1964) argued that sociology and deviance became separated in the mid-20th Century when scholars of deviance attempted to answer specific questions for the general public as well as for public officials. Sociologists who studied deviance were asked to answer questions concerning specific acts of crime and deviance. The result was that the connection between the study of deviance/conformity and sociological theory was broken. Goode (1994) describes how the nature of the scholarly work in the 1960’s and 1970’s regarding crime and deviance has moved over to the investigation of social control and its agents instead of the etiology of the criminal or deviant act in question. Goode accuses Becker and others associated with the labeling perspective that labeling theory also focuses on the nature of social control and societal reaction and not etiology. For example, Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) also concludes that the constructionist perspective, in which labeling theory can be included, tends to define the nature of deviance and social problems within the socio-historical context of the time period that the behavior was construed as problematic. It is a focus on the definitional qualities of the behavior as a result of the social control mechanisms and societal reaction, not the behavior itself. However, Becker’s position counters by stating that the connection between sociology and deviance became re-established during the 1950s and 1960s when sociologists of deviance expanded the realm of investigation to include traditional institutions and the people who perform roles in these institutions. The product

of this new spin within the sociology of deviance was a better understanding of conventional society and normative behavior. Therefore, the study of the etiology of deviance must not exist independent of traditional sociological theory.

Currently, as Goode as well as Becker would contend, the sociology of deviant behavior has again become disconnected from the study of sociology in general. In the advent of the rising rate of crime and violence in the last quarter of the 20th Century, sociologists are again pressed to answer specific questions regarding particular criminal and deviant acts. In 1963, within the pages of his classic work *The Outsiders*, Howard Becker outlined the problems that existed within the study of deviance and how sociologists could begin to address these problems. I believe that the problems described by Becker over 35 years ago remain relevant within the current study of deviant behavior. This position remains consistent with Goode's argument concerning the break in orientation from etiology to social control. In order to study the etiology of deviance, a sociologist must couch his or her explanation within an understanding of the normative order.

Becker (1963) suggested that theories of deviant behavior are the result of faulty construction on two points. First of all, theories of deviance are constructed on incomplete information concerning the lives of deviants. Simply, there have not been enough detailed studies concerning specific forms of deviance. Secondly, theories of deviance are constructed on only a modicum of possible deviant activity. Many types and forms of deviance have yet to be investigated. Becker suggests that the main culprit behind this dilemma concerning theory construction resides in the use of simultaneous techniques to collect and analyze data. The utilization of statistical tools and techniques

assume that the variables under consideration operate simultaneously. The theory that results from this endeavor attempts to combine and organize variables that will “predict” the behavior in question. For example, theoretical models such as the general theory of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990), general strain theory (Agnew 1992), and social learning theory (Akers 1997) tend to be monolithic and purport a prediction or explanation for all forms of deviance. However, within the prediction is essentially the problem with the theory. The majority of the middle range theory that is constructed to explain deviance is actually designed to predict, not to understand or explain.

In order to deal with this dilemma, Becker (1963) presents the position that deviant behavior should be studied through the use of sequential model instead of the incomplete simultaneous model. A sequential model assumes that patterns of behavior, either conforming or deviant, develop in an orderly sequence. Thus, a person who engages in a particular form of deviance should go through a series of stages or steps. Becker suggests that the conceptual model of a career would aid in the sequential study of deviance.

Becker points out that the career model is useful in the study of deviance because it “refers to the sequence of movements from one position to another in an occupational system made by any individual who works in the system” (1963 p24). The major feature of this model is the conceptualization of career contingencies. Career contingencies are those factors on which the movement from one position to another is based. Becker and Straus (1956) argued in their influential study of career contingencies that “(a)dult identity is largely a function of career movements” (p253). Career movements can traditionally be described in the terms of flow. The most common view of career flow is

seen as upward. People are recruited and begin at the bottom. People move up from the low prestige positions as they gain skill, work experience, and age. Even though this characteristic has changed in the new high technology, service economy, it was believed that most would remain with the same organization until retirement and many would achieve high posts. With the changes in position and status come changes in identity according to Becker and Straus (1956). In the career model of identity, behavior stability is dependent on stability in the social structure. Therefore, career movements will be accompanied by changes or development in personal identity. For the sociologist of deviance to employ the career model is to investigate the development of a deviant's identity.

The deviant career is traditionally broken down into three stages: entering deviance, being deviant, and exiting deviance (Adler & Adler 1997). The entering stage of deviance requires an investigative look into the recruitment and socialization into a deviant activity. The recruitment into deviance may be by a close friend or by a mentor who can show the novice specific techniques and provide opportunities to perform the deviant act in question. However, a person may come to deviance by self-discovery and acquire the techniques through observation of others or in the mass media (Bryant 1990). Being deviant involves the development of a personal style of deviance that includes the ability to balance their questionable behavior with parents, peers, and fellow members of the community. Being deviant also requires the individual to manage or negotiate their identity. The third and final stage of the deviant career is the exiting of deviance. Exiting deviance is the process by which the person who has been deviant attempts to end their relationship with that particular form of deviance. Bryant (1990) suggests that for many

individuals deviance is ephemeral and that exiting the deviant pathway can occur with maturity or by simply walking away from the disvalued behavior. However, Adler and Adler (1997) assert that even though most people who are involved in a deviant career wish to escape, the reality of the situation makes the exit process quite difficult. Problems such as a criminal record or lack of a respectable career can become barriers to a conforming life. Thus, exiting deviance becomes extremely problematic under certain circumstances.

In addition to the fact that the deviant career occurs in stages, the deviant careers can be exhibited in one of two forms. Delos Kelly (1996) contends that the deviant career can be in the form of either the institutional career or the noninstitutional career. The institutional career differs from the noninstitutional career in that the individual in the former takes a passive role. The career in this instance is begun and continued by an institution of social control. Career criminals, school dropouts or pushouts, and persons with a mental illness would fall into this category. The noninstitutional career is one in which the individual pursues because of personal commitment. The person in this case would be considered an active participant. The individual becomes responsible for entering and continuing in this particular type of deviant activity. The actor who develops a deviant career identity must “act in accord with existing ideology, culture, practice, and traditions” (Kelly 1996 p445). Therefore, the person engaged in a noninstitutional deviant career must present almost single-handedly a conforming self-image.

The analogy of the “deviant career” is not without its problems. David Luckenbill and Joel Best (1981) compared the nature of the respectable and the deviant career to better understand the nature of the analogy’s use within the sociology of deviance. They

concluded that respectable and deviant careers are indeed analogous, but there are limitations to the analogy. Respectable careers and deviant careers usually have the three stages: entering the career, being involved with the career, and exiting the career. However, the pathways people follow within the two types of careers are different.

Respectable and deviant careers differ on several dimensions. According to Luckenbill and Best (1981), the respectable career has formally defined positions, established pathways for career movement, upward mobility, and a central role in the individual's life. On the contrary, deviant careers do not have a well-defined hierarchy of positions, do not have established pathways for career movements, are usually downwardly mobile, and are not central to a person's life. Deviant careers are usually short-lived. Luckenbill and Best also note that Becker and Straus (1956) employed the escalator metaphor to explain respectable career movements. This escalator is upward moving and the pace is uniform. Luckenbill and Best, however, argue that this metaphor of the upward moving escalator does not fit with the deviant career. They suggest the metaphor of a path in the woods. Deviant careers resemble more closely a walk in the woods because pathways may or may not exist, may become overgrown, may get washed away, or may be followed at either a fast or slow pace. Luckenbill and Best state that "(d)eviant careers are fluid; they develop in many different directions, depending on such contingencies as the individual's objectives, resources, abilities, and opportunities" (1981 pp204-205). It is the fluidity of the deviant career that creates the limitation within the analogy.

Vegetarianism as a Norm Violation

William Alex McIntosh (1996) points out in his textbook, *Sociologies of Food and Nutrition* that the study of the sociology within nutrition looks at the social epidemiology of inadequate or different diets, obesity, stunted growth, and overall poor nutritional health. He even goes as further to list that the sociology within nutrition attempts to investigate the “(v)ariations in attitudes and behaviors regarding hunger, eating habits, (and) nutritional status” (p14). Within this outline, McIntosh states that certain forms of vegetarianism can be construed as deviant. Maurer (1997) also asks the question whether or not vegetarianism “will always be regarded as a marginal or deviant choice” (p112).

Historically, vegetarians have been viewed as deviant. The abstinence of meat even for Pythagoreas in the Greek city-states was considered subversive (Spencer 1995). In 450 BC, the controlling government attacked the Pythagorean order and membership began to decline. In subsequent centuries, Greek comedic writers used their plays to poke fun at the religious orders that practiced vegetarianism. Spencer (1995) goes on to say that throughout time:

Vegetarianism is one of the signs of a radical thinker, the individual who criticizes the status quo, who desires something better, more humane and more civilised for the whole of society. It makes meat-eaters uneasy and they often react aggressively (p97).

The existence of the vegetarian sects during the time of early Christianity brought about accusations that those practicing this type of foodway were religious heretics. The church stood by the doctrine concerning man’s dominion over animals, and human beings were insulting God by not eating what He provided for them. The only time it was

accepted to practice vegetarianism was if one was an ascetic. Even so, the ascetic was encouraged to go off into the desert alone to practice vegetarianism out of the sight of the other Christians (Spencer 1995).

Being vegetarian itself was not the only reason that practicing sects were ostracized. The ideology behind the sects also had much to do with it. Usually, these sects refuted and spoke out against the dominant churches of the time. Vegetarian sects went against the church by allowing women to be treated as equals as well as opening their doors to homosexuals (Spencer 1995). Also, these sects would denounce the accumulation of wealth. Meat consumption and the owning of livestock shows that the proprietor has wealth, power, and status in the community. In this context, vegetarianism is seen a threat to the fundamental philosophies of western, capitalistic societies such as the United States.

In the closest article on the topic of vegetarians as deviants, New and Priest (1967) also categorize vegetarians and other health food users as food cultists. However, they discern between two groups: general users and unitary users. The general users went to health food stores to gather a variety of products for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, the unitary users believed in a single overwhelming philosophy that New and Priest deemed religious in nature. A subculture eventually developed around this unitary philosophy. Their conclusion was that vegetarianism and health food use was a manifestation of civil discontent.

Vegetarianism as Positive Deviance

As I discussed in the opening of this chapter, a number of vegetarians that I interviewed openly questioned the assumption of vegetarianism as deviant behavior due

to the representations of deviance as something that a particular society deems socially reprehensible. However, when I framed vegetarianism as a form of norm violation that in its essence is for the benefit of humankind, the vegetarians I interviewed agreed and, in some instances, were proud of their rebellious behavior. When an act can be classified as being deviant but it is also believed that this act is for the moral, economic, or intellectual growth of a society, the act is classified as positive deviance.

According to Druann Maria Heckert (1998), the call for the study of positive deviance can be said to have begun with Pitrim Sorokin in 1950. Sorokin (1950) argued that the social sciences have spent an excess of time studying the negative element of human behavior instead of the more positive characteristics. He suggested that social scientists' ability to understand the more positive facets of human behaviors would only aid in the study of the negative.

However, many sociologists have preferred to focus their attention on the negative. The result is, according to Heckert (1998), that there exists a plethora of studies investigating negative deviance whereas there are only a limited number of studies looking at the positive nature of deviant behavior. Heckert contends that positive deviance has been conceptualized in these limited studies from three perspectives: a norm-violating stance, a labeling/societal reaction perspective, and from a position regarding a very specific kind of action.

The norm-violating perspective suggests that human behavior can be distributed along a continuum. The continuum would look very much like that of the normal distribution or the bell curve (Wilkins 1995). Normative behaviors would constitute the majority of the continuum and would be located at the center of the distribution. Both the

extremely negative and the extremely positive behaviors would occupy opposite ends of the distribution. This would lead to a small number of negative deviants at one end and a small number of positive deviants at the other.

The major problem with this approach is in the term “deviance”. Edward Sagarin (1985) sternly advocated that the study of deviance should only include negative forms of deviance. He even went as far as calling positive deviance an oxymoron. Sagarin’s argument warns that sociologists who study positive deviance are confusing “deviance” with “deviation”. Sagarin contends that the word deviance carries a well-deserved negative connotation. On the other hand, positive deviance should not be equated with positive deviation, a statistical term associated with the normal distribution. However, a number of sociologists (Dodge 1985; Ben-Yehuda 1990; Heckert 1998, 1997, 1989; Hughes and Coakley 1991; Ewald and Jobu 1985) have advocated and/or employed the concept of positive deviance in theoretical or applied research in deviance.

Positive deviance can also be explained from a societal reaction perspective. This perspective is most closely associated with the labeling perspective. The reaction from society is crucial, according to Heckert (1998), because where some behaviors need a large difference in behavior to be judged deviant, other behaviors only need a small difference. Erich Goode (1991) attacks the viability positive deviance as a valid realm of sociological investigation. He states that the behaviors that have been studied under the title “positive deviance” should actually be called “deviance” in most instances. Goode continues by pointing out that positive forms of labeling are not deviance because the social cost does not come with the reaction. Goode concludes by agreeing with Sagarin that positive deviance is an oxymoron. However, he does agree with many of the

proponents of positive deviance in that sociologists should expand the realm of study within the scholarly world of deviance.

The final approach to positive deviance examines specific types of action. Heckert (1998) attempts to argue that specific behaviors such as excessive conformity constitute an original perspective in the study of positive deviance. The behavior is acceptable but the positive deviant conforms too much. Therefore, it is the specific action within the appropriate behavior that causes the deviance. The major problem with this position lies in the reaction. In essence, this perspective is still dependent on the reaction of the culture or society. Thus, it seems that this position could be an extension of the labeling perspective.

Heckert (1998) has developed a typology regarding positive deviance. She maintains that there are five types of positive deviance with a potential sixth classification. The established five categories according to Heckert are as follows: altruism, charisma, innovation, supra-conformity, and innate characteristics. The sixth potential category is the ex-deviant. The argument for the ex-deviant as a positive deviant is based on the process of exiting deviance. Exiting deviance allows the ex-deviant to transcend the negative label. This is accomplished through a process of destigmatization or purification. According to Heckert, society evaluates the ex-deviant from a more positive locale. Examples include the reformed alcoholic, the ex-convict, and the ex-prostitute.

The first of the five established categories is altruism. Heckert (1998) states that the altruist can be traced back to the work of Auguste Comte, the father of sociology, and more recently, to the work on positive deviance by Pitrim Sorokin. Altruism can be

defined as “an act undertaken voluntarily to assist another person or other people without any expectation of reward” (Heckert 1998 p25). The second form of positive deviance is charisma. Heckert notes that Max Weber first proclaimed the nature of the charismatic leader as a form of legitimate authority. Charismatic relationships are composed of two elements: a situation where there is a group of people who is in search of a leader and a person who has the talents and abilities to lead the particular group in question. Thirdly, innovation can be defined as the combination of existing properties or elements in a completely novel form. Heckert states that innovations are a fundamental part of a society and must occur in crucial areas of culture in order for the civilization to evolve. Merton (1938) argued that innovation was a form of negative deviance. In Mertonian theory, innovation exists when people accept the goals of a particular culture but choose alternative means to achieve those goals. This ambivalence within the ideal of innovation is inherent in the classic structural-functional position regarding the fact that acceptable patterns of behavior can cause both positive and negative consequences. The fourth classification is supra-conformity. By definition, supra-conformity reaches an idealized level within a society. Heckert (1998) notes that the idealized behavior within a certain area of society is rarely achieved, so those who do achieve the idealized state are positively deviant. Ewald (1981) stated that runners and weightlifters who were overly religious with their workout regimen are the perfect example of the supra-conformist. Finally, the last type of positive deviance is the innate characteristics among individuals. Heckert describes this class as the attributes within particular actions and/or actors. Examples of this kind of positive deviance are beauty, intelligence, and/or a particular talent.

Under the definition that positive deviance is behavior that can be evaluated as “superior”, vegetarianism meets Heckert’s criteria for positive deviance and, therefore, deserves a place within the typology. Vegetarianism is viewed by many as a difficult and even noble attempt at personal and/or societal benefit. The problem then becomes where would vegetarianism fit within the typology? On the surface, it would appear that vegetarianism would fit the category of altruism. However, vegetarianism has six major motives (Beardsworth & Keil 1997), and not all are altruistic. One of the major motives is the benefit of a healthy diet. Being a vegetarian for health-related reasons is not very altruistic. It is for a personal benefit. However, vegetarianism can be classified as supra-conformity. Vegetarianism represents the ideal, whether it is the drive for ideal health, an ideal society, or the ideal treatment of animals. Vegetarianism even has the potential to become overly idealistic and incredibly strict in its variations. For example, vegans and fruitarians are extreme forms of vegetarianism that require supra-conforming behavior in order to reach that goal. In the end, vegetarianism has historically been a violation of major foodways in Western civilization. In the United States today, vegetarianism has, in a very effective manner, moved away from the heretical offenses of old world Europe to a marginal behavior that is seen as having positive value for those who practice. However, those who practice vegetarianism must negotiate their decision to participate in behavior outside the norm in similar ways to any other person who engages in deviant behavior.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

In the attempt to address the issues regarding the problems with theory in the sociology of deviant behavior, I will employ a qualitative research design using an interactionist, or interpretivist, paradigm. Adler and Adler (1997) note that the interactionist perspective as it applies to deviance attempts to overcome the weaknesses of the objectivist, or positivistic, paradigms. The simplicity of objectivist methods does not provide a solid foundation for research when definitions of social norms and their violations are contested. The problem of simplicity lies within what Becker (1973) termed the simultaneous methodology of statistical analysis. Therefore, the sequential model known as the deviant career will be employed as the theoretical backdrop for the methodology employed.

The purpose of using the methodology chosen was to address the three major goals of the study: (1) to employ a sequential model instead of the simplistic, and very popular, simultaneous models; (2) to investigate a new and different form of deviant behavior; and (3) to give a detailed understanding of the deviant phenomenon from the point of view of the people involved in it.

Qualitative techniques will be used to collect the data. More specifically, interviews with practicing vegetarians will be conducted using the interview guide technique as described by Michael Patton (1990). The interview guide is one of three basic avenues to collect qualitative data through the use of open-ended interviewing techniques. The purpose of this type of open-ended interview technique is to remain

flexible while simultaneously gathering data on specific topics that are outlined in advance. To quote Patton, “(t)he interview guide simply serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered” (1990 p280). The interviewer in this case assumes that there is common information to be elicited from the respondents, but standardized questions are not written in advance in order for the interview to adapt to the context and specific respondents during the actual interview. It is believed that the interview guide will keep the conversation as relaxed as possible while making sure that all of the topics are covered in a timely fashion (See Appendix B).

Rationale for Methodology

As Hughes and Degher (1993) have suggested, there are relatively few studies investigating the combination of both accounting systems and stigma management techniques as methods of coping. More specifically, there are few studies that delve into the context that the combination of these coping mechanisms become apparent. Vegetarianism is one subculture in which it is necessary to employ coping mechanisms in order to rationalize the marginality of this questionable foodway and to protect the personal identity of the practitioner, which can become scrutinized. Since vegetarianism is a sensitive and personal consumption option, people who subsist on a primarily fruit and vegetable diet have chosen this path because of beliefs regarding health, politics, religion, economic and food production practices, and personal philosophies that each person holds dear to him or herself. For this particular reason, Lee (1993) suggests that a researcher should create trust in order for the respondent to disclose sensitive or personal information. Therefore, personal interviews are to be employed to counteract the

depersonalization that a standardized survey questionnaire would promote. The advantage of a survey interview would be that the superficial nature of the methodology would produce little risk to the respondent (Lee 1993).

Research Approach

As mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 practicing vegetarians who resided in two medium-sized college towns located in the Mid-Atlantic and Southwest regions of the United States. The semi-structured format of the interviews would permit me to collect pertinent factual data about the respondent and his or her eating behavior while at the same time be flexible enough to allow for the respondent to provide his or her own frame of reference concerning the negotiating of the vegetarian identity. As mentioned above, the interview guide is provided in Appendix B.

The section of the interview involving the structured questions provides a basis for the interview to begin. The questions pertain to what kind of foods the vegetarian consumes. The majority of the questions are open-ended. I chose this method in order to explore a few general themes about the nature of vegetarianism and the strategies in which vegetarians cope with their marginalized behavior. Sudman and Bradburn (1982) argue that open-ended question should be preferred for research into sensitive topics because closed-ended questions do not permit the subject to describe his or her activities and experiences in his or her own words. In addition, this method respects how the respondent outlines his or her answer. Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that the responses should be from the subject's viewpoint, not from the viewpoint of the researcher. Crowl (1993) points out that the best interview protocols are ones that ask the

fewest questions as possible. The questions should be limited to those that would be pertinent to data analysis.

The goal of this study is to place the methods of coping utilized by vegetarians into a set of categories that are unordered. Closed-ended questions have a preordained set of responses that reduces the flexibility of the subjects' answers. Open-ended questions allow the subject to describe their views in a "real" fashion (Fowler 1993 p82). The third point is probably the most important. As mentioned above, open-ended survey questions permit the respondent to answer the questions in their own words. This point cannot be taken for granted. The freedom to describe the context and the situation in which a coping mechanism becomes utilized is essential for the success of this study. Finally, Fowler notes that open-ended questions are necessary when the response options are too numerous to list. This is also the case with this study. The types and categories of coping mechanisms are large. Therefore, to limit the set of responses would defeat the purpose.

Since this research is exploratory in nature, the interview questions were designed to elicit responses that would provide me with answers concerning the social interactions of vegetarians. The goal being to investigate how practicing vegetarians negotiate their marginality. The answers the vegetarian will be recorded and subsequently transcribed. The result would be a classification scheme of the different coping mechanisms vegetarians use to protect their identity and neutralize the stigma that comes with the questionable behavior. The classification scheme would be based on the theoretical work regarding accounts and stigma management techniques that will be presented elsewhere in this work.

The interviewee will be asked to complete a background data sheet at the end of the interview in order to compile demographic information about the sample.

Beardsworth and Keil (1997) state that the majority of vegetarians in Western societies are middle class Caucasian females. In fact, they report that the ratio of females to males who report being vegetarian is 2 to 1. As mentioned earlier, this is consistent with the sample of this study. The editorial profile of *Vegetarian Times* magazine, the largest vegetarian publication in North America, uses the demographic information regarding vegetarians to target their market (<http://www.cowles.com>). This publication states that the targeted readership is “active females, between the ages of 25 and 54 years of age. Most are college educated, hold white-collar jobs, and have a household income over \$44,000 per year”. The background data sheet has been designed to garner demographic information concerning gender, race, educational level, occupation, and family income.

Sampling

One of the major problems with the study of vegetarians is their elusive nature. Some vegetarians are open and evangelical while others practice a vegetarian diet without even knowing that they could be classified as vegetarians. Maurer (1995) argues that the definition of vegetarianism varies from one person to the next. For example, Dwyer et al (1973) found that only 64% of their study population of self-proclaimed vegetarians admitted to consuming no meat, fish, or fowl. Maurer points out that other researchers have attempted to estimate the actual number of vegetarians in the United States and have decided that there are approximately 750,000 to 2,225,000 practicing vegetarians in the U.S. today. As one can see, the number of vegetarians varies greatly. Thus, the elusive

nature of vegetarians and vegetarianism prompts the use of the snowball sampling technique. Beardsworth and Keil (1992) stated that the marginal and individualized nature of vegetarianism forced their study to adopt a snowball sampling technique in order to acquire an adequate number of vegetarians to interview.

Snowball samples are nonprobability samples that are obtained by asking existing sample members to identify additional members for inclusion in the sample (Henry 1990). The sample will begin with practicing vegetarians with whom I was in contact. As in the case of the snowball sample, those who are interviewees will be asked to provide names of other vegetarians they believe would be interested in participating in the present study. Lee (1993) points out that snowball sampling has strengths, especially when studying stigmatized populations, because “‘security’ features are built into the method” (p67). The interviewees are able to vouch for the character of the investigator and, therefore, create trust. In order to combat the problems associated with sampling vegetarians, the researcher placed advertisements in local shops in which vegetarians are known to frequent and were also placed around campus (i.e. the student center and bulletin boards in classroom buildings) to attempt to add diversity to this convenience sample. Also, a second snowball sample will be constructed by obtaining vegetarians who are from a second geographic area. This will guard against some of the problems associated with a single snowball sample. The advertisements in local shops and around the campus were also utilized in the second sampling method.

As Lee (1993) explains, snowball samples may be the only method to gather information on particular populations. Vegetarians are one such population that need to be sampled in this fashion. The most comprehensive study of vegetarians in the United

Kingdom employed a snowball sampling method in order to garner the necessary subjects in order to complete the project (Beardsworth & Keil 1992). As mentioned above, snowball sample is also necessary due to the ephemeral nature of the individual vegetarian. Maurer (1995) argues that the definition of vegetarianism varies from one person to the next. If we assume Maurer's estimate is indeed correct, then less than 1.5% of the U.S. population could be considered vegetarian. With such a small percentage of the population and the variations that people use to describe those who attempt to avoid meat, a snowball sample is the most logical choice for the economy of both time and resources.

Access to the Participants

Gaining access to practicing vegetarians is a process that requires sensitivity to the nature and the possible motives for the vegetarian lifestyle. Lee (1993) notes that researchers tend to study groups for whom that they have developed a liking or have sympathy. Lee continues by stating that the Chicago tradition of deviance research has a history of the investigators being members of the subculture they were studying. Current researchers have also used their status as a group member to gain access to a research setting. For example, Patricia and Peter Adler (1987) utilized their position as "friends" to become a part of the drug smuggling subculture. They maintained the expectations of a group insider and performed all of the duties associated with their position except for the actual act of smuggling narcotics. In this research endeavor, I was a member of the vegetarian subculture. I have been an on-and-off vegetarian for nearly ten years. The ideas for this research and the initial contacts have emerged because of the investigator's

own discussions with other practicing vegetarians about the problematic behaviors associated with vegetarianism. Lee (1993) refers to this phenomenon in deviance research as “appreciative understanding” (p136).

Vegetarianism is one subculture that requires a certain language and/or understanding of applicable social issues. These social issues simply can involve the research surrounding the health problems associated with the consumption of meat. For example, Maurer (1995) suggests that vegetarian groups have framed meat consumption as a social problem. Maurer proposes that meat eating poses a danger to any persons who dare to consume. Also, social issues regarding the exploitation of the environment as well as circumstances portraying the need for animal rights are a part of the lexicon of motivations regarding vegetarianism. A researcher who forays into the vegetarian subculture must become familiar with potentially combustible political beliefs that are a part of the vegetarian movement.

This study utilized the snowball sampling technique beginning with vegetarians that I was familiar. From each interview, the subject was asked if they could provide potential contact information for other vegetarians that they know might be interested in participating. This format for gathering sample members was the primary method for gaining interviewees. Nearly every subject provided at least one name of a potential research participant, and some the interviewees provided several names.

The second method for gathering sample members was advertising. Within each geographic area, advertisements for the study was placed in two independently owned and operated health and nutrition stores that were known to attract people with alternative eating and nutritional habits. This practice provided many leads to potential subjects but

only generated a handful of the 45 total interviews. The personal references from the respondents was the overwhelming method for constructing this study's non-probability sample.

Sample Demographics

The data was collected from two samples coming from two distinct locations within the United States. A total of 45 interviews were collected between the two samples. The first sample of 25 interviews was collected from May to August 1999 in a medium-sized college town located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The second sample was collected from September 1999 to March 2000 in another medium-sized college town that was located in the Southwest region of the U.S. The second sample consisted of 20 interviews with vegetarians. All of the interviews were transcribed by July 2000, so the total data collection process took approximately 14 months.

The average length of each interview was a little over 86 minutes (86.2 minutes), the median length was 70 minutes. The interviews were designed to get as much information as possible within a short period of time (one hour). The range of the interviews lasted from as short as 35 minutes to as long as 130 minutes. The reason one hour was chosen as a realistic time period was out of respect for the participants. Many participants' first question on initial contact was, "How long will this take?" When I explained that the interviews were designed to be completed within an hour, the vegetarians who volunteered to be interviewed were quite enthusiastic. The transcriptions of the interviews and the data sheets filled out by the interviewees resulted in nearly 1100 pages of information.

Of the 45 vegetarians interviewed, the most lopsided demographic characteristic was regarding race. Thirty-nine (86.7%) of the 45 participants declared themselves as white, European-American. This is consistent with information that has been collected on the demographic characteristics of vegetarians. One of the most interesting sources of information on the demography of vegetarians comes from the marketing information of *Vegetarian Times* magazine (www.cowles.com). *Vegetarian Times* magazine targets primarily whites, European-Americans. The remaining participants in the sample were Hispanic (6.7%), Native American (4.4%), and Asian (2.2%). The lack of African-Americans in the sample was noted. It is believed that because of the sampling technique used and the reality that the two college towns were located in areas where there were very low African-American populations contributed to the lack of African-American representation in the sample.

The second most lopsided category was gender. Thirty-five (77.8%) of the 45 subjects were female. This again is consistent with the marketing data from *Vegetarian Times* magazine. *Vegetarian Times* markets itself as a magazine that is preferred by women. These white women who read *Vegetarian Times* also are more than likely from a specific age range. The magazine identifies the target range of the female readership as between the ages of 25 and 54 years. Again, this sample of vegetarians is very consistent with the marketing information. The average age of a vegetarian in this study's sample was 26 years, and the range was a little wider with the subjects spanning from 18 to 61 years. Another source of information on the demography of vegetarians was also consistent with the data collected from this study's sample. The other source of demographic information was a sociological study on vegetarianism completed by Stiles

(1998). Stiles simple study only collected demographic data on age and gender. Her sample of 79 vegetarians that she gathered from the internet was similar to the sample collected here. The majority were female (58.2%) and at the age of 30 or younger (54.4%). The median age bracket was the range of 26 to 30.

The income range of the households that the vegetarians' resided in this study was less than \$10,000 per year to over \$100,000 per year. The median income range was \$40,000 to \$59,999. However, the modal income categories were \$40,000 to \$59,000 and over \$100,000 with 10 respondents each (22.2% each). The median income range of \$40,000 to \$59,999 is again consistent with the marketing data from *Vegetarian Times* magazine. The average household income of a reader of *Vegetarian Times* magazine is \$44,000 per year.

The final two demographic characteristics are education and employment. A little more than half of the sample (n=23 and 51.1%) claimed to have only completed a high school education. However, this is offset by the fact that many (n=17) were still attending college at the time of the interview. The remaining 22 subjects had at least a bachelor's degree and even 3 held a terminal degree. Of the remaining 22 subjects, eleven held a master's degree. As students were the largest single "employment" status, educators were a close second (n=15, 33.3%). The remaining subjects ranged in employment from fitness coordinators to office assistants to dieticians to one person being unemployed. The sample being collected in two college towns led to the over-representations among students and among educators. But according to the *Vegetarian Times* marketing data, this is quite consistent. The magazine markets itself to people who are college-educated and tend to be employed in the white-collar sector (www.cowles.com).

Data Analysis

Since the goals of the research were to develop a longitudinal view of a deviant career and to explore what kinds of coping mechanisms vegetarians use in order to defend their questioned identity, the data of the research will provide and outline for a classification scheme of these mechanisms that vegetarians utilize. This development of a classification scheme regarding the rationalization and defense of deviant behavior is consistent with the work of Pogrebin, Poole, and Martinez (1992); Scully and Marolla (1997); Weinstein (1980); Ray and Simons (1987); and Kalab (1987). These studies attempted to classify and categorize the coping techniques of individuals associated with a particular form of deviance.

The range of the stigmatizing behaviors investigated under the rubric of coping mechanisms can be considered much varied. For example, Pogrebin and his colleagues (1992) developed a classification scheme based on the accounts conceptual framework that explored the rationalizations of therapists who sexually exploit their clients. Scully and Marolla (1997) constructed a taxonomy of the accounting system that convicted rapists use to neutralize their heinous acts. Weinstein (1980) also attempted to create a classification system regarding illicit drug use based on Scott and Lyman's seminal notion of accounts. In addition, Ray and Simons (1987) interviewed people convicted of homicide in small communities to develop their taxonomy of accounts. Finally, Kalab (1987) used the students enrolled in her sociology classes to develop a classification scheme regarding college student absences. This study plans to use the theoretical framework of accounts as well as stigma management techniques to construct a

classification system of the coping mechanisms vegetarians develop to rationalize and protect their questioned behavior.

One factor that may emerge from the research concerns the type of vegetarian and the coping mechanism utilized. For instance, the more extreme the vegetarian (i.e. vegan or fruitarian) the more likely that person is to be marginalized. Beardsworth and Keil (1992) point out how difficult it is to be vegan. Vegans reject the consumption of any animal products whatsoever. For example, the behavior can range from the rejection of meat for eating to clothing made from animals such as leather and wool to the use of glue and other household items that are derived from animals. This study attempts to show the complexity of coping mechanisms as vegetarians become more or less strict as well as the changes in the coping mechanisms over time from early to late stage vegetarianism.

Confidentiality

Raymond Lee states that the attention paid to maintaining anonymity and confidentiality will assist in the legitimization process of the research endeavor (1993). Subjects who feel the researcher has taken the appropriate measures to protect their identity will be more likely to trust that investigator and provide him or her with data that can be considered accurate. Lee (1993) points out that it is very rare for confidentiality to be breached in any given research project. However, professional and personal ethics demand that the necessary steps be taken to ensure the safety of those who have been willing to place their identity into the open where it can be scrutinized.

Boruch and Cecil (1979) suggest that the most obvious solution to the potential problems of confidentiality is to gather data that is anonymous at the point of collection

or very soon afterwards. This study plans to protect confidentiality by providing anonymity at the point of collection as well as during the transcription process. The interviewee will be assigned a code name and number at the time of the interview. The principal investigator will only know the person's identity that coincides with the code name and number. To ensure confidentiality, only the principal investigator will transcribe the interview tapes. Also, during the transcription process, the principal investigator will remove any identifying characteristics from the transcriptions. Finally, once this research process is complete, the interview tapes will be either erased or destroyed.

Security of the tapes and transcriptions also provides a potential breach of anonymity. The audiotapes and transcriptions will be stored in a locked firebox that the principal investigator acquired for the purpose of storage. Only he will have access to this container. Interviewee code number will differentiate the tapes. There will not be any personal identifiers on the individuals' tapes or transcriptions except for the interviewee code number.

Conclusion

The collection of data from practicing vegetarians regarding their dietary habits was very similar to the collection from any deviant subculture. Snowball sampling techniques and a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality were essential to gathering two distinct samples in two parts of the United States. My "insider" position provided an avenue for discussion and allowed for a relaxed atmosphere for the interviews. The resulting two samples tended to white, female, and middle-class, which was consistent

with other data sources on the demographics of contemporary vegetarianism. The subjects also tended to be involved in the educational institution either as a student or as an employee. This can be attributed to the unique locations of the sample collection. One recommendation for a future study should be to collect data from a more diverse population such that would exist in a metropolitan area.

CHAPTER FOUR

Developing Tensions for Vegetarianism

As mentioned in the opening chapter, deviant careers can be in either an institutional or a noninstitutional format. Institutional careers require what Delos Kelly (1996) refers to as an “involuntary route” (p473) to enter the deviant lifestyle. This involuntary route consists of “a career entry or initiation point that is characterized by little individual choice” (p473). Erving Goffman’s (1959) classic research on the moral aspects of the mental patient’s career can be described as an institutional career because the act of becoming a mental patient is not one a person would opt for voluntarily. However, Kelly (1996) asserts that the noninstitutional career in which one can enter with a greater deal of freedom and choice. The decision to become either a “streetwalker” or a “house prostitute” is an example of the choice involved in a noninstitutional career. Other types of noninstitutional careers illustrated by Kelly include drug dealing, experimentation with homosexuality, shoplifting, or joining a questionable religious sect.

The overall thesis involving the distinction between the two types of careers becomes that vegetarianism is a type of deviant career that can be classified as noninstitutional. People in western societies voluntarily choose to follow the vegetarian way. The entrance into a noninstitutional career, according to Kelly (1996), is the result of the person’s own desires and personal attraction to the deviance in question. This is readily apparent by the number of different types of eating patterns that vegetarians acknowledge (See chapter seven’s discussion on the types of vegetarians by consumption). Kelly (1996) points out that, in some instances, exposure to a

noninstitutional career will sometimes lead to the indoctrination into that career trajectory. Clifton Bryant (1990) states that becoming deviant may involve a number of factors. For instance, many people enter deviance because of constitutional or predispositional factors. However, this position is more congruent with the path of an institutional career than a noninstitutional one. Other modes of entry involve learning, either by direct instruction or by indirect observation such as through the mass media and the Internet. This conception of learning deviant practices and ideology can be considered the core of the noninstitutional career.

Kelly (1996) utilizes the word “recruit” to describe the process of how one learns to be part of a noninstitutional deviant career. There does exist a problem with this word though. This word, “recruit” clearly emphasizes the fact that the deviant group exists prior to the initial contact of the potential deviant. This fact is true for vegetarians. Vegetarian groups have existed for over 2500 years and the entrenchment of the lifestyle cannot be debated. However, the words “recruit” or “recruitment” does not quite fit the ideology of vegetarianism. The words “recruit” and “recruitment” carry the connotation of developing strength as in a military-like movement. The vegetarian movement, on the other hand, does not project itself with the symbolism of power and militaristic action. The vegetarian movement’s ideology centers on three overarching themes: compassion for all living beings, health and vitality, and concern for the natural environment (Maurer 1997). There can be conflict and antagonism over these issues, but vegetarianism usually does not become the battlefield.

Instead of military analogies, vegetarianism has traditionally paralleled religious experiences. Johnstone (1992) defines religion as “a system of beliefs and practices by

which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is sacred, and, usually, supernatural as well” (p14). This religious parallel can be seen in the nature and evolution of vegetarianism. Eating in Western societies creates a strong and intimate connection with what individuals consume (Twigg 1979). As mentioned earlier, we are what we eat. This ideology of becoming what we consume closely parallels of who we are because of what we believe as sacred. This notion of sacredness in vegetarianism can be traced back to the father of western vegetarianism, Pythagoreas. It was because of this venerable and influential Greek thinker that vegetarianism was known as the Pythagorean diet until the 1840's. The basic premise behind the ideology that became known as the Pythagorean diet was not to kill any living creature (Hughes 1980). In Pythagorean philosophy, there is a unity between the elements and the creatures that exist within the elements. This balance then forbade the practitioners of the Pythagorean diet from eating the flesh of slaughtered animals as well as holding an occupation that involved violence such as a butcher or a soldier. Pythagoreas even forbade the eating of beans because beans, when sowed, could sprout a new plant (Spencer 1995).

Early Christian vegetarianism came about as a way to live an ascetic lifestyle. The abstinence from meat was a way to mortify the body from carnal sensations, while at the same time purifying the soul (Spencer 1995). This is also consistent with doctrine that true insight would come as the body was deprived of the pleasures of the flesh (Willard 1997). The ascetics viewed food and drink as essentially for sustenance, not for passion and pleasure (Spencer 1995). This medieval vegetarianism developed out of the monastic orders of Western Europe (Twigg 1979). These monastic orders followed what was known as The Rule of St. Benedict. Twigg explains that The Rule of St. Benedict

“was commonly interpreted as forbidding all quadruped meat, and thus allowing poultry, fish, and animal products” (1979 p19). She asserts that the Rule became the foundation for avoiding all animal products and fasting on such Christian holy days as Good Friday.

The avoidance and denial of meat that is associated with medieval vegetarianism corresponds to the premise that vegetarian fare is “better or higher” than traditional meat-oriented fare (Twigg 1979). Contemporary vegetarianism has its roots in both the Greek philosophical thought of Pythagoreas, as well as the religious practices of the Christian ascetics. It is within this context that vegetarianism germinated the existing relationship with spirituality.

Vegetarianism in the U.S. had a revival within the 1960’s hippie counterculture movement. Sociological research in the nature of vegetarianism and health food use during that time conducted by New and Priest (1967) reinforced the parallels between religion and vegetarianism. New and Priest referred to vegetarians and those who partake in health food as “food cultists.” The “cultist” label came from one particular group of health food users in their study, unitary users. Unitary users subscribe “to a single philosophy, quasi-religious in nature which is linked to a particular health food diet” (New and Priest 1967 p14).

The most in-depth study of vegetarianism to date by Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Kiel (1992) also places vegetarianism within a religious framework. They do not refer to vegetarians as “recruits” to the organization but as “converts” to the lifestyle. It is this shift in language from a militaristic style to a religious nature that has implications for the study of deviance. For instance, juvenile gangs and organized crime organizations recruit new members. Other types of deviance also recruit new members. Kelly (1996)

states that prostitutes are recruited. Bryant (1990) acknowledges that young convicts are recruited or “taken under the wing” (p291) of older more experienced convicts while serving their prison terms.

This shift in language from “recruit” to “convert” implies separate and unique passages into different varieties of deviant activity. To recruit someone is essentially to replace, replenish, or attract new members to a particular organizational activity whether it is sports or the military. Within this context, existing deviant organizations must recruit new members. These organizations already exist and must replenish membership at certain times. However, to convert someone is to transform, to save, or to remake someone. Structured organizations do not necessarily have to exist to be transformed. It is about the individual and not the organization. The individual must first be converted to the lifestyle, whether it is criminal or otherwise, before recruitment can take place. David Matza (1969) argued that the process of conversion is essential to the study of deviance. Matza chose the word “conversion” because “[u]nless one always was a deviant, in which little illumination if required, *becoming deviant* depends on being converted” (1969 p107 emphasis in the original). He argues that the process of conversion supplants the notion that people are preordained to behave in a certain manner. Deviance then becomes a process of transformation, not a contagion that people catch.

If we then accept the supposition that some forms of deviance require conversion, then what is the process of that conversion? David Matza (1969) outlined a theory of becoming deviant that included three stages of transformation: affinity, affiliation, and signification. Affinity can be simply defined as a personal desire to become deviant. Affiliation, then, is the actual process in which the individual converts to a deviant

lifestyle. Finally after affiliating with or converting to the questioned lifestyle, signification occurs when the person thinks of himself or herself as being a part of the deviant subculture, as well as planning where he or she will go within that subculture. It is a process of building an identity around the deviant behavior.

Within the sociology of religion, a theoretical position exists that is complimentary to the theory of becoming deviant as espoused by David Matza. John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965) developed a theory of conversion that applies to “deviant” religious organizations. Commonly known as the “Lofland-Stark Model” within the sociological study of religious conversion, this theoretical position presents a process of how a person adopts a deviant ideology. The theory consists of two types of factors or conditions: predisposing conditions and situational contingencies. The strength of the model emanates from the seven-step process that explains the movement of a person from potential religious deviant to the newly converted.

The first three steps of the model are known as the predisposing conditions. (Lofland & Stark 1965). The first step, tension, states that a discrepancy exists between what is desired, or ideal, and what is the real, or actual in the lives of the potential converts. Parallel problem-solving, the second step, contends that people who view the world through a lens of religiosity will feel mentally comfortable with a religious solution to their tension. However, the predisposing factors are not complete unless the religious problem solving evolves into an actual search for a religious answer to the problem of tension. Lofland and Stark acknowledged that there was a problem with the third step in the process, seeking religion. The major problem resides in the fact that the accounts of conversion are retrospective. Snow and Phillips (1980) also found that the third step is

not necessary in all conversions. In addition, they argue that none of the predisposing conditions were necessary in the conversion process of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists. Snow and Phillips (1980) allege that this social-psychological-motivational approach to conversion is based on consequences of conversion, not on actual predisposing tensions.

The second part of the conversion process, situational contingencies, is constructed of four steps. According to Lofland and Stark (1965), situational contingencies are the conditional factors that usher in the successful conversion experience. The first of the situational factors and the fourth in the whole process is the turning point. This is a personal occurrence that is perceived by the convert as the moment in which conversion would be possible. To state this more simply, the turning point is the time in a person's life when objective changes such as loss of job or divorce and/or being in an acceptable state of mind comes together with first contact with the deviant religious organization. The fifth step, cult affective bonds, is considered one of the most important steps in the conversion process. For conversion to take place, an affective bond must exist between the potential convert and the religious organization. The next situational condition then becomes the absence or negation of extracult affective bonds. According to Lofland and Stark, the bonds to persons outside the religious group must be neutralized in order for conversion to be consummated. Finally, the conversion process is not complete until the potential convert engages in intensive interaction with group members. Lofland and Stark insist that conversion is only verbal until the interaction with group members becomes intensive. Snow and Phillips (1980) found that not all of the situational conditions were necessary for conversion. Their research strongly supports the necessity for the affective bonds to exist between group members

and the potential convert and for the presence of intensive interaction in order for conversion to take place. Snow and Phillips also found relatively strong support for a turning point in the lives of a potential convert. As mentioned above, the turning point could include such objective life changes as job separation and/or to personally be at a moment in one's life to be open to alternative religious associations (i.e. hippies or wanderers). They found no support for the absence or neutralization of extracult bonds. Snow and Phillips conclude that this was not a necessary condition for conversion.

As one can see, this perspective has primarily been applied to alternative religious sects such as the Moonies (Lofland & Stark 1965) and the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist movement (Snow & Phillips 1980). However, Lofland & Stark state that the theoretical process is general, so the elements of the theory could "provide a reasonable starting point for the study of conversion to other types of groups or perspectives" (1965 p875). The thesis of this chapter is that the phenomenon of vegetarianism, Matza's theory of becoming deviant and the Lofland-Stark Model of religious conversion can be synthesized in such a way to offer an original analysis for the entry into the deviant career of vegetarianism.

Developing Awareness: The Affinity or the Predisposing Conditions for Vegetarianism

John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965) assert that conversion to an alternative, or deviant, ideology and/or lifestyle must have an originating set of circumstances. These circumstances or, as the Lofland-Stark model states, predisposing conditions should be present in order for transformation to be possible. David Matza (1969) also contends that for a person's conversion to deviance an originating set of circumstances must exist.

Matza referred to the originating circumstances as an affinity for deviance. This affinity for deviance can be defined “as a natural biographical tendency borne of personal and social circumstance that suggests but hardly compels a direction of movement” (1969 p63).

A melding of concepts from both the Lofland-Stark Model and Matza’s theorizing regarding becoming deviant is necessary in order to develop an understanding regarding the conversion to a vegetarian diet. For a person to become vegetarian, there must exist a tension. Tensions can be best described as a person’s discrepancy between a perceived ideal state and the reality in which the person actually resides (Lofland & Stark 1965). Tensions must have an interplay with a person’s particular biography in order to create a specific movement toward a chosen behavior. This is also Matza’s definition of affinity. There must be a particular biography among vegetarians that leads them to choose this particular lifestyle. Therefore, the interaction between tension and personal biography is necessary for a person to opt for a vegetarian lifestyle.

The Pre-Conversion Tensions Among Vegetarians

From the interviews of practicing vegetarians, five categories of pre-conversion tension emerged. They are as follows: aesthetically-disturbing tensions, health-oriented tensions, relationship-maintaining tensions, independence tensions, and moral-political tensions. The tension themes characterize the imbalance between certain perceived ideal states and the realities within the interviewees’ lives. The interviewees may have multiple tensions concerning their conversion to vegetarianism. Therefore, the tension themes are not mutually exclusive. Finally, the tensions regarding aesthetic, health-

oriented, and moral-political themes are similar to motivations for vegetarianism as described by Beardsworth and Kiel (1992 & 1996).

Aesthetically-Disturbing Tensions

Aesthetically-disturbing tensions include a variety of items that the pre-conversion vegetarian found unpleasant that range from the taste and texture of meat to the unsettling forms of meat such as sausage and the varieties of luncheon meats. Beardsworth and Kiel (1996) state that a motivating force of vegetarianism is the disgust that meat exudes for the vegetarian. They argue that the positive aspects of meat such as a source of protein and vitality are rejected. Among the forty-five interviewees, 16 (35.6 %) admitted to having aesthetically-disturbing tensions.

Among the aesthetically-disturbing tensions, taste was the most commonly referred. Ten of the vegetarians interviewed claimed that they did not particularly enjoy the taste of meat before they became vegetarian. Giving up meat was just a way to reduce the unpleasantness regarding the conception of meat and meat products. For example, Ophelia is a lifelong vegetarian because she never acquired the taste for meat:

When I first started vegetarianism, I was a baby. My mom...she only remembers me eating a hot dog once while I was growing up....my mom said when I was first starting to eat, it was, like, the baby food. If it had some sort of meat in it, I would spit that out. (Ophelia 01).

However, this experience is the extreme regarding avoidance of meat concerning taste.

More typical examples regarding the dissatisfaction of the taste of meat are as follows:

I really don't like the taste of red meat, so red meat and pork were the first two things I gave up because I didn't like them (Mallory 14).

I know for a long time that I was never really a big beef eater. I never really liked beef, and chicken was pretty much the only meat I was eating

because I didn't like seafood either...I never really liked the taste of meat anyway, so it wasn't a difficult task (Megan 10).

Other individuals state that the conversion to vegetarianism included tensions regarding the nature of meat as an object. The aesthetics of the meat itself created a tension that created a circumstance in which vegetarianism was a viable option:

I don't like it. I used to work in a treatment center for brain-injured people and I would have to cook for them sometimes...In the ground meat, I see like a piece of skin down there. The sign of raw chicken really grosses me out. I just don't want it (Kaylee 102).

Another very common aesthetic concern is the viability of eating "something dead". Beardsworth and Kiel (1991), as well as Twigg (1979), have suggested that the consumption of death is a motivating factor to become a vegetarian. The thought of eating the flesh of another being causes tension where vegetarianism can be realistically considered:

I was eating steak one day, and I just decided I thought it was disgusting to be eating a dead animal (Sadie 104)

I never thought about what I was actually eating. I just had this wonderful insight and realization of me eating the flesh of animals. It just disgusted me (Janet 101).

It must be my imagination like when I started eating tacos at Taco Bell. I started thinking about ground up animals. It just didn't appeal to me anymore. It was more than an active imagination...I don't know. Just thinking about where the meat goes through. You know all the processes until it gets up to my plate (Brittany 15).

The tension develops with the realization of disgust. The properties and qualities of the meat have always existed. The tension comes with the realization or re-definition of the meat they are currently consuming. The realization does not have to come from the individual. Other circumstances can lead to this realization.

In the fourth grade, they took our class on a field trip to the

V***** Meat Packing Plant, which was about a block and a half away. We were studying farm life or whatever. You know, the agricultural schpeel. They took us. We held hands and walked down the street. They took us inside [the plant]. That was it for bologna and hot dogs right there (Summer 21).

Probably one thing that triggered it was when I got sick one time during my senior year in high school. I had a parasitic infection that they connected with uncooked meat. That turned me off... (Sandy 27).

Aesthetically-disturbing tensions result from the imbalance between what one believes to be perceived as pleasing in a tasteful manner and the reality surrounding the taste, nature, and production of meat and meat products.

Health-Oriented Tensions

Even though a major motif among the rhetoric of vegetarians is the health benefits of the diet (Maurer 1995), only thirteen of the 45 vegetarians interviewed mentioned tensions regarding personal health in the time prior to the conversion to the vegetarian lifestyle. According to Maurer (1995), the vegetarian rhetoric that focuses on the health aspects utilizes a theme of endangerment. Much of the vegetarian literature employs scientific evidence that states the consumption of animal products is not beneficial for long term human health. Vegetarian literature argues that the eating of animal protein leads to health problems such as obesity and hypertension as well as other disorders associated with heart disease. Staying in accord with this theme, several of the vegetarians expressed the need to lose weight. For instance, Maxwell, a special education teacher, wanted to lose a significant amount of weight:

I'm very overweight. As you can see, I'm a big guy. I'm about 6 foot 5 and weigh more than 300 pounds. I would like to be at 240 or 250 (Maxwell 111).

Another vegetarian, Noel, suggested that her weight problems were a direct result of her eating habits:

I was about 40 pounds overweight....I just ate anything I wanted. I was just an overeater. When I lived with my parents, my mom would buy low fat things for me, and I would eat them. I would eat them for them [my parents]...So, there's no medical reason. It was just that I liked food (Noel 108).

Other vegetarians mentioned tensions that involved "getting into shape." This type of tension not only included a potential switch to a vegetarian diet, but included an exercise routine as well. These tensions were distinctively health-oriented, but the expressions did not have the specificity of losing weight:

I didn't do much when I was in high school. I not only changed my eating habits [to vegetarianism] when I got to college. I was running and working out. A lot more than I was in high school, and not drinking, which everyone did in college (Sandy 27).

A couple of the interviewees pointed out that a switch to a vegetarian lifestyle could help them compete athletically at a higher level. Colleen, an Olympic hopeful in 2004, epitomizes the adoption of a vegetarian lifestyle to keep pace with other competitors:

I mean, of course, I used to eat meat and stuff like that, but I wasn't eating very well and I got involved in kayaking....I started doing that pretty competitively, and there's a lot of people there that are vegetarian...I just started...eating what they ate. I started feeling better (Colleen 106).

Finally, a tension that emanated from the discussions with practicing vegetarians regarding the circumstances that led them to become meatless was a feeling of uneasiness or imbalance concerning body chemistry.

I think it was a lot of, most of it, it was the idea that it's actually healthier for you if you balance your food right. If you know what you are doing, you can learn how to feel your body and what it needs (Zoe 112).

My body wanted to do it. I just followed my body...I became conscious of my body as a healthy machine that I have to keep up and my body rejected it all, didn't want anymore of that, of meat, fish, fowl, anything like that (Lily 115).

Relationship-Maintaining Tensions

An important note about vegetarianism is that it does not occur in a social vacuum. Nearly half (22 out of 45) of the interviewed vegetarians mentioned relationships with significant others regarding their conversion to the lifestyle. Tension developed for the individuals to maintain these networks of friends, family, and acquaintances. More specifically the relationships that created pre-conversion tension could be catalogued into four types: friendship groups, love interests, activity groups, and familial relationships.

Friendship groups were the most varied type of tension-producing association. That tension that led to conversion could have emanated from a single, close or "best" friend to a primary social group made up of dedicated vegetarians to the initial membership within a subculture. Among the vegetarians interviewed who claimed to be influenced by one person in particular, the effect was not the result of pressure. For example, Juliana, a law student, discusses how her friend influenced her decision to become vegetarian:

Well, she's my best friend....we were pretty close. She didn't like tell me I should be a vegetarian, but I kind of watched what she did. She did a lot of natural stuff. She wouldn't take any medication for anything. Like when she had a headache, nothing. I thought that was real interesting not to be so dependent on the pharmaceutical end. Vegetarianism kind of coincides with that end, everything is real natural and healthy. Once you get into being healthy. She kind of introduced me to it a little but (Juliana 26).

The above quote exemplifies the complex nature of the pre-conversion tensions. Juliana admits that her friendship was an important factor, but one could also argue that a health-oriented tension is also present.

Other interviewees suggested that being involved in a vegetarian social network led to tensions that resulted in a personal desire to become vegetarian. Darren, an art student who immigrated with his family from Europe as a child, implies that the vegetarian friendship group he was a part of helped his growth as a person.

[T]hey did it in a good way...They weren't so judgmental like you can't eat that when we were out...they did mostly by just showing me, not by preaching, but just like, them eating what they wanted to eat. They would make suggestions that I should try this vegetarian dish or that vegetarian dish...they had a lot to do with my spiritual growth and my, coming out of my shell I suppose. I was 18 or whatever, and started to truly get to know myself through them. They helped me blossom and be very comfortable with myself (Darren 109).

However, not all of the vegetarians had such a supportive social group. One vegetarian describes how that being a meat eater did not conform to the norms of the vegetarian group:

But primarily it's been my culture. I've always been in the kind of hippie counterculture. Well, at least, most people were in it at some time or the other. Most people I have been close to have been like, "You're eating *MEAT?*" It was kind of deviant to be a carnivore (Morgan 113).

The hippie counterculture theme was a subject for several of the vegetarians interviewed. Spencer (1995) has indicated that today's current collection of vegetarians has its roots in the civil upheaval of the 1960's, which the hippie subculture evolved. The hippie counterculture was, and can still be considered, an amalgamation of people who live by a bohemian philosophy (Berger 1971). This bohemian philosophy is based on eight points that range from accepted ideas of liberty and living life to its fullest to more

or less controversial notions of paganism, mind expansion through drug use, and gratuitous sex. However, the hippie ideal of each being's potentiality curtailed by an oppressive society becomes the connection of vegetarianism. Hippie interpretation of Western society as a place of selfishness, violence, and environmental destruction via capitalism provides a constant tension for vegetarianism to evolve.

Maintaining membership in the hippie counterculture could be construed as a source of pre-conversion tension among several of the vegetarians interviewed. For instance, Charles, a college professor who began his vegetarianism during the initial counterculture movement of the early 1970's, describes his conversion to vegetarianism:

I was in college, and it was the early seventies. It was the "in" thing to do. You know with hippies and stuff like that...it was kind of the collective family. You know the people I was going to school with. It was something that kind of happened together...This collective use of drugs, being against the war, being against violence, and you know vegetarianism just seemed like it was part of that (Charles 22).

A younger vegetarian who claims that the hippie counterculture sprouted an interest in changing to the lifestyle:

When I was 15 or 16, all of my friends were hanging out and getting into the whole nature-love, free-loving, long-haired hippie kid scene. It was just really easy for me to be vegetarian. Probably, I thought it was cool (Summer 21).

A curious finding regards the romantic interests of few of the sample and the later conversion to vegetarianism. Four of the vegetarians interviewed claimed to be converted to vegetarianism through romantic relationships. The two women who eventually converted to vegetarianism were married to vegetarian men. The two men were in dating relationships at the time of their conversions. One of the women discusses the difficulty she had being in a relationship with a strict vegetarian.

It was such a hassle to try and eat two different things that I started eating a lot more of what he did (Melissa 23).

The men, on the other hand, believed vegetarianism would bring them closer to their love interest in question:

I didn't really give up meat or consider vegetarianism at all until I dated a vegetarian girl...I got into it [vegetarianism] socially because of the people I was hanging around with, especially this girl and her friends (Mike 12).

There was this girl I worked with at this restaurant when I was going to school. I was actually working on my master's degree. She was a vegetarian. She told me it was a good way to lose weight. I kind of had a thing for her, so I became a vegetarian (Maxwell 111).

Another tension that could be described as relationship-maintaining involves activity or work groups that the vegetarian belongs to. The people involved opted for the vegetarian diet in order to remain in good standing with those in this activity-based group. For instance, vegetarianism has gained quite an acceptance within the hard core music scene. Two of the vegetarians interviewed claimed that being involved in this kind of music genre led to conversion to vegetarianism:

Another thing that also played a good role in this, mostly for me...a lot of my friends were involved in the [local city] punk scene and hard core music scene. We'd go to shows and there would be kids 3 to 4 years younger than us handing out fliers about vegan/vegetarianism and things like that (Roger 103).

In high school, a lot of the kids I hung out with were into hard core straight-edge-type music, and we all went to shows. I was in a band with a bunch of them. A lot of them were vegetarian or vegan...I thought it was pretty cool that they were doing it. I just didn't see. I couldn't see the justification personally. I could see what they were saying, so I was cool with it. And, like, the more I interacted with them. (Brandon 07).

The final type of pre-conversion tension emerged from the familial context. The renowned anthropologist George Peter Murdock (1949) concluded that one of the major

functions of the nuclear family is subsistence. Food consumption patterns are therefore at the center of family life. Tensions arise when a family member deviates from the prescribed family foodway, whether meat-eating or vegetarian. Grandparents, parents, and siblings were all mentioned as important catalysts for conversion to vegetarianism. One vegetarian in particular, Ashley, discusses how she was raised by a vegetarian mother, stepmother, and grandmother:

I have pretty much grown up with it. My grandmother is a vegetarian. My mom passed away when I was young but she was a vegetarian. I heard all those stories about how good a cook she was, how she did all her own gardening, and her own canning. My parents were hippies. That had some influence, and then also my stepmother is a vegetarian as well. It's always kind of been in my life (Ashley 28).

Ashley, however, was not raised as a vegetarian from birth. Her parents permitted meat consumption and only allowed her to become vegetarian when they thought she was sufficiently grown enough to handle it. On the other hand, Autumn was raised from birth as a vegetarian. She does not have a conversion experience, but her description of why she would not accept meat when she was a child supports this position that familial tension may dictate dietary choices:

When I was little and if I went to people's houses and offered meat, I didn't want to do anything because I worshipped my mom and dad, especially my dad. Whatever he did, I wanted to do. I thought it was a heroic thing to do (Autumn 24).

This familial tension does not exist independently. The family's religion may also dictate a particular food consumption pattern. Marvin Harris (1997) uses food taboos regarding the pig to describe how religious doctrine has dictated familial food consumption for thousands of years. Two vegetarians in the sample acknowledged familial religious backgrounds as an arena for the adoption of vegetarianism. For example, Meeta cites her

Indian heritage and family's strong Hindu belief system as her base for her lifelong vegetarianism:

My parents are vegetarian. It's not highly looked upon if you start eating meat...It's looked upon as very good [to be vegetarian], but I don't know. I've been very strong in not eating it (Meeta 20).

The relationship-maintaining tensions are unique regarding the conversion to vegetarianism because one can obviously see the other tensions. However, the difference with this tension is that there was an underlying sense that the relationships were more important than the ideology that led to the vegetarianism.

Independence Tensions

The fourth type of tension identified were tensions resulting from a lack of independence on the part of the pre-conversion vegetarian. Ten of the 45 (22.2%) vegetarians interviewed remarked about how vegetarianism gave them a sense of independence. The independence could be from family, societal norms and traditions, and/or and independence of thought in order to explore new and original ideas. Several of the vegetarians interviewed mentioned how the adoption of the lifestyle was the first independent decision they made. It was a theme of getting from under their parents' authority.

Well, I actually thought about this, it's something that I never think about anymore, ever. But when it was mentioned to me and I thought about the past, I guess when I moved away from home. I was 19 and, I guess, really for the first time in my life, I just felt sort of ownership. I started to feel my own. I could make choices and do things on my own...(Liane 107).

I never really ate it [meat]. I mean I'd eat it as if it was on the table and my parents made me eat it. But, I remember specifically in the seventh grade I stopped. I refused to eat it anymore...I decided I

wasn't going to let my parents make me anymore (Brandi 03).

Independence tensions were also comprised of a rebelling against society. A few vegetarians interviewed mentioned their rebellious nature as reasons to consider the alternative foodway. In a prime example, when asked to explain why vegetarianism was appealing to him, one interviewee responded:

To be different. It was a form of rebellion. I would guess just being in the group I was in... We were all tied up in the anti-war movement and things like that. It all seemed to be a part of that (Charles 22).

Another vegetarian suggested that independence of thought drove him to adopt the dietary pattern. Conversion tensions revolve around an exploration of ideas and positions:

My policy, what I usually do, is I make fun of something and then I think about it. Then I change it [my behavior]. When I first came to campus I ate meat, and I made fun of the animal rights people. That's what I do. Then I thought about it, and became involved in an animal rights group. It's kind of my way of exploring ideas because a lot of them are bad – bad policy (Andre 06).

Andre's position is typical among the vegetarian's interviewed. It is typical due to the combination of tensions presented. He obviously reveals tensions that involve animal rights, but his vegetarianism is also tied to his rebellious nature and interest in exploration of personal thought.

Moral-Political Tensions

Finally, the last tension provided by the vegetarians interviewed is the most frequently outlined tension. Of the 45 vegetarian interviewees, 23 or 51.1% presented moral or political tensions for their conversion to vegetarianism. The moral-political tensions include problems associated with food production and factory farming, animal

rights, issues of violence, environmental justice and social inequality. According to Beardsworth and Kiel (1996), moral positioning such as animal rights, themes regarding the problems resulting from modern food production and factory farming, and themes involving the social inequities of sexism, racism, classism, and so forth are major components of the vegetarian rhetoric. Maurer (1995) argues that the vegetarian rhetoric can be described as arguments regarding endangerment or arguments of entitlement. Endangerment arguments center on the fact that a meat-oriented diet harms people and the environment. Entitlement assertions are based on the knowledge that certain groups of beings, whether human or animal, deserve equal standing. This is a philosophical argument regarding the equality of all living creatures. All beings, either human or animal, have a right to exist without the shackles of “oppression” and “suffering” (Maurer 1995 p152).

Among the vegetarians included in this sample, the most claimed moral-political tension concerned the rights and abilities of animals. Beardsworth and Keil (1996) state that this position grounds itself in the premise of animal suffering. It is a well-defined argument that has a firm foothold in contemporary philosophy (i.e. Singer 1976; Regan 1984). Donald, a college professor and scholar, articulates quite well this form of tension:

I was persuaded by the moral justification for eating animals... It's obviously not necessary to eat animals. Any practical way, especially in our current society and economy, raising animals causes substantial suffering, so it's really very simple. Here's something that is not necessary at all and with any plausible ethic today causes substantial suffering, so you shouldn't do it. Why shouldn't one burn random strangers with matches because one doesn't have to and causes them pain (Donald 19).

Other vegetarians mentioned the rights of animals. Within this perspective, animals have just as much of a claim to life and liberty as do human beings:

I couldn't take the thought of an animal dying so I could eat something. I didn't think I had the right to do that to another animal. I didn't think I had the right to do that to another animal. I didn't have a choice in the matter...(Karma 25).

Right now I'm secretary of the humane society of M***** County, we're mostly involved with animal welfare...I started thinking a lot about life and that philosophical stuff, and I starting thinking about animal rights. I just came to the decision to put my beliefs in action I guess...(Pat 08).

Other moral-political tensions included a focus on food production and factory farming. Beardsworth and Keil (1996) note that the food production theme is an environmentally-based argument. This tension "is based upon the premise that the production of meat represents an unjustifiably extravagant use of natural resources" (Beardsworth & Keil 1996 p227). For example, social activist Jeremy Rifkin (1992) points out that it takes the beef industry seven pounds of feed grain to produce one pound of beef for human consumption. According to this argument, the inefficient nature of meat production is prompting the cattle industry to destroy more forests, which also means a loss of topsoil, in order to create more areas for cattle to graze. In addition, the over-reliance on meat in the Western diet has led to the development of factory farming, as well as the introduction of growth hormones for the animals' sustained weight.

I started out for primarily environmental reasons. I basically saw the rainforests being cut down. That was the first big thing...(Beth 09).

I was in the environmental group [in college]. I had a real strong interest in environmental issues. I think that sort of led to *Diet for a Small Planet*. I don't know if someone recommended the book or if I just found it...I would say that sort of turned the tables on what I wanted...I would

say that my entry into vegetarianism was really through environmental issues. I just have a very strong interest in the environment and that book kind of convinced me that vegetarianism was the right way (Debbie 29).

The final moral-political tension involves the adoption of vegetarianism as a form of protest on the grounds of social inequality. Beardsworth and Keil (1996) refer to this as a “new moral order” theme (p228). This ideology behind vegetarianism reveals a criticism of contemporary Western society. Carol Adams (1994) epitomizes this position arguing that vegetarianism attacks the patriarchal consumption society that oppresses developing nations, minorities, and women. Maria, a graduate student in the social sciences, vocalized this position quite well:

I was in the UN [United Nations] and I learned about world food production practices and what our privilege is doing to the rest of society...pesticides levels in our food, types of illegal practices that foreign governments practice—violations that they do – bad sanitation, poverty – how many people aren’t eating because of what you are eating...the political aspects of food production (Maria 18).

As mentioned earlier, the five pre-conversion tensions are not mutually exclusive. Many vegetarians revealed tensions that could have fallen into multiple categories. That is the quintessential nature of vegetarianism. It is complex and fluid. However, the tensions that led to vegetarianism had one commonality. Vegetarianism was viewed as a path to achieve a desired outcome. The practice of avoiding meat was seen as a potential solution to problems that these individuals deemed important.

Personal Biographies of Vegetarians

According to David Matza (1969), the affinity to become deviant must proceed from an attraction to the deviant lifestyle. Matza states that such things as race, social

class, intelligence, family life, and even adolescent turmoil are the basis of affinity. Deviance then, in Matza's view, can be described as the end product of a person's circumstances. What then are the personal characteristics, or circumstances, that would lead someone to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle?

The problem with answering the above question arises out of the correlational perspective regarding the study of deviance. A relative understanding of the deviant phenomenon is not constructed before sanctions are advanced. The sanctions in this instance are the critical comments, the awkward meals, and the potential interpersonal conflicts that come between the vegetarian and the non-vegetarian. Becker (1973) contends that the predominant study of deviance that centers on the origins and the corrective initiatives instead of the nuances of the behavior in question. To present that more simply is to state that the study of deviance tends to focus on the entering and exiting phases of the issue, not the actuality of being deviant.

Another problem that has to be mentioned is that this particular study's sample has limitations and liabilities. As mentioned in chapter two, the sample demographics were limited due to the locations where the samples were collected, college towns. However, there is a certain validity to the locations as well. Areas surrounding colleges and universities tend to be more liberal in the ideology of the town's people. This is definitely a type of climate where vegetarianism can thrive.

The typical vegetarian that was identified in the sample could be described like this. First of all, the vegetarians that were interviewed were predominantly white, European-American, and female. This was consistent with the national data that was gathered from the marketing information of *Vegetarian Times* magazine

(www.cowles.com). This is also consistent with the historical data provided by Spencer (1995) and McIntosh (1995). Because western vegetarianism began as a European phenomenon with roots in enlightenment philosophy and democratic thinking, it is quite obvious that the deviance is predominantly practiced by European Americans. This is the group that has had the ability to engage in positive deviance with minimal questioning more so than other marginalized groups. Eastern variations of vegetarianism as practices by Hindus and Buddhists are well ingrained within their religious and cultural practices, so therefore eastern vegetarianism cannot truly be considered deviant within each culture and was beyond the scope of this work. The other historical note is that meat eating has been quite gendered in western societies (Adams 1994; Spencer 1995, McIntosh 1995). The stereotypical American male diet is meat and potatoes. Men even stereotypically prefer their meat on the bloody side, the rarer the better. Even though millions of women enjoy eating meat and potatoes, the stereotype of the American female diet is the salad. Vegetarianism would be by this deduction alone lead to more women to adopt the diet than men.

Age-wise, the sample ranged from 18 to 61 years. Again, this was consistent with the marketing data provided by *Vegetarian Times*. Their research targeted an age bracket of 25 to 54 years. Also, the magazine targeted a household income (in 2000 dollars) of \$44,000. This study used income ranges to protect anonymity and the median income range was \$40,000 to \$59,999. This places the typical vegetarian in the middle class range.

The final two demographic variables were education and employment. *Vegetarian Times* magazine was aimed at the college-educated. Thirty-nine of the 45 vegetarians in

the sample held at least a bachelor's degree or were currently working on one. This statistic has to be taken with caution because of the samples being collected in a college town. However, it does reveal that vegetarian becomes less deviant as one garners more education. Also, along these lines, 32 of the 45 vegetarians were either students or educators. This definitely projects to a potentially more white-collar population. Again, this is very consistent with the magazine's marketing data.

With all of that said, how would one describe the personal biography of a potential vegetarian? According to the sample collected, the marketing data of *Vegetarian Times* magazine, and the historical accounts of vegetarianism and dominant foodways (Spencer 1995; McIntosh 1995), the typical American vegetarian would be white of European decent, female, under 50 years of age, from a middle class background, college-educated, and holding a white-collar occupation. So, looking back to Matza's (1969) theory, when a particular personal biography is then matched with the appropriate desire and tensions, a conversion to deviance is possible. However, it is not guaranteed. One must also become affiliated with the deviance. How, then, does a potential convert affiliate with the vegetarian lifestyle? Chapter five will begin to answer that question with the notion of the turning point.

CHAPTER FIVE

Beginning the Affiliating Process with Vegetarianism: The Turning Point

David Matza (1969) suggested that an individual's affinity for a specific form of deviance can only be disclosed in its natural context. The natural context will only make itself available for investigation *after* the person has converted to the deviant lifestyle. It is within the context of affiliation and signification that one can find the affinity for deviance. This is because the only way affinity can become meaningful, according to Matza, is to return it to its natural social context, which connects affinity to both affiliation and signification. This chapter will present the beginning of the process for affiliating with vegetarianism. It was from the data collected on the socialization into vegetarianism that the previous chapter on affinity and affiliation emerged.

Affiliation can be described as a slippery process. In order for Matza (1969) to explain this process, he utilized Howard Becker's classic 1953 study, "Becoming a Marijuana User". The stages one goes through to become a marijuana user are being willing, being turned on, and being awakened according to Becker. However, Matza advocates that any specific deviation will have features completely unique to its own affiliating process. Matza implies that every type of social deviation will have its own set of circumstances that make up its affiliation process. Vegetarianism is not marijuana smoking, so the stages proposed by Becker, and employed by Matza, on marijuana using are not entirely relevant to the process of affiliating with vegetarianism. Therefore, the process of affiliation according to Matza must be defined in a general enough manner to

be applied to other specific forms of deviance. Fortunately, Matza accounted for this troublesome position when developing his theory of becoming deviant.

According to Matza, “affiliation provides the context and process by which the neophyte may be ‘turned on’ or ‘out’” (1969 pp101-102). This context and process is situationally-specific. Thus, each type of deviation has its own milieu and progression. Essentially, the theory of becoming deviant according to Matza is a process of learning. It is a process similar to “differential association” as described by Edwin Sutherland (1937; 1939). However, Matza contends that Sutherland’s idea of differential association is too simple. It is not conversion. It is just a method of learning. Becoming deviant must involve affinity, affiliation (i.e. differential association as a method of learning), and signification. Therefore, according to both Sutherland and Matza, deviance is learned through the process of symbolic interaction in the course of contact with successful and currently practicing deviants (Vail 1999). To fit this perspective into this study of vegetarians would mean that people learn how to become vegetarians through contact with other vegetarians.

The simplicity of the above statement then becomes the question to be answered in this chapter. How does one learn how to become a vegetarian? Since Matza’s theory of becoming deviant is a deviation-specific theoretical position, what are the specific components to the learning process for vegetarians? The Lofland-Stark model for religious conversion again provided the framework for the beginning of the affiliating process among vegetarians.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Lofland-Stark model is made up of two parts: predisposing conditions and situational contingencies. Predisposing conditions were

presented in Chapter Four as having a relevant basis for Matza's concept of affinity. On the other hand, situational contingencies are the conditional factors that set up a successful conversion experience. However, not all of the steps of the Lofland-Stark model are relevant to all types of conversion (Snow & Phillips 1980; Lofland & Stark 1965; Lofland 1978). For instance, the only step within the predisposing conditions relevant to the affinity for vegetarianism was tension. In this middle stage of becoming vegetarian, the two situational contingencies that become relevant for the affiliation with vegetarianism are the turning point and the group affective bonds. The latter will be discussed as a part of chapter five regarding the learning of vegetarianism.

Dealing with Building Tensions: The Turning Point for Vegetarians

As the various kinds of tensions build, there must be a point at which a person attempts to reduce the awkward feelings the building tensions create. Tensions were defined by Lofland and Stark as the "discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which these people saw themselves caught up" (1965 p864). How does the person reduce his or her tensions according to Lofland and Stark? The first part in the process of tension reduction is to reach the turning point. The turning point is the moment in the convert's life where the old ways of action were proving ineffective regarding the perceived tensions, and the realization of a potential new way of problem solving becomes possible in order to reduce these perceived tensions. This meeting between the old and the new fosters an insight in the individual, which can be referred to as the turning point. According to the Lofland-Stark model, the importance of the turning point resides in the increased awareness regarding the potential new

opportunity. This awareness comes together with the desire to deal with the tensions and motivates the person to do something different. In this case, vegetarianism becomes the “something different” to help deal with the tensions.

Snow and Phillips (1980) note that their research supported the existence of a “turning point” for conversion. The authors point out, however, that the conceptualization of a “turning point” may become problematic. Snow and Phillips give two reasons for this. First, the whole conceptualization of “turning point” is vague at best. It is not really possible to ascertain if someone is at a turning point in his or her life. Almost any point in one’s life can be self-defined as a “turning point”. Secondly, Lofland and Stark define turning points as a specific time of major life changes (i.e. graduating from high school or college; getting a divorce; becoming unemployed). Snow and Phillips’ research did not locate such major changes as turning points. The turning point in their investigation is the point when the person comes to align him or herself with a movement or subculture. They gave two reasons for the shift in definition of turning point. The turning point is actually a subjective experience. Snow and Phillips suggest that a turning point might come as someone’s role changes in the group or it may be the result of some profound insight on the part of the convert. Whatever the turning point is must come subjectively from the person. The second reason resides on the fact that the person had to be aware and involved with the group *before* the turning point occurred. This means that the conceptualization of “turning point” may be an artifact of the conversion experience.

The research on vegetarianism lends support to the notion of “turning point” as described by Snow and Phillips. Beardsworth and Kiel refer to what could be called a turning point as a “conversion experience” (1992 p267). However, Beardsworth and Kiel

suggest that a turning point or conversion experience could only occur during an “abrupt” change to vegetarianism. An abrupt change to a vegetarian diet revolved around the “conversion experience”. A conversion experience can be defined as an event that was “associated with distress or disgust, and could lead to a sudden change in eating patterns” (Beardsworth & Kiel 1992 p267). This becomes problematic because if we use Snow and Phillips’ conceptualization of “turning point” we could also include what Beardsworth and Kiel label a gradual process of conversion to vegetarianism. For instance, Snow and Phillips state that the turning point is a subjective experience. Also, they indicate that a turning point may come after involvement with the ideology of the group in question as well as a development of an insight with this group in question. A gradual conversion to vegetarianism involves a slow adoption of the vegetarian diet rules. It may involve a progression from a diet including all of the major meat groups (i.e. beef, pork, poultry, and seafood) to a semi-vegetarian diet (i.e. elimination of beef and pork) to an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet. This dietary progression may include a moral progression as well. A convert to vegetarianism may not adopt a full vegetarian diet until adequate reasoning and justification has evolved within the individual. Under these circumstances, vegetarians who convert abruptly or gradually can be considered to have turning points. However, the turning point is important for another reason. It is at the turning point that the process of affiliation begins. Up until the turning point, the person had an affinity for vegetarianism. Tensions built and personal biography set the stage. It is at the turning point that a person begins the process of “becoming vegetarian”.

A Typology of Turning Points for Vegetarians

Since the turning point is essentially an insight within the individual concerning current personal and social arrangements, what specific experience in the vegetarians' pasts acted like a catalyst for their entrance into the vegetarian career? This becomes an awkward question because Snow and Phillips (1980) did report that a turning point is a retrospective account of how each vegetarian began his or her career. Therefore, each individual can redefine retrospective accounts of how and why certain events occurred. However, as Snow and Phillips note, one cannot really understand this process until after they occur, so the turning point will always be retrospective and subsequently flawed. To add to this awkwardness is the fact that three of the sample of vegetarians could be considered vegetarians who did not experience a turning point. These three vegetarians have essentially been raised vegetarian. This is a problem that reveals a fundamental assumption underlying this study. This is a study of Western vegetarianism. Historically, western cultures, and in particular the United States, have been primarily meat eating cultures (Rifkin 1992). Because of this legacy of meat eating, vegetarianism, for the most part, is an adopted diet, not a fundamental diet. For this reason, only the 42 remaining vegetarians will be included as having a turning point.

From the interviews, it was determined that there were five kinds of experiences that can be classified as turning points: discussions, reading literature, health problems, excursions, and aesthetic experiences.

Discussions as Turning Points

The most common type of experience that could be categorized as a turning point was a discussion. Eighteen of the 42 vegetarians describing a turning point outlined a discussion as the context for their entrance into the world of vegetarianism. Discussions can be portrayed as conversations with people about the topics within the ideology of vegetarianism that prompted the vegetarian to make an attempt to adopt the lifestyle. These discussions could be with friends, family members, significant others, or acquaintances. The most common discussions that led to a change in diet were with friends. Of the 18 vegetarians who claimed a discussion as their turning points, nine reported that it was a conversation with a friend that triggered the adoption of the vegetarian diet. All nine of these individuals stated that the friend was already a vegetarian. For example, Mary relates a comment a friend made to her about becoming a vegetarian:

It was my senior year in high school and one of my friends was vegetarian. I don't even know if she is a vegetarian anymore. We were talking about and she was like, "You really won't miss it". So, I tried it for a month. (Mary 04)

Another vegetarian, Karma, points out that a close friend would consistently tease her about her meat consumption. It was this friend that eventually triggered her conversion:

My friend was a vegetarian, and he would gross me out every time I would be eating meat...I think I kind of wanted to do it anyway. He just pushed me into it. (Karma 25)

In a third example, Darren states that regularly held meals with vegetarian friends led him to adopt the lifestyle:

My freshman year, a lot of my friends were vegetarians, and so not to offend, I suppose, because it wasn't a big deal to me, when I went out with them, I would eat vegetarian

meals. I just go into it that way, that's how I started.
(Darren 109)

Conversations with friends were not the only turning points among the practicing vegetarians interviewed. Four of the 18 interviewees voiced that it was discussions with family members that acted as their catalyst. For example, Roger was home for Christmas from college and had a traditional meal with his family, including his vegetarian brother:

Then I realized it was around Christmas time and the whole family with the ham, kielbasa, and all of the traditional Polish foods and I was thinking, you know...well...New Year's resolution. It was the 25th or something, Christmas Day. I had the big traditional meal of kielbasa we normally have, all the meat. My brother didn't, and I was thinking, "OK, New Year's Eve, New Year's resolution – I'm going to start becoming a vegetarian". I realized at that point in time why should I be held by that institution, New Year's Day. Since (that day), the day after Christmas, I was waiting as I said, "I'm going vegetarian today, now". From that point on I've pretty much been strictly vegetarian. I have a date that I can reflect upon. (Roger 103)

However, it is not always the case that the family member was a vegetarian. The turning point for Beth occurred after a conversation with her father:

I started to think like a vegetarian. I saw meat and I would see all of these things. I remember one time with my dad. I asked, "Why do you want to have meat? Why not vegetables?" I realized that I was doing that to myself. I was eating meat at the time, so I should become vegetarian. So, I did. (Beth 09).

Brandi, on the other hand, had a more volatile turning point that involved her family and her family's dinner routine:

I never really ate it. I mean I'd eat it if it was on the table and my parents made me eat it. I remember in the seventh grade I stopped. I refused to eat it anymore...I just didn't like the way it tastes, and I decided I wasn't going to let my parents make me anymore. (Brandi 03).

Another kind of discussion occurred with significant others. Significant others include spouses, life partners, and people who could be considered in a dating relationship at the time of the turning point. Two of the eighteen turning points occurred in a discussion with a significant other. In one instance, the two decided to start the vegetarian diet together:

I was in college and my boyfriend, my partner at the time, we just talked about it. We just decided together that we were going to do it. (Barbara 13)

The final conversation-related turning point was a discussion with acquaintances and other individuals. Acquaintances can be classified as individuals that do not hold a particular close emotional relationship with the vegetarian. The person is neither a friend, a family member, nor a significant other. However, it was the conversation with this type of individual that facilitated the insight for vegetarianism. Three of the 18 vegetarians in this category reported this kind of conversation as the turning point. Each of the three conversations involves qualitatively different types of people. One spoke with members of her church, one spoke with fellow athletes, and the final spoke with her fellow coworkers:

I gave up meat for Lent because I'm Catholic...I talked to people in the church about why we gave up meat for Lent...Then I decided that I never wanted to eat meat again...That was just during Lent. It was to just give it up. It was to sacrifice for Jesus Christ, that kind of thing. I just gave it up because it was a thing to do with the church. (Janet 101).

I wasn't eating very well and I got involved in kayaking...I started doing that pretty competitively and there's a lot of people that are vegetarian, and so I was going on trips with them and they were actually eating things that I liked...Then I just started eating what they ate. I started feeling better. (Colleen 106)

It was a social issue because almost everybody at the UN was vegetarian, and they were from about 25 different countries. That was a strong motivator. (Maria 18).

Media as Turning Points

The second most common turning point mentioned by the 42 interviewees who converted to vegetarianism was through interaction with particular written materials or Internet sites. The written material could include books, pamphlets, or magazines. Ten of the vegetarians reported that the last piece of evidence accumulated came from reading materials or Internet sites. Clifton Bryant notes that the acquisition of deviant tendencies through media such as literature signifies a “generalized” experience (1990 p289). It is generalized because the information presented may persuade the potential deviant to believe that the phenomenon in question is quite commonplace. This projection provided by the particular medium may cause a person with an affinity for that particular act to believe it is more widespread than it actually is. Therefore, the person may enter into the deviant activity. Snow and Phillips (1980) argue that the turning point must come at a time when the person with the aforementioned affinity is presented with an opportunity and/or information to confirm within that person that change is the correct thing to do. For these 10 vegetarians, it was a particular reading that was the last piece of evidence in a case for conversion to vegetarianism.

Nine of the ten vegetarians who fall into this category stated that it was a particular written material that convinced them that vegetarianism was the correct path to follow. The tenth cited an Internet site as the medium pivotal to conversion. Four of those

citing a specific medium as a turning point mentioned classic vegetarian-oriented authors such as Peter Singer, John Robbins, and Frances Moore Lappe:

No, it was the literature. I mean I listened to the argument and read the materials. Listen to the argument and couldn't see anything wrong with them, so after several years of dragging my feet, I finally had to go along with them...[t]he most persuasive is Singer's which is in *Animal Liberation* and in *Practical Ethics* and some others. It's a straight forward basically utilitarian argument. It doesn't have to be presumed utilitarianism. The structure is really as simple as I gave you. Here's something that causes something and it is not necessary. Therefore, it shouldn't be done. It's really pretty simple. (Donald 19)

What happened was I started out, I guess I was in the environmental group. I had real strong interests in environmental issues. I think that what sort of led to, "Diet for a Small Planet" [by Frances Moore Lappe]. I don't know if someone recommended the book or if I just found it, but I read the book. I would say that sort of turned the tables on what I wanted. (Debbie 29)

I had a boyfriend who was a vegan. I was in massage school at the time, and he was talking to me about it a little bit. You know with John Robbins' "Diet for a New America" book. I wasn't interested in it, and we had this class in massage therapy. We saw this tape about this guy who was working with him. It was fascinating, and on the way home, I was telling my boyfriend that would really like to read that book. He immediately stopped the car, got out, and got the book out of his trunk. He gave it to me. I read it, and I never ate another scrap of animal anything until seven years later when I got pregnant with her. (Morgan 113)

The second most common media mentioned were pamphlets or booklets. Three of the vegetarians stated that a pamphlet or a booklet provided to them by other vegetarians was the turning points for their vegetarian career. However, not all of these items were directly given to the three vegetarians. Zoe reports that the owner of a local vegetarian restaurant wrote the booklet she read:

I've been there before and one of the first times I was there they handed out this little book that was like a paperback book about, not even 100 pages long, and the woman who wrote owns the restaurant wrote the book. She is supposed to be like some supreme person or something like that...she's done a lot of work and...she's real spiritual or something like that. I really don't know a lot about her, but I read what the book had inside it. Something just made me decide that day, that day to become a vegetarian, and since then I've been one. (Zoe 112)

The other two interviewees stated that reading pamphlets from well-established vegetarian sources were the turning points in their conversion process. The well-established sources the vegetarians mentioned were Vegan Outreach and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Vegan Outreach is a non-profit organization promoting vegan advocacy (www.veganoutreach.org). Vegan Outreach's primary goal is the spreading of veganism in order to facilitate the downfall of the animal husbandry industry due to its cruel and inhumane methods. The brochure, "Why Vegan?", is the signature piece of literature for the Vegan Outreach organization. It briefly describes the philosophy behind the vegan lifestyle and reasons one should adopt this particular diet. Sherri describes how she obtained a copy of "Why Vegan?" and how that pamphlet influenced her decision:

And [a vegan friend] had just gotten a bunch of these "Why Vegan?" pamphlets put out by Vegan Outreach. He asked if anybody wanted one. I said, "I'll take one". I took it home and read it, and I was blown away. I never heard of any of that before. I was probably like most of suburban America, meat was just another commodity. People don't think of it as a living thing at all, an animal anyway. I think I went vegetarian three days later. I just said, "I'm going vegetarian" (Sherri 11).

The PETA organization has similar goals – the ethical and humane treatment of animals. However, PETA is a more established organization. It is the largest animal rights organization in the world, claiming to have over 700,000 members (www.peta.com).

Their literature includes flyers and pamphlets, but the organization also produces other forms of media: several Internet sites, videos, magazines, a newsletter, advertisements, billboards, leaflets, bumper stickers, posters, and what PETA calls “activist materials”, which includes fact sheets and fundraising guides. PETA has become so involved in various forms of media that it maintains its own “literature department” so that people may call to obtain all of the above-mentioned materials (www.peta.org/pubs/other.html). Helen notes that a number of different forms of media from PETA played a distinctive role in her conversion to vegetarianism. Her sister provided the information, but it was the data and facts presented in the PETA information that can be classified as her turning point:

My sister actually became a vegetarian a month before I did. She had a lot of information on it, and I was reading about it...I just found that the materials followed way I believed in. A lot of it had to do with the overconsumption of meat in the United States and other places...

INTERVIEWER: YOU SAID THAT YOUR SISTER WAS VERY HELPFUL. WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION DID SHE GIVE YOU?

A lot of it was from PETA. (Helen 16)

Other vegetarians claim that information provided by periodicals such as magazines and newspapers led them to their conversion to vegetarianism. For these two individuals, they were very close to becoming vegetarian and the brief information provided by these periodicals pushed them into the lifestyle. For example, Janice discusses how an article in a magazine was her turning point:

It [eating meat] was really bothering me, and I just happened to be flipping through a magazine one day, reading about...it was some model who was a vegetarian. It was just that she had a vegetarian diet. That’s when it clicked. I thought, “no meat”. You

know it's possible. It's another way of life. So, I told my mom I don't want to eat meat anymore, and she agreed with it. (Janice 114)

The final use of media as a turning point reveals a phenomenon that is unique to the digital age. One of the vegetarians interviewed stated that her turning point was information she obtained surfing Internet sites related to her interests in animal rights:

Right now I am the secretary of the humane society of [a county in Virginia], and we're mostly involved with animal welfare. But, I started thinking a lot about life and all that philosophical stuff...Well, I will be honest. Most of it is off of the Internet and I realize that a lot of these sites are a little bit biased...(Pat 08).

Health Issues as Turning Points

The third most common turning point among the vegetarians interviewed involved health issues. Seven of the 42 (16.7%) vegetarians admitted that a health issue caused their conversion. More importantly, this category can be neatly divided into two subcategories: weight loss and meat-related illnesses. The issue of weight loss can be a tricky one. A person's weight is most definitely a health-related issue, but it is also a social issue, especially for women. Becky Thompson (1994) argues that weight issues are complex and may be intertwined with women's problems associated with social class, racism, and sexism as well as possibly linked to other problems such as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Weight loss is included here under health issues because maintenance of a healthy weight can provide a path both physical and psychological well-being for the individual. Four of the seven interviewees voiced a turning point as a weight issue. For instance, Katie expressed a desire to maintain a weight she achieved while being a competitive athlete:

[H]onestly, I was a gymnast for 17 years, and we were put on a strict...well...pretty strict diets...when I graduated high school, I had no intention of being a gymnast anymore, and realized that I started to gain a bunch of weight. You know I couldn't eat what I wanted to, so initially it was health reasons. I took a drastic move and cut all meat and everything out of my diet. (Katie 02).

The remaining three interviewees had similar positions concerning their turning points.

For those with weight loss as the catalyst, all four mentioned a realization that they felt overweight. It is this realization that becomes the turning point:

Well, I actually thought about this. It's something that I never think about anymore, ever. But when I thought about the past, I guess when I moved away from home. I was 19 and I guess, really for the first time in my life, I just felt sort of ownership. I started to feel my own. I could make choices and do things on my own. I remember thinking I had been raised by a two parent home that both my parents worked. Almost constantly they were gone, and we just didn't have a very good diet. It was convenience food and take out and pick up, just kind of scrap on my own almost. And I just felt like the way I eat and this isn't right. I was going to make some changes. I was never really overweight, but I weighed 103, which for me, the way I like to feel, is too heavy. (Liane 107)

Well, I was 40 pounds overweight and so I decided to...start losing weight, and when I kind of started working out and just eating better. (Noel 108)

The second type of health issue mentioned as a turning point was an illness. The illness was not just any illness such as a common cold or the flu. It was an affliction that the interviewee attributed to eating meat. For example, Sandy's turning point was a peculiar infection she acquired from eating undercooked meat:

Probably one thing that triggered it was when I got sick one time during my senior year in high school. I had a parasitic infection that they connected with uncooked meat. That turned me off as well as the fact that I never really enjoyed eating red meat. (Sandy 119)

However, illness as a turning point does not have to be as dramatic as Sandy's experience. Two other vegetarians connected eating a portion of meat with a subsequent upset stomach as their turning points. Donna admits to tampering with a vegetarian diet prior to the time of her upset stomach, but it was the association of an illness with her meat-eating that spurred her total conversion:

I don't know why I originally became a vegetarian. I was like 18 and I was like, "That's it. I'm going to become a vegetarian." I really didn't know what to eat, so I didn't become one [at the time]. Then I got a hold of Vegetarian Times magazine...I started following the recipes, so I knew what to eat. Then I started eating vegetarian food [on occasion]. When I ate meat, I got sick. I said, "That's it. I'm a vegetarian." (Donna 116)

Finally, Mallory noted that a trip to a well-known fast food restaurant for a hamburger was the convincing piece of evidence for a conversion to vegetarianism:

I went to Burger King, and I ordered a junior whopper or something and got really sick to my stomach. I was like, "I don't want to eat it anymore". So, I gave up red meat and pork. (Mallory 14).

Excursions as Turning Points

Another type of experience reported by several vegetarians that can be classified as a turning point is the excursion. Four of the 42 vegetarians interviewed remarked that an excursion away from their everyday setting triggered the conversion process. An excursion can be defined as a short trip that the person took for either educational, health, or recreational reasons. Two of the four vegetarians mentioned school trips to factories that were associated in the meat packing industry as turning points:

I visited a slaughter house my eighth grade year, in middle school. That was enough for me to decide I wanted to do it. (Jim 05).

[T]hey took our class on a field trip to the V***** Meat Packing Plant, which was about a block and a half [away from the school]. We were studying farm life or whatever. You know the whole agricultural schpeel... That was it for bologna and hot dogs right there. (Summer 117)

Educational excursions were not the only type of short trips mentioned. Andre decided to begin the path toward vegetarianism after returning from an environmental conference:

I found I went vegetarian after I went to a conference, an environmental conference. There were a lot of animal rights people there, and then I became vegan after I returned home. It was at this conference where I talked with other people. It was probably the most progressive thought maybe in our area. Each time I go to this conference I get kind of triggered to go a step higher (Andre 06)

Finally, the last excursion could be categorized as an excursion for pleasure or recreational purposes. However, the interviewee went with friends who were practicing vegetarians to an area that was known for alternative thinking in the northern California area:

Well, I'm from California originally. Vegetarianism isn't a real rare phenomenon there. But, really, I guess growing up I really didn't have a big love for meat. I was never really into it. One weekend I spent with some friends, some hippie friends, at B***** C*****, which is a hippie town [in California]. It's actually in the mountains and they were vegetarians. I don't know, but they sort of talked to me about it. And I thought it was the right thing. It just kicked for me. It just worked ever since that day. (Edie 105)

Aesthetic Experiences as Turning Points

The final theme which emerged from the vegetarians regarding turning points was the aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experiences among vegetarians can be defined as the ability of meat or meat-related items to produce disgust within the individual. The

aesthetic experience rises out of the moment of disgust concerning the meat or meat-related product in question. Beardsworth and Kiel (1996) state that meat can be re-characterized as disgusting instead of appetizing and delicious. Meat can be redefined to provide the individual with images of death, violence, and suffering. Three vegetarians interviewed placed the onus on a particular aesthetic experience as the trigger for vegetarianism. Sadie exemplified the notion of aesthetic experience as presented by Beardsworth and Kiel:

Truthfully, I was eating a steak one day, and I just decided I thought it was disgusting to be eating a dead animal...That simple! (emphasis in original interview) (Sadie 104)

Brittany also described this theme of experiencing a revelation during eating. She discusses the scenario in which became her turning point for vegetarianism:

It must be my imagination like when I started eating meat at [a large international fast food chain]. I started thinking about ground up animals. It just didn't appeal to me anymore. It was more an active imagination than...I don't know...just thinking about where the meat goes through. You know all the processes until it gets to my plate. (Brittany 15).

Abrupt vs. Gradual Conversion: Critiquing Beardsworth and Kiel

In the academic literature on vegetarianism, the conversion process in this particular dietary phenomenon has only been researched by one set of authors. Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil (1992) stated that there are essentially two classifications regarding the conversion process among vegetarians. It can either be an abrupt change or a gradual change to the lifestyle. The major problem with their conceptualization of abrupt vs. gradual is the in the composition of the conversion process itself. According to Beardsworth and Kiel, the actual behavior is not truly important but it is the ideology

behind the behavior. These researchers view conversion as an ideological shift that may take either one of two forms. Beardsworth and Kiel define an abrupt change as an experience that was “commonly associated with distress or disgust, and could lead to a sudden change in eating patterns” (1992 p267). Abrupt conversions center on the conversion experience. This conversion experience is very similar to the turning points that have been outlined in this chapter. However, Beardsworth and Kiel do not outline a conversion experience for a gradual change. The gradual change, according to Beardsworth and Kiel, involves “a relatively gradual process of change, as the individual’s ideas evolve and vague dislikes and misgivings (in some cases heading back into childhood) take shape and become more pressing” (1992 p266). The point being that a vegetarian must come to a place to decide to become a “vegetarian”. This requires a turning point or a conversion experience, whether gradual or abrupt. In defense of Beardsworth and Kiel, their conceptualization of the conversion experience involves a dramatic shift in ideology due to a distressing situation involving meat.

Another problem with the conversion processes outlined by Beardsworth and Kiel deals with the actual behavior of vegetarianism. It is one thing to ideologically state you are a vegetarian. It is another to actually be one in practice. Beardsworth and Kiel briefly state that either an abrupt or gradual ideological conversion may actually take days, weeks, or months to come to fruit as a practicing vegetarian. The main issue here is that the parameters of “gradual” and “abrupt” are within the eyes of the beholder. One person’s abrupt change is another’s gradual conversion. The function of time makes this concept difficult to understand due to the complexities of human nature and opinion.

In this current investigation, it was found that the 45 vegetarians interviewed could be classified three ways based on their “conversion experience”. First and foremost, three vegetarians interviewed were lifelong vegetarians. Therefore, these individuals did not have a gradual or abrupt conversion.¹ Secondly, 24 of the 42 vegetarians reported that their change was a gradual one when they were questioned. That leaves 18 respondents claiming to have adopted the vegetarian lifestyle abruptly. However, if you use Beardsworth and Kiel’s ideological conceptualization of the two conversion processes, you can re-categorize several individuals and discover that 28 of the 42 vegetarians took a gradual path to conversion on the ideological level. Interestingly, when you re-classify the interviewees on the grounds of being a practicing vegetarian at the time of conversion 23 of the 42 interviews would have converted gradually to the vegetarian diet.

The major problem arises when you are describing conversion. Is conversion ideological or behavioral or both? The issue becomes cleaner when you do use the respondents’ answers to the question on their conversion. Forty-one of the 42 vegetarians referred to the actual eating patterns as the conversion to vegetarianism. Only one person delineated his/her answer by stating that the ideological conversion was gradual but the behavioral was quite abrupt. Therefore, when speaking of conversion to vegetarianism, one should refer to the actual behavior of being a vegetarian, not the ideology behind it. Beardsworth and Kiel are correct that the ideology plays a huge role in the conversion

¹ Beardsworth and Keil (1992) never address the issue of lifelong vegetarianism. Actually, the academic literature does not address this phenomenon at all. However, in the future as more and more children are being raised vegetarian, there may be a time when the topic of lifelong vegetarianism among Westerners will be worthy of more investigation.

process, but it is the behavior that people respond as to whether you are vegetarian or not. To put this simply, to be a vegetarian one must practice what one preaches.

Conclusion

Chapter Four dealt with the person's affinity for a particular form of deviance. This chapter has dealt with the "trigger" for becoming deviant. John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965) outlined this "trigger" in their theory of deviant religious conversion and called it a turning point. The only major sociological study on vegetarians completely by Beardsworth and Kiel (1992) suggested that a turning point does occur in the vegetarian conversion process, but the turning point could lead to two potential speeds for conversion, abrupt or gradual. When the interviews were conducted for this study, it was readily apparent that the turning point was a crucial component for someone's conversion to vegetarianism.

The turning point becomes the moment in time when the potential vegetarian makes the decision to become vegetarian. It directly evolves from the build-up of tensions in a person who has an affinity for vegetarianism. However, when a build-up of tension occurs, there must be a point, a setting, or a circumstance that a person can release or reduce the tension. Vegetarianism can be the circumstance that helps a person reduce the tensions that build up during the affinity stage.

The interviews yielded five potential turning points: discussions, media, health issues, excursions, and aesthetic experiences. Discussions are situations in which the potential vegetarian engaged in circumstances that led to an attempt to adopt the lifestyle. The media-based turning point can be described as the point where the decision to

become vegetarian was based on the reading or the consuming of particular forms of media such as books, pamphlets, films, television shows, or the internet among many others. Thirdly, a health-related issue could trigger a conversion to vegetarianism. A few interviewees mentioned weight loss and/or a suspected meat-related illness as the turning point to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle. Excursions are arguably the most interesting turning point in the study. Excursions are centered on social interactions and discussions, but what makes this turning point so different is that a trip away from the everyday setting primed the person for a conversion to vegetarianism. Finally, the last turning point is the aesthetic experience. Some vegetarians interviewed experienced a moment of intense disgust regarding meat and meat-related items that caused the beginning of the conversion to a meat-free lifestyle. This turning point is a re-definition of meat as a viable food stuff to a disgusting or morally-reprehensible item. Each turning point represents a situation or a moment in time when the person ultimately decided to adopt the vegetarian diet. Not all of the vegetarians experienced a turning point due to the fact that three of the vegetarians in the sample were lifelong vegetarians and have never really consumed meat.

The turning point can be described as the start for the affiliation process. As the Lofland-Stark Model (1965) points out, turning points are the reflected moments in the individual's life where it is believed that a decision was made to reduce the tension. However, as Lofland and Stark note, the turning point is not part of the learning process to become involved in a deviant lifestyle choice. This chapter set the stage for affiliating with vegetarianism. Chapter six will actually present the socialization process of vegetarians as they became more involved in the deviant lifestyle.

CHAPTER SIX

Continuing the Affiliating Process:

Sources of Vegetarian Socialization

After the convert reaches a turning point an affective bond must develop with members who currently hold the deviant perspective (Lofland & Stark 1965). A positive relationship between the new convert and the individual or individuals who hold the ideology in question must exist before a full conversion is to take place. This bond between the recent convert and the members of the movement may emerge from a new relationship between strangers who have not met prior to the turning point or may be the result of an existing personal relationship (Snow & Phillips 1980).

Snow and Phillips (1980) suggest that the group affective bond may be the most critical aspect of the conversion process. If you parallel this conceptualization with Matza's theory of becoming deviant, than you can see the importance of the affective bond. Matza (1969) argues that the process of affiliation resembles the process of differential association as described by Edwin Sutherland (1947). In the most general sense, affiliation, or as Sutherland calls it differential association, can provide the convert with definitions critical to the situation at hand. But before a discussion of the nature of definitions can begin, an explanation regarding the nature and legacy of differential association as well as the impact of the theory on Matza's notion of affiliation must be presented.

The theory of differential association has a long history within the study of criminology and deviant behavior. The theory first appeared in notable criminologist

Edwin Sutherland's first edition of his classic text, *Criminology*. The fourth and final version of the textbook was published in 1947 (Akers 1997). Sutherland insisted that criminal and deviant behavior is learned. In fact, Sutherland believed that all behavior is learned in the same manner. The only difference between the learning of deviant behavior and the learning of conforming behavior lies within "what" is learned, not in so much "how" the behavior is acquired (Williams and McShane 1999). However, the premise that all behavior is learned is only one of three basic assumptions that are specific to differential association (Shoemaker 2000). The second assumption states that the learning of deviant behavior occurs primarily in small informal groups. The final assumption purports that the learning of questionable behavior comes from "collective experiences as well as from specific situational, current events" (Shoemaker 2000 p139). This belief that learning occurs in small, informal, and intimate settings is essential to the notion of the affective bond in the Lofland-Stark Model of deviant conversions. Within the Lofland-Stark Model deviant conversions will most likely occur when the potential convert develops a personal relationship with a person already practicing the deviant religion in question. Definitions in favor of deviant ideologies are learned in conjunction with individuals and their resources in these personal relationships. This idea becomes quite important within Matza's theory of becoming deviant because Matza credits Sutherland with originally tackling the concept of affiliation with the construction and evolution of his theory of differential association. For our purposes here, the basic assumptions of the affiliation process are the basic assumptions provided by Sutherland within his theory of differential association. However, Matza believed that Sutherland's notion of learning or affiliating was too simple.

According to David Matza (1969), it is through the idea of definitions that provides the impetus for affiliation, but it is Sutherland's conceptualization of the person involved in the affiliating process that is simplistic. Sutherland does not account for the individual's ability to choose. He did not allow the subjects with his theory of differential association to create meaning. They are passive recipients of the learning process. Differential Association does not allow for a person to be active in their own learning process.

The one concept in differential association, however, does leap out as a cornerstone of the affiliating process. This is the concept of definitions. In the final version of differential association, Sutherland (1947) dedicates two of the nine principles that outline the theory to the conceptualization of definitions. Principles five and six delineate the nature of the concept of the definition. Sutherland states in principle five that the motivation to commit crime and deviance or refrain from criminal and deviant activity comes from the definitions the individual learns regarding a positive or negative view of society's norms. Principle six states how a person will eventually become deviant. When the individual obtains an excess of definitions favorable to norm violation over those definitions favorable to conformity.

Sutherland's theory was not as focused on the learning of techniques for the different varieties of deviance (even though it is mentioned within the framework of the nine principles). The primary focus was on the learning of definitions central to engaging in a specific kind of deviance (Williams & McShane 1999). Williams and McShane note that Sutherland's conceptualization of definitions did not look at the "excess of definitions" as a numeric function. According to Sutherland, it is the quality of the

interaction with the others in which the definition was learned that determined how a person would respond. Simply, it is the quality of the definition, not the quantity that leads to the excess.

However important Sutherland was to the study of deviance and the development of differential association theory, it is the revision of his theory by Ronald Akers that brings this perspective into a more usable light. Ronald Akers' Social Learning Theory was originally intended as an extension of Differential Association. However, it grew to become "an alternative to Sutherland's theory" (Williams & McShane 1999 p221). The result was a new theory that owes much to Sutherland and his Differential Association perspective, especially the legacy of the concept known as definitions.

Before entering into a detailed discussion of social learning theory and the application of definitions from the theory to vegetarianism, one must ask how does social learning fit into the affiliating process as described by Matza? Two issues need to be resolved before a shift from differential association to social learning can take place. First of all, Matza (1969) specifically stated that affiliation to deviance most resembled what Sutherland accomplished with his theory of differential association. The problem is that Differential Association's emphasis was on criminality and delinquency, not deviance in general. Akers claims that social learning theory is a "broader" theory that can be applied to virtually all forms of deviance (1985 p41). Since many forms of deviance are not violations of the modern penal codes, social learning theory's focus on deviance has a more logical consistency than differential association because of its focus on criminality and delinquency. The second issue deals with the evolution of deviance theory. Matza's theory was published in 1969. Differential Association was the premier theory of

deviance that dealt with social interaction and the learning of techniques, rationalizations, and motivations of those deviant and criminal acts. At the time, this was a perfect fit for the concept of affiliation in Matza's theory. The problem with differential association is that the theory was not revised since the 1947 version of the theory. This had more to do with Sutherland's untimely death in 1950 than with any major flaw in the theoretical position (Akers 1997). It is for the development of differential association as well as many other important contributions to criminology that Akers (1997) has called Sutherland the most important criminologist of the 20th Century.

Since Sutherland's death in 1950, the path regarding the evolution differential association wandered somewhat over the last half of the 20th Century. Matsueda (1988) maintains that there have been three distinct applications of differential association within the evolution of the theory. The first application came shortly after the death of Sutherland during the 1950s with the subcultural theories of Cloward and Ohlin; Walter Miller; and Albert Cohen. There the theories investigated the passing of definitions that were favorable for committing delinquent acts through the existence of delinquent, lower class subcultures. The second trend in the unfolding of differential association began in the 1950s and continued through the 1960s. Matsueda explains that this application was an attempt to reconcile the relationship between symbolic interactionism and differential association.

For example, Donald Cressey, a colleague of Sutherland and the biggest proponent of Differential Association after Sutherland's death, extended differential association to include role theory (Cressey 1954). Cressey suggested that learning vocabularies of motive and rationalizations for committing crimes were learned in the

same way as any other set of motives and values. The third application of the theory takes differential association and attempts to incorporate components of the psychological position known as social learning theory. This trend, which is the most widely accepted revision, began in the mid-1960s and continues until this day.

According to Ronald Akers' latest revision of differential association/social learning theory (1998), the fundamental assumption is that similar processes, contexts, situations, and mechanisms can produce both deviant and conforming behavior. The basic proposition revolves around four variable "sets" that permit deviant behavior to be learned over conforming behavior (Akers 1998 p50). Akers notes that the basic propositions can be reported in one long sentence. However, the four main sets of variables can be separated from the central proposition. The separation of the central proposition leads to four independent testable hypotheses that become the core to the social learning perspective. Akers suggests that a person is more prone to deviant behavior if the following occur:

1. He or she differentially associates with others who commit, model, and support violations of social and legal norms.
2. The violating behavior is differentially reinforced over the behavior conforming to the norm.
3. He or she is more exposed to and observes more deviant than conforming models.
4. His or her own learned definitions are favorable toward committing the deviant acts (Akers 1998 p51).

The main component of social learning theory is the idea of the definition. The basis of the definition is similar for both Sutherland and Akers. According to Akers (1997

& 1998), definitions are a person's own attitudes or meanings that are attached to any given behavior. This includes rationalizations and moral attitudes that define an act as either right or wrong; good or bad; and/or favorable or unfavorable. These definitions can be attached to a general form of behavior or a specific act. Some definitions can provide the subject with moral approval or positive reinforcement. Other definitions can be utilized to neutralize deviant behavior in order to avoid punishment or justify the deviant action. Definitions can provide people with particular vocabularies of motive for specific deviant acts. Williams and McShane (1999) point out that social learning theory argues that people acquire both the deviant behavior and the definitions that accompany the behavior. Akers (1985) suggests that the learning can either be direct through the process of operant conditioning or it can be indirect through a process of imitation or modeling. Both direct and indirect learning are important in the process of socialization into vegetarianism.

Since socialization can be simply defined in sociology as the lifelong learning and relearning of culture, who are the agents of vegetarian socialization and what types of learning experiences do the agents provide for potential vegetarians in the affiliating process? The three major agents of socialization in the process of affiliating to vegetarianism are other individuals (which includes family, peers, and educators), written materials, and the Internet along with other visual media.

Learning to Become Vegetarian: Other People

The socialization into a deviant career has been one of the most researched areas in the study of deviant behavior. Entering into deviance can take either a direct route or an indirect route (Bryant 1990). Vegetarianism is no different. Potential vegetarians can learn the definitions of becoming vegetarian either directly or indirectly. Direct socialization usually occurs through the process of direct instruction. One person who is already engaged in the deviant activity teaches a novice “the ropes” concerning the deviant activity and/or ideology. Akers (1985) states that direct learning involves a process of conditioning. Conditioning is the practice where the deviant is positively reinforced for his or her questionable actions. The questionable behavior becomes strengthened through the belief of receiving actual or potential rewards. Indirect learning of deviance is the result of observation, imitation, and/or modeling (Bryant 1990; Akers 1985). Imitation and modeling of deviance is the outcome of mimicking a person acting out the particular form of deviance. Also, indirect learning can involve watching others or from a more generalized source such as the mass media (Bryant 1990). However, the most common path to deviance is through direct experience that comprises of a shift in social groupings. People alter their peer groups, and they move into “a new phase of the life cycle” (Adler & Adler 1997 p458). Entering deviance becomes the new phase of the life cycle.

Again, vegetarians are not any different when it comes to being socialized into deviance. Of the 45 vegetarians interviewed, 34 claimed to have had substantial contact with one or more people concerning their adoption of the vegetarian diet. As mentioned earlier, 3 of the 45 vegetarians have been practicing the lifestyle since birth or at an

extremely young age. Two of the three were raised in vegetarian households, one for religious reasons (Hinduism) and the other due to parental choice. The third has been a vegetarian since she can remember due to her lifelong disgust for the taste of meat. Her situation was atypical. Of the remaining 42 vegetarians, 32 (76.2%) learned the social mechanisms of vegetarianism from other people familiar with the lifestyle.

Having a vegetarian friend or family member to discuss and aid in the conversion to a vegetarian diet was by far the most common process of socialization. Twenty-five of the vegetarians interviewed stated that they discussed, were given information by, or modeled a particular person or people when becoming vegetarian. This connection with a fellow vegetarian or vegetarians as “guides” or as “mentors” could come in many forms. For instance, Ashley stated that she came from a family of vegetarians:

I have pretty much grown up with it [vegetarianism]. My grandmother is a vegetarian. My mom passed away when I was young, but she was a vegetarian. I heard all these stories about how good a cook she was, how she did all of her own gardening, and her own canning. My parents are hippies. That had some influence, and also my stepmother is a vegetarian as well. (Ashley 120)

It was in the context of the family that Ashley learned how to think and eat like a vegetarian. Glass et al (1986) note that across generations family members have similar attitudes. These attitudes have become internalized. This is especially important if the cross-generation family members in question also attain similar occupational status. This becomes important because in the situations where a person is raised in a vegetarian lifestyle. The attitudes, beliefs, and practices of vegetarianism will most likely be a part of the foundation for the person’s later development, which is quite similar to attitudes toward particular occupations (Handel 1990).

Also, an individual can learn vegetarianism from a close friend:

One of my best friends was vegetarian, and she told me a lot about it. You know I thought they brought up some really cool points. I thought, you know, that's a really good idea. And, I thought...I started to think like a vegetarian. I saw meat, and I would see all these [bad] things. (Beth 09)

Close friends play an important role in the socialization process of vegetarians. It is through the friendship that one can open up and talk about something very personal such as one's eating habits and beliefs. The peer group provides a context in which people can capture experiences that they will probably never achieve elsewhere (Adler & Adler 1998). The friendship group permits individuals to learn self-direction. People can experiment with activities of self-expression within the peer group. Mary explains how her friend convinced her to try vegetarianism as an experiment:

It was my senior year in high school, and one of my friends was a vegetarian. I don't even know if she is a vegetarian anymore. We were talking about it and she was like, "You really won't miss it". So, I tried it for a month. I was also reading a lot of stuff on animal rights issues and the mass production of meat. So, I really didn't miss it during that time, and it became more of a habit after a while. (Mary 04)

Indirect learning from someone close to the vegetarian can also occur. Several vegetarians mentioned they modeled their lifestyle change after someone they knew personally:

When I came back, I was overseas, so I basically had no choice but to eat meat there. There wasn't a lot of food. Then a few months after we got back my mom's friend decided she was going to be vegetarian, but she did it for health reasons. I was like, "OK, I'm going to lose some weight". That's when I became one initially, and then I came to learn more about it...I read more about people who were vegetarian, so I learned more about animal rights and

stuff like that. That made me stick with it rather than doing it for a little while (Rosalia 17).

Well, she's my best friend...used to be [at one time]. Well, we were pretty close. She didn't tell me I should be vegetarian, but I kind of watched what she did. She did a lot of natural stuff. She wouldn't take any medication for anything, like when she had a headache...nothing. I thought that was really interesting not to be so dependent on the pharmaceutical end. Vegetarianism kind of coincides with that end. Everything is real natural and healthy. Once you get into being healthy. She kind of introduced me to it a little bit. (Juliana 118)

Another group of individuals that can socialize a person into vegetarianism is a teacher.

Two of the vegetarians discussed a specific teacher they encountered during their schooling that helped them become vegetarian. For example, Sherri was introduced to the environmental ideology behind the vegetarian movement by her first-year English professor:

Well, actually it has been a long time. It's a long process...freshman year, my freshman English class...it was an environmentally focused English class, and I had no idea it was going to be. We had this book that was a compilation of a bunch of different environmental essays. One of the one's she made us read was called "Beyond Beef" by Jeremy Rifkin...the part in there basically deals with the environmental effects –it's two pages- of cattle ranching. I was never really exposed to...it wasn't really animal rights, but the environment and food consumption was never really brought to my attention. I never really did any research on my own, but I immediately stopped eating beef at the time. (Sherri 11)

Teachers have always played an important role in the socialization process. According to Ballentine (1997), the teacher holds power over the student. The power can be in the form of punishment (negative reinforcement) or praise (positive reinforcement).

Teachers are expected to impart positive moral examples on students. In Sherri's case, the moral example of the instructor being environmentally aware and a practicing vegetarianism also provided a model for her to guide her early vegetarianism.

Sherri's example is extremely important. The agents of socialization presented are not mutually exclusive. The agents function together and separately depending on the context. It is the process of internalizing the vegetarian dietary practices as well as the development of the attitudes and the ideology that makes up the vegetarian. The learning of vegetarianism is a course of action that includes multiple agents of socialization (i.e. the family; the friendship group; teachers; and the mass media) working together to mold the prospective convert.

Family, friends, and teachers are not the only individuals who join in the socialization of prospective vegetarians. Peers of the potential convert that include but are not limited to fellow athletes, members of social organizations, and colleagues can also teach the young vegetarian about the lifestyle. Colleen believed that in order for her to become an elite in her sport of kayaking, she felt that she needed to become vegetarian:

I mean I, of course, used to eat meat and stuff like that, but I wasn't eating very well. And I got involved in kayaking...I started doing that pretty competitively, and there's a lot of people there that are vegetarian. And so I was going on trips with them and they were actually eating things that I liked instead of [meat]...and I found that like, maybe, that I just didn't like the taste of meat...it's really heavy. I guess I kind of wasn't, you know, I didn't like it very much. Then I just started kind of eating what they ate. I started feeling better. (Colleen 106)

Several interviewees mentioned membership in particular activist groups that provided encouragement for vegetarianism. These groups primarily included environmental and

animal rights groups. Since the vegetarian movement intersects both the animal rights and environmental movements (Maurer 1997), it is no wonder the membership in these organizations would bring individuals in contact with other vegetarians that could socialize the novice vegetarian. The best example of this predicament happened to Andre:

There were people in the [environmental] group who were vegetarian. I would talk to different people in...for instance, one of the head people in [the environmental group on campus] was a vegetarian. The head of [another campus group] was vegetarian, so when I was interacting with these people in the groups, it kind of crossed boundaries. Also, there were the people in the [animal rights group] as well...Different people would question. We would get into discussions, and they would question my logic. There was one person in [the campus environmental group] who was very good at that, to the point of being obnoxious. Anytime you would have a rationale, he would take it and break it down to make sure it was logical. He helped me get analytical. (Andre 06)

Finally, Maria outlined that her conversion to vegetarianism included fellow employees. Her activities within the scope of her day to day dealings brought her into contact with individuals of different cultures with whom she was employed. This exposure aided in her socialization:

I was at the U.N., and I learned what world food production practices and what our privilege is doing to the rest of society...pesticide levels in our foods, types of illegal practices that foreign governments practice; violations that they do; bad sanitation; poverty – how many people aren't eating because of what you are eating in terms of the political aspects of food production. (Maria 18)

Maria's experience was interesting because it leads to an important experience in the vegetarian subculture. The next subsection outlines a peculiar phenomenon in the

socialization of vegetarians. The potluck dinner provides a venue where vegetarian food and ideology can be shared from those who create it, perpetuate it, and live by it.

Bringing People Together: The Vegetarian Potluck

Socializing with other people who are vegetarian seems to be the primary way vegetarians learn how to become vegetarians. In what context does this learning process occur? Understandably, many vegetarians discuss their eating habits over meals, usually a meal of the meatless ilk. However, one particular context stands out among the vegetarians interviewed. Fourteen of the 45 vegetarians interviewed directly stated or alluded to participation in a group meal that involved primarily vegetarian cuisine. These “vegetarian potlucks” became a way in which vegetarians can come together as a social group.

The word “potluck” itself conjures the image of eating whatever happened to be in the pot at dinner time. It more specifically refers to what an unannounced guest would eat (The American Heritage Dictionary 2000). Over time, the word has evolved to mean a meal in which each guest brings a particular food dish to a social gathering so that everyone may share their food collectively. It is an old fashioned and inexpensive way to bring people together for a particular occasion. The potluck dinner as we know it today began as a covered dish supper that was usually held in a church basement or a community hall (Jameson 1999). It was a way for social groups that did not have an overabundance of funding to find a way to hold social get-togethers. There has been a renewed interest in the potluck dinner due to the hectic nature of people’s lives today. Potlucks have experienced a revival due to the fact that a person can organize a party or a

get-together with minimal effort and expense. According to Jameson, potluck suppers have also found renewed interest due to the cooperation and friendliness required of the guests. It is a way of seeking community in a disconnected modern world.

Vegetarians are one group of people who have utilized the potluck in order to maintain group cohesiveness. Since vegetarianism is centered around dietary practices, an inexpensive, community-oriented, and logical way to share information and ideas on the subject would be a potluck dinner. Many vegetarian groups, organizations, and societies sponsor periodic potluck dinners for their members and their families.² The most common time period for the potluck was monthly. However, some groups advertised weekly and biweekly potlucks as well.

The rules pertaining to the vegetarian potluck are essentially the same as any potluck. Each guest and their family brings one prepared meal that can feed several people. Also, it is usually the custom to bring the recipe or copies of the recipe for the dish that was prepared so others may try it at home if they like (Jameson 1999). These two rules are the basic rules. Not all vegetarian potlucks have the same rules beyond the basic rules. For example, one local vegetarian society in California states that the dishes they bring only have to be vegetarian, which involves having no red meat, seafood, or poultry. However, dairy products are allowed (www3.sympatico.ca/FCUA/last.html). Other groups like a student group located at a university in the southern part of the U.S. stated that all meals prepared must be vegan so all members, both vegetarian and vegan, can enjoy them (www.uga.edu/~vegsoc/potluck.html). Some other groups ask that all

² I typed in “potluck dinner” into a well-known Internet search engine. It produced several hundred “hits” with sponsoring groups ranging from student clubs on college campuses to church groups to athletic teams to vegetarian groups. I subsequently typed in “vegetarian potluck” in the same search engine only to find approximately 200 sites representing vegetarian organizations throughout the U.S. and Europe. These groups sponsored periodic vegetarian potluck dinners.

members bring all of their own serving and eating utensils

(www.lcurrent.org/etus/events.html). As one can plainly see, potlucks are designed to bring vegetarians together under a common set of rules in the spirit of cooperation and friendship.

What then are the outcomes for people who attend vegetarian potlucks? The main purposes of the vegetarian potluck is learning about vegetarianism, making contacts, and, thirdly, introductions. The first and most important purpose of the potluck is learning about vegetarianism. This can happen on either of two planes. First, you can learn about different vegetarian ideologies while interacting with other more informed or experienced vegetarians. Secondly, you can learn about different styles of vegetarian cooking while simultaneously acquiring recipes for future meals.

The second major function of the potluck supper is making contacts. The vegetarian potluck provides an arena for vegetarians to casually network with other vegetarians. This ability to meet new vegetarians permits the individual vegetarian to become more socialized within the subculture. As one can see, this function directly relates to the first purpose because it is the intimate interaction with the people that allows for learning of vegetarianism to take place. The eating experience is a close and personal endeavor that permits someone to see a bit closer into the person he or she shares a meal. These personal connections are vital to future socialization experiences. The final function also relates to the first two functions. Potlucks involving vegetarians have a purpose of introducing non-vegetarians to the meatless lifestyle. For example, vegetarian groups encourage members to bring non-vegetarians in order for the

vegetarian group to show the possibilities of vegetarian living

(www.uga.edu/~vegsoc/potluck.html).

The total socialization experience of the potluck was not lost on a number of the vegetarians interviewed. For example, Charles notes how potlucks functioned as a learning device.

[I]t was kind of the collective family. You know the people I was going to school with. It was something that kind of happened together...the collective use of drugs, being against the [Vietnam] war, being against violence, and you know vegetarianism just seemed like it was part of that. It was also something we did together. We'd have big potlucks, and we were all pretty new at being vegetarian. So, it was nice to be sharing food with each other...there was such a large support group. It was just like all of my friends, well 75%, were vegetarians. That's because 75% of the students were. It was an "in" thing to do. In fact, if you ate meat, it was almost as if you were ostracized. At least within the circle I was in. [It was] my support group.
(Charles 22)

The potluck is the bringing together of different kinds of people who happen to share one thing in common, vegetarianism. The marginalized nature of vegetarianism allows for people practicing the diet to have a bond with each other. The potluck then serves to introduce people to a new subculture while at the same time transferring knowledge about different paths to becoming a vegetarian. Maria noted that her job and the potlucks held at her place of employment helped her become vegetarian:

It was a social issue because almost everybody at the U.N. was vegetarian, and they were from about 25 different countries. That was a strong motivator. I learned how to cook different types of food. We began to have international potlucks at my job. (Maria 18)

Learning to Become Vegetarian: Written Publications and Manuscripts

The second major source of deviant socialization for vegetarians was written publications. These came in the forms of books, magazines, pamphlets, flyers, and any other manuscript a vegetarian could collect. Surprisingly, vegetarians learned much about their lifestyle through publications and manuscripts. Scholars of deviance have pretty much ignored the fact that learning knowledge about a particular form of deviance could occur from written texts. Clinard and Meier (2000) note that written texts fall under the category of mass media. However, the authors point out that most of the questions surrounding the socialization process of the media center on television and motion pictures. Bryant (1990) also notes that a written text can help a less experienced deviant learn about a particular deviant act, but, again, there is no specific mention of a specific form of deviance having been acquired through the influence of specific written manuscripts and texts. Vegetarianism has a peculiar phenomenon of drawing individuals who tend to lean toward intellectual interests (Spencer 1993). This makes sense regarding the nature of vegetarianism and, especially, veganism. In order to abstain from meat, or all animal products in the case of veganism, one must read or deconstruct the ingredients and by-products for much of the conventional food produced today in the U.S. This is extremely important because for veganism one must learn which ingredients have been derived from animals. For instance, rennet and gelatin are essential ingredients in cheese and gelatin desserts such as Jell-O, respectively.

However, it is not only the “what” that is learned from reading. It is also the “why”. The primary component within the vegetarian experience learned from written manuscripts is the justifications for vegetarianism. The definitions concerning the

rejection of meat can be either learned or reinforced from the reading material. Some readings do involve the “how” or being a vegetarian, but most of the reading presented by the vegetarians interviewed involved the “why” regarding the violation of the dominant American foodway.

What kinds of readings does a person learn information necessary to become vegetarian? Among the vegetarians studied, 33 of the 45 mentioned at least one monograph that was important regarding the learning of vegetarianism. These monographs range from classic, well-respected academic texts to self-published monographs to simple pamphlets and flyers. The one major theme that most of these manuscripts present is that they provide reasons for practicing vegetarianism. Akers (1985) refers to this particular meaning given to vegetarianism by the material as positive definitions. Positive definitions are favorable toward practicing acts of deviance because they provide an evaluation of the behavior in a positive light. Positive definitions are primarily learned by participants in the deviant subculture. As mentioned above, literature in the form of books, magazines, articles, and/or pamphlets are essential pieces to the vegetarian subculture. The arguments presented are very persuasive and provide a context of acceptance and indoctrination to vegetarianism as well as a reinforcement of the dietary practices for those who are already practicing.

The most common response given regarding the learning about vegetarianism was the reading of classic texts by authors extremely vital to the vegetarian movement. Eighteen vegetarians mentioned seven different but very influential vegetarian authors. Frances Moore Lappe’ was the most referred to author. She wrote the groundbreaking *Diet for a Small Planet* in 1972. *Diet for a Small Planet* espouses a vegetarian diet in

order to capitalize on the abundance of plant life while simultaneously cutting back on meat consumption in order to protect our environment from overuse. Her argument is based on scientific evidence stating that a society's meat consumption is more taxing on the environment than a plant-based diet. Several editions of the book were published, including a special 10th anniversary edition summing up the impact of the book and her follow up book, *Food First. Diet for a Small Planet* gives the environmental reasons behind a vegetarian diet as well as the nutritional information needed to make the conversion a healthy one. Lappe' also included dozens of recipes for the novice vegetarian.

The second major author mentioned by the vegetarians was Jeremy Rifkin. Rifkin is a political activist and lobbyist whose focus is on the degradation the cattle industry has on the natural environment. He has written a series of articles and has made numerous presentations on the topic of the cattle culture. The culmination of his work is the book, *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture*, which was published in 1992. The first half of the manuscript addresses the history of beef consumption in western societies. Rifkin paints a picture of the holiness of beef in the rise of western civilization. The last half of the book examines the impact that the modern cattle industry has on the natural environment and on western cultures. Most importantly with a look on how Western ideology is beginning to permeate the entire globe. The last portion of the book can be described as the "sociology of beef". Rifkin presents the socio-cultural forces behind the dominance of beef including gender hierarchy in the realm of meat consumption. Also, Rifkin looks at the political agenda the beef industry fights for in order to protect its interests even in the face of severe environmental consequences.

The third author mentioned was John Robbins. John Robbins is a unique person with an interesting story. He is the son of Tom Robbins, the founder of the Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream novelty retail chain. He rejected association with the family business and wrote the vegetarian best seller, *Diet for a New America*. The book is essentially a call to vegetarianism for animal rights, health, and environmental reasons. Published in 1987, Robbins gives an updated account of the environmental woes caused by the meat industry. His arguments are very similar to those of Frances Moore Lappe'. Interesting enough, Robbins devotes a small portion of the manuscript to give a detailed summary of Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet*. Robbins also provides evidence that vegetarianism allows people to live a more vigorous and healthy lifestyle. He outlines the scientific evidence available that shows how the United States people's use of meat, dairy products, and eggs contribute to "the epidemic of heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and many other diseases of our time" (Robbins 1987 pXV). Finally and most importantly, Robbins discusses the plight of the animals themselves within what Robbins calls "The Great American Food Machine" (Robbins 1987 pXIII). Robbins focus is not whether or not animals are killed for human consumption. His issue is the quality of life of the animal before the killing takes place. The publicizing of the production methods of factory farming can be considered John Robbins' major contribution to vegetarian ideology. His "expose" that is known as *Diet for a New America* outlined the horrors of dairy production from a perspective of an insider. The fact that he rejected the Baskin-Robbins fortune to focus on vegetarian-related causes lends even more credence to the vegetarian lifestyle. He has become an example of how one can step away from the America Dream to what he or she believes is right.

Another author mentioned by the vegetarians to be important in their learning about the personal and social benefits of a plant-based lifestyle was Peter Singer. Peter Singer is the Princeton University professor and philosopher who stalwartly promotes a vegan lifestyle. His major work influencing vegetarianism is *Animal Liberation*, which was published in 1975. Singer advocates a utilitarian perspective in environmental and animal rights. The fundamental assumption of his moral theory involves the position that beings that have a moral standing have equal interests. The only quality necessary for a being to have moral standing is the capacity for suffering and/or enjoyment. The term Singer prefers to describe the ability to enjoy or suffer is sentience. According to Singer, all sentient beings have at a minimal interest to not suffer in any way. Animals, therefore, qualify as sentient beings and should not suffer. In order to reduce the suffering of animals, one should become vegetarian. Singer himself is vegan. He believes that humans practice speciesism. This is the discrimination played out on animals that deny them their moral standing. The lack of moral standing permits humans a license to utilize animals and animal-related products for our needs whether that be as food, clothing, or any other kind of purpose. This exploitation of animals likens itself to the exploitation resulting from sexism or racism. Vegetarianism becomes a stand a person can take against speciesism in support of animal rights.

Multiple sources of information was also extremely popular to learn positive definitions about vegetarianism. Nine people reported that they learned about vegetarianism from a series of random writings on the topic. Many of the vegetarians could not remember the exact titles, but they perused various books on vegetarianism including those regarding philosophy and/or cookbooks. Nine other people claimed that

the voluminous literature that PETA and its affiliate SETA (Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). PETA publishes books, booklets, pamphlets, flyers, and a quarterly magazine on topics involving animal rights and the conversion to the vegetarian lifestyle. PETA currently publishes “Animal Times”, a quarterly magazine designed for adult members: “GRRR”, a magazine published twice a year intended for children; advertisement posters that proclaim a range of pro-vegetarian/anti-meat messages; leaflets about vegetarianism and animal activism; bumper stickers ;and an activist campaign packet that can teach the novice vegetarian basic facts and techniques on how to convert others and defend oneself from counterarguments (www.peta.org/pubs/index.html).

The final major source of information that came in text form was a pamphlet. This pamphlet happened to be quite influential among the people who claimed to be vegan in the sample. The pamphlet is called “Why Vegan?”. The pamphlet “Why Vegan?” is the signature piece of activist literature from the vegan rights group, Vegan Outreach. Vegan Outreach is an international organization that is dedicated to the mission that all animals are sentient beings. Each animal has a right to its own body and life. Therefore, Vegan Outreach obviously promotes a vegan lifestyle. The organization believes that the vegan lifestyle contributes as little as possible to the exploitation and death of animals. They promote that members should proselytize a vegan diet to “the convertible” (www.veganoureach.org/about/about.html). The organization claims that “over 1,071,983 hard copies” of their main two pieces of literature “Why Vegan?” and “Vegetarian Living” have been handed out as of September 2000 (www.veganoutreach.org/about/about.html).

“Why Vegan?” is a sixteen page pamphlet/booklet discussing the reasons why a person should adopt a vegan lifestyle. It comes as part of the advocacy pack promoted by the Vegan Outreach organization. It is a piece of vegan propaganda with the sole purposes of converting others to veganism. Prepared with quotes from famous academics, writers, and social activists, the booklet primarily focuses on the harsh living conditions of animals in the meat, dairy, and egg industries. The remainder of the booklet discusses the environmental impact of meat eating as well as the health benefits of converting to veganism. It also briefly discusses the nature of protein in the vegan diet. The issue of protein is usually the biggest concern for people before converting to veganism. As a socialization device, the “Why Vegan?” pamphlet usually does not stand alone. “Why Vegan?” is used as a tool for people attempting to convert others. The proselytizing user, the booklet, and the information found on the website work together in an attempt to convert people to the vegan lifestyle.

A compelling fact about the nature of reading material as a source of vegetarian socialization is the broad array of literature mentioned by the small sample of vegetarians interviewed. The above-mentioned texts were commonly cited by these vegetarians. However, 18 other texts, pamphlets, booklets, and magazines were mentioned by the various vegetarians. These ranged from subscriptions to “Vegetarian Times” magazine to numerous cookbooks to even one vegetarian claiming that a renowned children’s book author, the late Roald Dahl, was placing hidden references about vegetarianism in a number of his books. The fact remains that there exists a plethora of writings on vegetarianism that are too voluminous to document in detail. The use of multiple random sources is a very common method of learning the vegetarian culture, but the “Why

Vegan?” and the organization that produced it reveal how intricate the socialization process becomes. It is a process of communication that comes in the form of direct learning from people as well as indirect learning resulting from access to literature and other forms of information, which this next section is about.

Learning to Become Vegetarian: The Internet and Other Forms of Mass Media

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, when deviant norms and values are projected from the media, usually television and motion pictures are blamed for the transmission of norm violating behavior. Clinard and Meier (2001) state that television and motion pictures have become the dominant forms of media in the U.S., and since these forms of mass media have become so dominant, they have become so influential. The broad appeal and relative ease at which someone can gain access to television and movies provides an avenue for deviant socialization on a wide spread level. Behaviors that violate our society’s norms can be consumed by individuals who may have never even thought of the behavior before seeing the media in question.

Interestingly, Akers (1998) states that the media, especially television and motion pictures, provide reference groups and exposure to both deviant and non-deviant models. The media provides models, which Akers says are in contrast to the direct contrast of the primary groups in person, can be referred to as symbolic modeling. Symbolic modeling is a form of indirect instruction that results from television, movies, and other forms of media such as music and the Internet. The mechanism of social learning theory employed here to learn the deviant foodway of vegetarianism is imitation. Imitation can be defined as the committing of “behaviors modeled on, and following the observation of, similar

behavior” (Akers 1998 p75). Akers continues to note that imitation alone is “inadequate” (1998 p75) to account for the learning by the practice of modeling. There has to be previous reinforcement for the modeling to be an effective socialization device. Akers points out that Edwin Sutherland was correct regarding the nature of direct instruction. However, differential association was constructed before the age of rampant technology and mass media. Akers argues that the media in today’s society can produce stronger effects regarding learning and socialization than can direct learning from primary groups. Individual media effects will be weaker than direct instruction, but with the overabundance of media producing both negative definitions of conforming behavior and neutralizing definitions for the committing of deviant acts. The media effect will most prominently “be a function of the relative frequency, intensity, duration, and priority of [the] association” (Akers 1998 p76). The media’s impact will also vary by type of behavior. For example, vegetarianism is a form of positive deviance that can be learned from different forms of media. The most prominent being the written text. However, vegetarian ideology and definitions can be acquired through models in television, video, film, the Internet, and music.

The final major theme that grew out of the interview questions on vegetarian socialization deals with the media other than that of the written word. This kind of media includes music and visual media as well as the Internet. The last two kinds of media are different in that visual media includes television episodes, films, and video and the Internet is quite interactive and has the capability to include all of the above mentioned other forms of media. The Internet provides an arena for which socialization may take place. Vegetarians may interact with other vegetarians on-line as well as access

information relevant to the lifestyle. The Internet provides a potpourri of devices such as chat rooms, web pages, on-line cookbooks, and access to libraries, which can transmit the language, values, and norms of the vegetarian subculture.

A number of vegetarians interviewed spoke directly to the fact that media other than manuscripts provide information that aided them in developing into a vegetarian. Fourteen of the 45 vegetarians interviewed mentioned either a music group or groups; a television program, video or film; or, finally, the Internet as a source of information on vegetarianism.

Music becomes an important device for socialization into vegetarianism. Since the majority of respondents were on the younger side, certain types of media are more influential among younger audiences. Music is more than just a combination of notes and lyrics. Music brings a style, an image, and an attitude from those creating it to the audience consuming it. Rock music in particular has been an important, and often neglected, source of socialization for the youth subculture for over 40 years in the Western world (Dotter 1994). Dotter points out that from its genesis a source of nonconforming values. Young people looked to and learned from the deviant images of rock musicians. Rock music has always been portrayed as a two-edged sword regarding non-conforming behavior. On one side, rock music caters to the hedonistic and independent desires of burgeoning adolescents and young adults. Simultaneously, on the other side, rock portrays this rejection of current normative behavior as the path to a better life, a life that is more open, more equal, and more understanding (Weinstein 1994).

Music's impact on vegetarianism is no different. The image of vegetarianism as a means of simultaneously rejecting tradition and making the world a better place is congruent with rock music's ideology. Four of the vegetarians interviewed specifically mentioned a particular style of rock music or a musician as a source of information about vegetarianism. All four of the respondents were young and of European American descent. Their preferences were for rock music as a general type, but three of the four referred to the hard core/punk genre while the other mentioned a more mainstream musician. The hard core/punk movement has traditionally focused on the youth subculture and flaunted a seemingly total rejection of prevalent social norms. Within the hard core/punk movement, there exists a faction of artists who include vegetarianism as a part of norm violation.

This strain of hard core/punk known as straight-edge promotes vegetarianism and veganism. Straight-edge is a branch of the movement, which developed in the early 1980s. The musician credited with the founding of the straight-edge movement is Ian Mackaye of the music group, Minor Threat. Originally, straight-edge was only the rejection of the use of mind-altering substances such as illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. They also promoted the abstinence of premarital/promiscuous sex. Today, straight-edges are encouraged to adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet and engage in political activism, usually on behalf of the environment (www.straight-edge.com).

Music is the unifying key to the straight-edge movement. Information is disseminated among the straight-edge community through information booths at concerts, web sites, compact discs, and fan mailing lists. The Teen Idles, Minor Threat, Gorilla Biscuits, and Youth of Today were the original preachers of the straight-edge gospel.

Strife, Mouthpiece, and the most visible of the straight-edge bands, Earth Crisis, promote not only the original philosophy of no drugs and abstinence. They also advocate personal reflection and seeing the connection that one's own behavior has on society and the natural environment (www.straight-edge.com).

As noted, three vegetarians interviewed claimed to have been influenced by the hard core/punk music that promoted vegetarianism. Two of the three vegetarians were practicing vegans at the time of the interview. Straight-edge promotes to its followers the more strict vegan diet. Vegetarianism is acceptable as a transition to the ideal vegan lifestyle. As with any source of information, the music had varying impact on each of these vegans. For example, Brandon was in a hard core/punk band in high school where band mates illuminated him to the ideology of vegetarianism:

In high school, a lot of the kids I hung out with were into hard core, straight-edge type music, and we all went to shows. I was in a band with a bunch of them. A lot of them were vegetarian or vegan. I wasn't at the time. I didn't have any bad feelings toward it. I thought it was pretty cool that they were doing it. I just didn't see. I couldn't see the justification personally. I could see what they saying, so I was cool with it. And, like, the more that I interacted with them, for instance, at shows. And PETA would have booths there because it was in the Norfolk area. PETA's headquarters is down there. I started reading the stuff, and one of my friends who was in the Hare Krishnas put together a 'zine that had just different music stuff. But, one page had facts that were taken from John Robbins' *Diet for a New America*. (Brandon 07).

Roger, on the other hand, is more involved in the music. The music itself becomes the source of information:

Another thing that also played a good role in this mostly for me and a lot of my friends were involved in the [Southwestern City] punk scene and hard core music

scene...[W]e'd go to shows, and there would be kids three to four years younger than us. And, they'd be handing out these fliers about vegan/vegetarianism and things like that. These kids were in the same scene, so we'd get kind of interested to get them to buy a record...buy a record, the albums with all the songs about vegetarianism and animal liberation and things like that...benefit compilation CDs and records...actually specific records. I can actually pick out a record, a record called *The Voiceless*. It was a benefit compilation for animal liberation front³ and some other organization too. And, all the bands had songs about animal liberation and basically vegetarianism and things like that. When I saw that and listened to it, I was like, "Man, you know". It really started me going. I was younger you know. I wanted to be part of the that scene up there, up in [the Southwestern City]...but I can look back and think of like three or four records that, you know, reading the lyrics and the pamphlets that came with that stuff and articles that were often Xeroxed in the record sleeves and things like that pushed me [to become vegetarian]. (Roger 103)

However, the influence music has on the deviant lifestyle does not have to be as complete and encompassing as the straight-edge philosophy. Mainstream musicians can also become agents of socialization. As described by social learning theory, simple modeling can provide enough information for one to attempt a new type of behavior. Since rock musicians are modeled so often by adolescents and young adults, it is no surprise when an incredibly popular performer adopts the vegetarian lifestyle that others follow suit:

I think the number one influence was [the rock group] Pearl Jam, as a matter of fact...because they were all vegetarians. And I think they just don't eat red meat. And, I was reading an article about them. And, it just really hit the nail on the head. I thought, "Wow, these people are that". You know, I enjoy their music. I enjoy their lyrics, and they have a lifestyle that I think that I would want to have...that really helped me to go on with my decision of not eating meat. I was reading about when Eddie Vedder [of Pearl Jam] started vegetarianism. (Janice 114)

³ Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is a known domestic "terrorist" organization that has been indirectly linked to a number of "monkeywrenching" activities throughout the United States. See Scarce (1990) for a great summary of a number of environmental terrorist groups.

Music is not the only form of mass communication important to the learning of vegetarianism. Visual media such as television, video, and film can bring to the viewer the stark realities of certain types of behavior. Visual media of the types mentioned provide information that is not only seen but heard as well. This kind of media brings to the viewer scenarios and occurrences that otherwise a person would not be privy. Akers (1998) suggests that the media, and more particularly the visual media of television and film, provides the most relevant models and definitions of nonconforming acts with people who have a certain predisposition, or affinity, for the types of deviance in question. Several vegetarians referred to this type of indirect learning experience. Television, videos, and film provided models and definitions for the new vegetarians to imitate. The organization of visual media varied considerably. The types of visual media cited as socialization mechanisms ranged from local news broadcasts to specific videos distributed by PETA and John Robbins' foundation known as EarthSave to PBS specials on meat production and the environment. The one common theme produced from reaction to consuming this type of media was the image presented, which heightened awareness and ultimately played a role in learning more about vegetarianism and its motives. It is one thing to read about and discuss meat packing and environmental degradation. It is another to have images tied to the rhetoric. The mental images created by the television show or video provided a reminder to maintain a vegetarian lifestyle:

My freshman year in college, I saw a special on TV about chicken, and how, I know this is funny but, the chickens are treated in the trucks and how they've been chained up and all that. And, I don't know, but something inside of me said, "That's it. I'm never eating it [meat] again". (Katie 02)

I saw a PBS special that had shown the atrocities that the animals went through. There was something that they showed. It was weird because it was on chickens, and I eat chicken now. It showed the way chickens were raised. It was like so many things that came together at once. (Barbara 13)

It was interesting [when I lived] in England with RSPCA [the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals], the animal rights group, much bigger than the American [group]. They always had television shows. They were active around the farms with people abusing their animals. So, that was largely publicized, and I don't know if you've seen those [shows on] Animal Planet...they have a lot of shows like that from the RSPCA and Australia and stuff, so it's more public in other countries. So, there's more of an awareness there. I was into that. (Darren 109)

Finally, the Internet was mentioned by the interviewees as a source of information for vegetarianism. Four of the vegetarians specifically discussed surfing vegetarian, animal rights, and environment related web sites as a major source of acquiring vegetarian arguments. The Internet is quite different regarding the nature of the interaction involved. At times it is passive and functions like television and/or film, but often it can be an active experience for the user. The person can discuss, search, write, and/or design text and images. The ability to interact with the world through cyberspace may create both a direct learning experience (i.e. a virtual simulation) or an indirect learning experience (i.e. viewing a short video clip). Usually, when discussing the use of the Internet for the socialization into deviant behavior, the deviance in question is usually pornography and computer-based crime (see McCaghy, Copran, & Jameson 2000). The reality that most sociological studies on deviance and the world wide web have focused on the previous two categories does not lessen the impact the web has on other forms of

deviance. Amazingly, sociologists who study deviance have for the most part ignored the actual and potential ramifications of the Internet as a way of learning deviant behaviors and motivations. Even the main proponent of social learning theory, Ronald Akers, has yet to address in depth the implications of cyberspace on deviant behavior⁴.

Since the vegetarian movement is so closely associated with both the animal rights movement and the environmental movement (Maurer 1997). The crossover among information resources can become seemingly infinite. The proliferation of vegetarian, animal rights, and environment web sites seems to be just as overwhelming as the number of business-related sites. A vegetarian today has access to information via the Internet from many strains of each movement that exists on different continents. The Internet provides vegetarians with exposure to many different kinds of vegetarians and vegetarianisms around the world.

Even though only four vegetarians referred to the Internet as a source of information on vegetarianism, the four utilized the web to obtain various kinds of information and to use the Internet for different purposes.

There was a lot of self-research. [A large Midwest university where Jim attended] was very technologically advanced. I was able to do internet searches...do research in that way, and PETA was a help. (Jim 05)

Cheese. Cheese has rennet. It comes from the thick lining of a cow's intestine. That really pissed me off, so that pretty much did it.

INTERVIEWER: WHERE DID YOU GET THAT INFORMATION?

⁴ I made this comment because the nature and concepts central to social learning theory are the best positioned to capitalize on the explanation of deviance in cyberspace. To Akers credit, he does mention the potential ramifications of new technologies such as the world wide web in his book, *Social Learning and Social Structure*.

Probably on the internet. I have several books on vegetarianism that I was also reading at the time. First I heard of this from a friend... Then I checked the ingredients. Then I looked up what the word [rennet] meant. Then I started to do research on the internet on the history of cheese and all that stuff. I was screaming. I was really mad about that. (Mallory 14)

The information obtained by the vegetarians above was different. Jim used the Internet to gain access to information from the PETA website. Mallory did more research into a specific topic that dealt with a particular food, cheese. The information she garnered from the website about rennet convinced her to move toward a vegan diet from a traditional vegetarian one.

Finally, Morgan employed the web to maintain contact with a particular website that included a posting board and a chat room. She belonged to this site affiliated with a magazine and the people whom she interacted with provided information and support for numerous avocations and lifestyles:

I'm a member of [an internet site]. It's an online thing...there are several subgroups that am also a member of...There's all kinds of conferences there. There's society and philosophy...This is like the magazine [that sponsors the site], but it's interactive. It's like a big message board. There will be anything ranging on the topics that you are looking for. (Morgan 113)

Conclusion

After a person reaches, the turning point in the decision to become vegetarian, a socialization process begins in which the vegetarian learns the culture of vegetarianism. This chapter dealt with the major agents of vegetarian socialization. David Matza (1969) called this socialization stage in the process of becoming deviant, affiliation. Matza

contends that the affiliation process resembles the theory of differential association as described by Edwin Sutherland in 1947. However, differential association has been updated and modified to include some the advances in learning theory, but because of the way Sutherland constructed the theory, it is vague enough to incorporate the latest developments in the field of learning.

The key to learning under this position lies in what Sutherland termed “definitions”. It is the person’s definition of what behavior constitutes right and wrong. Vegetarians define the meatless lifestyle as superior and are willing to negotiate a marginal identity and inconvenience to live the lifestyle. A major problem with Sutherland’s theory of differential association lies in the fact that Sutherland focused on crime and delinquency more than he did forms of deviance. However, when Ronald Akers began revising differential association theory, he developed a theory with a broader scope that may include many forms of deviance. Akers had developed his version of differential association called social learning theory that creates a bridge between Sutherland’s conceptualization of learning and today’s research in learning theory. Akers’ latest revision (1998) incorporates most of what Sutherland outlined back in 1947, but focuses more on the concept of definitions. The general idea of definitions is as how Sutherland outlined it originally. People attach their own attitudes and/or meanings to any behavior, good or bad. Motives, rationalizations, techniques, and attitudes are all included. Definitions are the building blocks of future deviant behavior.

The most important revision that Akers undertook was that people must acquire the definitions. And this acquisition happens through a process of learning. Sutherland noted this in original theory, but never said how it was supposed to be accomplished.

Akers (1998) outlined two types of learning specifically, direct and indirect. Direct learning occurs through a process of operant conditioning that has a long established history in the psychology of learning and will not be discussed here. Indirect learning involves the process of imitation and/or modeling. Again, modeling has a long established history within psychology. Vegetarians utilize both direct and indirect learning to acquire the definitions associated with the vegetarian lifestyle. However, the vast majority of vegetarian learning occurs indirectly through imitation and modeling.

This chapter outlined the three major sources of vegetarian socialization or learning. The three sources are other people, written materials, and other forms of mass media. The most obvious source of affiliation was other people. People learn directly from others and from modeling other individuals' behavior. Vegetarians are no different. The vast majority of vegetarians in the study learned definitions from other people within the lifestyle. The people who taught the novice vegetarian their definitions could be considered "mentors" or "guides". These mentors could be either family members, friends, or close acquaintances. However, people did learn the vegetarian lifestyle from membership in activist groups as well. These groups could be focused on the environment, animal rights, or humanitarian issues. In many cases, the group facilitated more interaction and provided a more comprehensive opportunity to learn vegetarianism.

The next major source of affiliation was the written manuscript. These written manuscripts could be formal publications or they could be in the form of pamphlets or self-publications. There happen to a number of classic vegetarian texts. They include *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappe; *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* by Jeremy Rifkin; *Diet for a New America* by John Robbins; and *Animal*

Liberation by the renowned philosopher Peter Singer. These four works seem to constitute the “sacred” texts of the vegetarian subculture. It is in the written materials that we can see the religious parallels mentioned in earlier chapters quite clearly. Other manuscripts include the pamphlets provided by specific activist groups. The two major groups that had the most impact on the sample with their literature were People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Vegan Outreach.

The final major agent of socialization in the vegetarian subculture was other forms of mass media, more importantly music, television, and the internet. The electronic media is the primary source of indirect learning through modeling. Almost a third of the sample mentioned alternative forms of media as a source of vegetarian socialization. Since the sample was skewed toward younger vegetarians, there were a number of interviewees that mentioned music as a core component to the vegetarian lifestyle. Most of the vegetarian-oriented music is a subset of the punk rock and hard-core music subculture. This subculture promotes a flagrant disregard for norms and most things deemed as mainstream. One particular brand of hard-core music, straight-edge, actively promotes a strict vegan diet. Also along these lines, the internet provided a major source of vegetarian socialization. Vegetarian-related web sites such as the number sponsored by PETA and Vegan Outreach were mentioned as quite popular. Web searches regarding specific foods and nutrition also provided the infant vegetarian to be quite a useful tool in learning the vegetarian subculture. Finally, several vegetarians mentioned television and video as a source of learning. Various programs and videos that aired on PBS, that were from PETA, or that were from other specific organizations provided a visual confirmation for the choice to give up meat from their diet.

The three sources of vegetarian socialization revealed through the sample (other people, written materials, and alternative forms of mass media) really provided a specific explanation to the affiliation of vegetarians among those interviewed. By discussing the turning point in chapter four and the socialization process in chapter five, this study attempts to show a context in which Matza's conceptualization of affiliation could be explained. It is believed here that Matza has correctly suggested that differential association/social learning theory was the primary method for learning a deviant lifestyle. However, we outlined the idea of the turning point from the Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion (1965) to show the starting point for the affiliation process for vegetarianism. The next chapter will now present the final aspect in Matza's theory of becoming deviant, signification. The signification process is the point when a deviant actually identifies wholly as a deviant. It is the when the novice deviant actually develops a deviant persona and develops defenses against questions regarding the deviance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Signifying Vegetarianism: The Internalization of a Deviant Lifestyle

This chapter deals with the third and final stage in the process of becoming deviant, signification. According to David Matza (1969), signification is the “indicator” that one’s identity has been reconceptualized in terms of the alternative lifestyle (p165). The person who has been practicing deviance has now internalized the deviant label. The internalization of the label now permits the individual person to adopt the deviant lifestyle. The person has reorganized his or her life to become like the deviants in question (Vail 1999).

Matza outlines the concept of “indication” by elaborating on the process of how professional thieves build identity:

Quite different from consequence, indication points the subject to consider himself (sic); to the question of unity of meaning of the various things he does and the relation to those things to what he conceivably is. To consider the possibility that the theft was important in the sense of being indication of him puts the subject well into actively collaborating in the growth of deviant identity by building its very meaning (1969 p165).

What Matza means here is that the signification process is the final step in becoming a deviant. Certain behaviors indicate to others what kind of person the individual in question has become. These indicators, or indices as Matza sometimes refers to them, provide others with a gauge to measure up your identity. Signification has been reached when a person’s identity and behavior unify so that a look at the behavior in question will be an appropriate indicator of who that person really is. Within the context of this study, a person who begins to think of himself or herself as a vegetarian starts to behave in ways

that indicate that they are truly a vegetarian. It is the internalization and acceptance of the appropriate behaviors of vegetarianism that signify that one has actually become a vegetarian.

Matza (1969) elaborates on the concept of signification by suggesting that a person who wishes to violate society's norms must think about the ramifications, both positive and negative, indicative of that behavior. If the person is willing to live the ramifications resulting from being associated with a form of deviance, then a deviant identity may be accepted. He simplifies this by stating that the person who can answer, "yes", to the question, "Am I deviant?" regarding their particular behavior has essentially developed a deviant identity. Vegetarians who proclaim their vegetarianism and can provide reasons for this behavior are signifying or indicating their deviance. Those who announce their lifestyle as indicative of who they are accept the ramifications of the behavior. Vegetarianism, however, obviously does not have the same level of social condemnation today as say an alcoholic or an "ex-con", but it does produce a social awkwardness that can be associated with a violation of a significant social norm, meat eating.

In this chapter, the signification process will be discussed as it moves from its simplest form in early vegetarianism to the more complex form of a mature vegetarian. As with affiliating, signification is a process of learning how to be vegetarian. However, affiliating essentially deals with the learning of techniques and definitions that apply to the particular form of deviance in question, but affiliating with vegetarianism also included the experiences that triggered the conversion process as well as what to eliminate from his or her diet. The information learned from the affiliation process came

from numerous sources, other people, and various forms of media. Signifying vegetarianism is, then, the process that the new vegetarian utilizes to reorganize their identity in order to adopt the behavior. The problem is that Matza did provide a structure of how one signifies any particular form of deviance. Therefore, vegetarianism appears to have two stages with the signifying process: early or developmental vegetarianism and mature vegetarianism. Developmental vegetarianism is the stage within the signifying process where the young vegetarian develops an initial eating pattern and acquires appropriate definitions in order to cope with other people who question the reasons behind adopting a vegetarian lifestyle. Mature vegetarianism is the final stage of the signifying process where mature vegetarians have settled into a routine regarding their eating patterns as well as have come to an understanding regarding the reasons, definitions, and/or justifications behind their sustained choice of being a vegetarian. However, both mature and developing vegetarians have particular eating patterns that influence the complexity of their justifications. Each eating pattern must be outlined before the accounts for vegetarianism can be presented.

Initial Eating Patterns of Early or Developmental Vegetarians

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the National Council on Science and Health (NCSH) has created eight categories of vegetarians. Meister (1997) outlines the eight types that range from semi-vegetarian, which excludes only beef and pork, to the extremely strict fruitarian, which only consumes the fruit portion of any plant. Of the 45 vegetarians interviewed, only five of the types listed above were represented in the early stages of vegetarianism. No one claimed to have begun their vegetarianism as a vegan or

a fruitarian (actually, there are not any fruitarians in the entire sample at any point). This is quite logical because the vegan and fruitarian status are very vigorous. Most would not be able to go from eating meat to the extreme of no animal products whatsoever. Initially, only four of the vegetarians (11.1%) in this study fell into the logical semi-vegetarian category initially. Another 8 vegetarians (17.8%) claimed to be pescos- or pollo-vegetarians, who ate fish and poultry respectively. Common sense would dictate that most people who became vegetarian would eliminate red meat first as it is viewed by the health and vegetarian community as the most harmful. Following that common sense rationale, the next elimination would be poultry and other fowl with seafood being the final reduction until one was a lacto-ovo-vegetarian. However, the vegetarians interviewed stated the most common beginning form of vegetarianism was the lacto-ovo-vegetarian. Twenty-seven (60%) of the 45 interviews claimed to have eliminated all red meat, poultry, and seafood from their diets when they decided to become vegetarian. This is consistent with what Stiles (1998) found in her study of vegetarians she conducted on the internet. Her sample consisted of 51.8% (41 of 79) lacto-ovo-vegetarians. This study is the only social science article giving numbers of U.S. vegetarians within a sample. Also, according to the Vegetarian Resource Group's 2000 poll on vegetarianism, more than half of the people who were vegetarian claimed to be lacto-ovo-vegetarian (www.vrg.org/nutshell/poll2000.htm).

This fact about the types of vegetarianism leads one to surmise that the change to vegetarianism is an absolute decision. For example, Katie discussed the final decision to eliminate meat once and for all:

I saw a special on TV about chicken, and how, I know this is funny, but they are treated in the trucks and how they're all chained up and all that.

And, I don't know but something inside of me said, "That's it. I'm never eating meat again". (Katie 02)

This response was quite typical of a "final" decision regarding meat. The problem with a quick and decisive position is that all of the potential hazards have not been analyzed.

Since vegetarians claim health-related benefits of vegetarianism, many of the vegetarians do not understand the ramifications of shifting to a diet without proper education regarding vegetarianism.

Of the 45 vegetarians who participated in this research, 19 claimed to have had medical problems that could be traced back to the improper implementation of the vegetarian diet. The problems ranged from not feeling well, which led to a doctor's visit, to headaches and passing out to the most serious condition of the beginning of an eating disorder. However, the most common complaint was iron-deficiency anemia. Ten vegetarians in the sample reported being diagnosed with iron-deficiency anemia. One other was diagnosed with the other vegetarian-related anemia, B12-deficiency anemia. According to Grayson (2002), vegetarians are extremely susceptible to anemia due to the low iron content of most vegetables. One interviewee, Edie, exemplifies the anemia problem among abrupt conversion vegetarians:

(I was diagnosed with) anemia, which is the lack of iron in the blood. That has a lot to do with diet if you are not eating enough iron. Red meat is so full of it. If you really concentrated on eating the vegetables that have iron in it, then that would be OK. There have been times when I have been vegetarian that I have not been eating enough vegetables or the right vegetables as I could, so I have to take supplements. (Edie 105)

The surprising finding that 42.2% of the sample had some kind of physical ailment due to a vegetarian diet underscores the reality that many who switch to a vegetarian diet do not do so in a healthy manner. With all of the health benefits that vegetarianism promotes,

people who convert do not do the intended research that a strict diet which eliminates meat consumption must in order to remain healthy. The tensions and reasons behind vegetarianism have to be put in perspective. The majority of the respondents chose to adopt vegetarianism for one particular reason and ran with it without thinking of the potential physical consequences.

Initial Accounts of Vegetarians

An eating pattern is not the barometer of whether or not someone has become vegetarian. Vegetarians must justify or rationalize their behavior to others when they are questioned. Vegetarians utilize what C. Wright Mills (1940) referred to as a vocabulary of motive. Vocabularies of motive are justifications presented by those in an attempt to redefine the behavior in question in a positive light. Mills states that motives are “strategies of action” (1940 p907). A vocabulary of motive is not just a reason for behavior. It is a way of validating oneself and selling the behavior to others.

Probably the most known application of the vocabulary of motive is the conceptualization of accounts outlined by Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman (1968). The necessity of legitimacy in the life of the vegetarian forces the vegetarian to offer accounts for their deviance. Scott and Lyman note that every person engages in some form of deviance at one time or another, and individuals need verbal mechanisms to rationalize their deviance. These accounts help people maintain a positive self-image. However, Scott and Lyman’s 1968 version of accounts is not the only version of accounting that have been outlined by other sociologists who study deviance.

The arguably most comprehensive organization of accounts and accounting techniques was developed by Nichols (1990). Nichols attempted to expand the definition of accounts. Scott and Lyman presented the function of an account as a verbal mechanism to “prevent conflicts by bridging the gap between action and expectation” (1968 p46). Nichols points out that Scott and Lyman only look at two of the potential four categories of accounts. The two outlined by Scott and Lyman are excuses and justifications. Excuses are verbalizations that admit the wrongfulness of the acts but denies any personal responsibility for that act. Justifications are statements that admit personal responsibility but denies the wrongfulness of the deviant act. Nichols notes that these concepts, excuses and justifications, are immensely useful, but they do leave out two other possibilities. According to Nichols’ position, admissions are another type that admits to both the wrongfulness of the acts as well as the acceptance of responsibility for the behavior. Denials are on the opposite pole from admissions. Nichols explains that denials reject both the wrongfulness of the behavior as well as the acceptance of responsibility.

All four of these types are what Nichols (1990) calls remedial accounts. Remedial accounts are vocabularies of motive that are given *after* the behavior has been completed. Vegetarians use remedial accounts when consistently defending their identity after conversion takes place. Using this premise, remedial accounts may be employed for as long as one engages in a disvalued behavior such as vegetarianism. It is the defining feature of a deviant who is in the final stage of signification. The person practicing vegetarianism then becomes a vegetarian.

Initially, vegetarians, as well as other deviants who are early in their careers, are still learning the how and the why of the vegetarian way. In these early experiences, vegetarians do not have complex accounting systems or coping mechanisms developed. In this study, developing vegetarians usually just offered one account to alleviate the conflict that arises between their actions and societal expectations. According to Nichols (1990), when a person with a questioned behavioral pattern uses account to defend his or her identity, then it is referred to as a monothematic account. A monothematic account is a defensive verbal scheme that is very simplistic. Vegetarians early in the signification process usually only offer simplistic monothematic accounts for their vegetarianism.

Monothematic Accounts in Developing Vegetarianism

In this study, 32 of the 45 vegetarians interviewed (71.1%) offered monothematic accounts for their initial vegetarianism. Eleven of the respondents offered polythematic accounts initially that contained two distinct accounts, and two subjects presented accounting mechanisms with three separate accounts. The dominance of the monothematic account in early vegetarianism is consistent with the theoretical arguments presented by Nichols (1990). Nichols argues that we can all distinguish and even utilize monothematic accounts within everyday experience. However, as one becomes more experienced with the deviance and with more real world interaction as a person with a contested identity, polythematic accounts of greater complexity will develop.

Initially, though, the monothematic account serves an important purpose. It gives one a “starting point”. These monothematic accounts arise from tensions the deviant experiences during the affinity stage of becoming deviant. The initial vegetarian accounts

can be classified within the framework of Scott and Lyman's (1968) accounting typology as well as Nichols (1990) reconceptualization. The problem with vegetarians' employment of Nichols reconceptualization of accounting mechanisms is two-fold. First of all, Nichols does not include the notion of deviance avowal.

Deviance avowal is a concept introduced by Ralph Turner in 1972 that outlined a coping or stigma management technique in which deviants attempt to portray their marginal behavior in a positive light. It becomes a way of bridging the gap between the deviant and the non-deviant. Adler and Adler (1997) note that deviance avowal is a way of showing that the deviant person understands both the deviant lifestyle as well as the viewpoint of the "normal".

With all that said, Nichols' classification of what he calls remedial accounts is quite useful in describing the rationalization, justification, excuses, and denials that vegetarians utilize in maintaining that bridge from questioned person to normalcy. Vegetarians, however, do not use all of the remedial accounts listed by Nichols. As with any specific form of deviance, certain accounts will be more prevalent within certain subcultures. Vegetarians are no different. There are essentially 10 major accounts vegetarians give that minimizes their behavior. The first category, admissions, allows the person to admit the wrongfulness of the act while simultaneously accepting responsibility for the behavior. Vegetarianism is not necessarily a wrongful act, but it is questioned and marginalized. The two types of admissions outlined by Nichols (1990), apologies and confessions, are truly not all that relevant to the vegetarian. A vegetarian may apologize to someone who has prepared a dinner made with meat because they neglected to inform the person about his or her diet. Confessions are definitely not necessary. When someone

engages in a positive form of deviance, a confession becomes almost surreal. However, as mentioned above, it is believed that Nichols neglected to include deviance avowal as an account that fits within his typology quite well.

Deviance avowal necessitates the ability of the questioned person to build a bridge between the deviance and behavior that is reacted to as “normal”. According to Turner (1972), the person who is questioned tries to normalize the behavior. The vegetarian will openly acknowledge the marginalized dietary habit and present themselves as positively as possible. Vegetarians will minimize the impact of their behavior within social interaction, especially during eating activities. Many vegetarians attempt to “get by” with what is available when interacting. Jacob exemplifies the acknowledging the vegetarianism, but does not cause difficulty. He explained how he “blended” with his family:

I mean they questioned, “What are you going to eat?” My standard reply is “I’ll find something”. I do. At holiday meals, there is always enough food to eat well. (Jacob 110)

The second and third of the monothematic accounts utilized by vegetarians fall under the category of excuses. Excuses are defined by Nichols (1990) as behaviors that admits the wrongfulness or deviant nature of the act but denies personal responsibility for the act in question. Excuses are made up by four distinct accounts. The accounts were originally outlined by Scott and Lyman (1968), but two of the accounts listed under this type are not relevant to vegetarians. Vegetarians do not employ the accounts appeal to accidents and the appeal to defeasibility because the choice of vegetarianism is one that constitutes a lifestyle, not a result of a hazard or a one time mental lapse. However, the other two excuses are quite relevant. An appeal to biological drives can be defined as the

belief that the body and/or biological factors can determine human behavior (Scott and Lyman 1968). It is believed here that the body can influence certain social choices. Vegetarianism definitely qualifies here. Beardsworth and Keil (1996) note that one of the major themes for conversion to vegetarianism is the aesthetic/gustatory theme. This motive is based on the tactile properties and the taste of meat. Many vegetarians claim that they do not like the taste of meat or that they cannot handle the aesthetic qualities of meat such as the touch, the smell, or even the sight of raw and bloody meat. Twigg (1979) argues that the aesthetic properties of meat that vegetarians find repulsive are based on the association of meat with death. For example, Brandi explains now she backed off meat because of the taste:

I never really ate it. I mean I'd eat it if it was on the table and my parents made me eat it. But, I remember specifically in the seventh grade I stopped. I refused to eat it anymore...I just didn't like the way it tastes, and I decided I wasn't going to let my parents make me anymore.
(Brandi 03)

The other excuse used by vegetarians is scapegoating. Scapegoating denies the responsibility of the questioned behavior by alleging that his or her deviance is in response to another's behavior. A few vegetarians employed the scapegoating account when initially converting to vegetarianism. The way vegetarians scapegoat is to place responsibility with the other people in their lives at the time of conversion. One older vegetarian stated that it was the lifestyle of the time period that led him into vegetarianism:

I was in college and it was the early seventies. It was the early seventies. It was the "in" thing to do. You know with the hippies and stuff like that...it was kind of the collective family. You know the people I was going to school with
(Charles 22).

Other vegetarians use scapegoating as a way to shift responsibility to their parents. In the case of one particular vegetarian, she was raised vegetarian by her “hippie” parents:

That would be through my parents. When I was little and if I went to people’s houses and was offered meat, I didn’t want to do anything because I worshipped my mom and dad, especially my dad. Whatever he did I wanted to do. I thought it was a heroic thing to do. (Autumn 24)

The third major type of remedial accounts is the justification (Nichols 1990). The justification by the typology’s definition denies the wrongfulness of the behavior, but the person actually accepts responsibility for the deviance. Justifications are the primary type of remedial account used by the vegetarians in this study. Four of the six major motives for vegetarianism (Beardsworth & Keil 1996) fall under the justification argument. Justifications, like excuses, were originally outlined by Scott and Lyman in 1968. The first justification employed by vegetarians is the denial of injury. Denial of injury can be described as an account that presents the deviance as acceptable because no person or thing was injured. This parallels the classic vegetarian argument for social justice. Beardsworth & Keil (1996) refer to this as “the new order theme” (p228). Rejecting meat under this position is rejecting the current dominant social structure in Western societies. According to this view, vegetarianism is a form of protest that stands up against the exploitation of people under a capitalistic and patriarchal system. Only one vegetarian in the sample claimed this theme in her defense in vegetarianism:

I was (working) at the U.N., and I learned the food production practices and what our privilege did to the rest of society...types of illegal practices that foreign governments practice, violations that they do, bad sanitation, poverty...how many people aren’t eating because of what you are eating...in terms of the political aspects of food production (Maria 18)

Whereas social justice was probably the least popular theme among the vegetarians interviewed, animal rights was the most popular. Eighteen of the 45 vegetarians (40.0%) in the sample claimed the rights of animals as an initial motivation for vegetarianism. The argument for animal rights essentially can be classified as the justification known as an appeal to higher loyalties. By definition, an appeal to higher loyalties admits the responsibility for the action because it was done out of allegiance to another group (Scott & Lyman 1968). The other group in this case is the animal kingdom. Beardsworth and Keil (1996) note that this argument is based on the concept of “speciesism” originally popularized by famed philosopher Peter Singer (1976). From this position, it is a moral imperative to reduce the suffering of animals. Animals suffer just the same as humans do. Therefore, we must try to reduce the suffering as much as possible. It is also part of the argument that since our food production is so plentiful today in the West that there is no real need to make animals suffer. Below are some examples of this kind of justification given by vegetarians in the sample:

There was an organization on campus here called Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. They had a booth and at the same time, they were handing out fliers...but back then, they were all vegetarians...but there were a lot of fliers about animal liberation stuff and animal testing and things like that. And that’s how I got interesting in vegetarianism (Roger 103).

There was one (book) in particular. *Diet for a Small Planet* was one of the big ones out during that time. But other stuff as well, the literature PETA hand out in different articles. It (animal rights) was kind of big at that time. (Mary 04)

The next most common justification for vegetarianism was the case for self-fulfillment. This account resides in the belief that the deviant behavior is actually helping the man or the woman become a better person. When a vegetarian claims better health as

a reason for their vegetarianism, he or she is essentially arguing for a position of self-fulfillment. Seventeen of the 45 interviewees (37.8%) claimed the potential for improved health as the reason for becoming vegetarian. This health position states that eating meat is essentially opening the person up to the ill effects of meat consumption (Beardsworth & Keil 1996). Meat and meat-related products are essentially seen as contaminated. For example, the two quotes below reveal the belief in the healthy projection of adopting the vegetarian diet:

My mom's friend decided that she was going to be a vegetarian, but she did it for health reasons. I was like, "OK, I'm going to lose some weight". That's when I became one initially. (Rosalia 17)

My body just wanted to do it. I just followed my body. I also was aware of all the steroid and injections that cows were receiving for growth hormones, and I didn't want to put that into my body. (Lily 115).

The last major argument for vegetarian described by Beardsworth and Keil (1996), food production/environmental, can also be classified as a justification. More specifically, this remedial account fall into the type known as condemnation of the condemners. As Scott and Lyman (1968) state, when a deviant uses this accounting mechanism, he or she is volleying back the negative connotation for the behavior by stating that others commit much worse acts, "and these others are either not caught, not punished, not condemned, unnoticed, or even praised" (p51). Vegetarians who take this position present the facts surrounding the meat industry and the subsequent misuse of environmental resources for a more cost-effective, market-driven demand for meat. The mass production of beef, veal, pork, and poultry all have the unpleasant realization that

cause many people to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle. Exemplifying this position, an older vegetarian states her initial motivation for vegetarianism:

What happened was I started out, I guess, I was in the environmental group. I had a real strong interest in environmental issues. I think that (is) what sort of led to *Diet for a Small Planet*. I would say that sort of turned the tables on what I wanted. (Debbie 21).

The next justification vegetarians employ is the sad tale. The sad tale presents the person as a victim of certain circumstances, and the deviance has now “saved” them from that dismal situation (Scott & Lyman 1968). This is very similar to the health argument, but in this case, the vegetarian says that the vegetarian lifestyle saved them from continuing down the path of sickness and disease. Sandy describes her instance of suffering from consuming red meat that led her to adopt vegetarianism:

Probably the thing that triggered it (the vegetarianism) was when I got sick during my senior year in high school. I had a parasitic infection that they connected with uncooked meat...I also kind of made a transition to eat healthier, to get in better shape, and I thought the best way to do it would be to cut a lot of fat out of my diet. In doing so, I cut out red meat (Sandy 119).

The last justification within Nichols’ typology is the denial of victim account. However, this account is not pertinent to vegetarians because it involves blaming the victim for the deviance (Scott & Lyman 1968). It has been used very successfully in other forms of deviance, especially rape (Marolla & Scully 1985). Since vegetarianism does not have a direct victim to blame, this justification becomes moot under these circumstances.

Among the four major categories of remedial accounts, the final one in Nichols’ typology is the denial. Denials involve the deviants’ rejection of both the wrongfulness of

the act as well as the responsibility for the act. The two types of denials are passing and deviance disavowal. Erving Goffman (1963) outlined the classic definition of passing in his book *Stigma*. Passing can be described as the deviant's unwillingness to tell anyone about the stigma in question. Goffman argues that passing is important when some people know of person's deviance but the deviant chooses not to tell others. However, if the information were to be known, then the person may be discredited. Vegetarianism is a type of deviance that lends itself to passing quite nicely. All of the vegetarians interviewed claimed to have used the passing mechanism to cope. The only real time vegetarianism has to be acknowledged is during the course of a meal. Obviously, vegetarians tend to remain "invisible" because of the obvious questioning many receive when their diet is revealed. The final account to be discussed and the second to be listed under this part of Nichols' typology is deviance disavowal. Fred Davis (1961) defined deviance disavowal as "the refusal of those who are viewed as deviant to concur with the verdict" (p120). The purpose of the disavowal is for the deviant to normalize themselves in relation to others (Adler & Adler 1997). Vegetarians attempt to disavowal their deviance by trying to show "normals" they can participate in ordinary eating activities. The development of meat analogs is the perfect example of how a vegetarian can attempt to appear ordinary, which allows others to ignore the stigma. A meat analog is a food designed to replace meat in the traditional meal, but it is made primarily out of vegetables and grain. The most recognizable meat analog is the "veggie burger". A vast majority of the vegetarians in the sample stated that they eat and rather enjoy the meat analogs. Meat analogs provide a vegetarian with the ability to acknowledging the difficulties of being

deviant while simultaneously participating in “regular” eating. It is a denial that the dietary choice affects the vegetarian’s normalcy of life.

The Maturation of Vegetarianism

The developing vegetarian usually adopts one position as a motive and chooses a less radical type of vegetarianism to begin. However, as one matures as a vegetarian, the exposure to more people, more media, and more aspects of vegetarianism can change it. There is always the possibility even of the vegetarian quitting the vegetarian lifestyle all together. That is the vegetarian will exit their vegetarian career. This study did not look at the exiting phenomenon, but the evolution through a deviant career. Maturation into any form of deviance can follow any path. One can get more involved, less involved, or a deviant can remain at the relatively same level of involvement. This is the problem with the career analogy (See Luckenbill & Best 1981 for the problems associated with the career analogy in the study of deviance). One cannot predict a smooth movement from entering a deviant lifestyle to existing within the lifestyle. Deviance is not structured like traditional and acceptable forms of social behavior.

The maturing vegetarian is no different from any other form of deviance as one follows its winding path. This study was extremely interested in the process of how vegetarians negotiate their deviance. Over time, the accounts in which vegetarians signify their deviance begin to change. The changes occur on two levels. Vegetarians experience changes in diet, and mature vegetarians experience a shift in motivations that affects the accounts they give for their diet.

Current Eating Patterns of Mature Vegetarians

As mentioned earlier, Matza (1969) states signification is the indicator of one's identity (p165). Matza suggests that signification becomes the point in which the person becomes united with the behavior indicative of himself or herself. Vail (1999) states the signification process even more simply in that once one learns the techniques of being deviant, the novice deviant redefines his or her life in regards to the deviance. Matza humorously suggests an acid test for anyone who becomes deviant: "does he do the damned thing again?" (1969 p167). This snide yet important question leads to the development of a deviant identity. As the deviant matures, the deviant must provide reasoning for the continuation of the questioned behavior. Early in the signification process, most deviants provide one prominent form of reasoning, or account, for the deviance. However, what is surmised by this study is that as deviants mature, they adopt more complex reasoning. The deviant expands on the number of accounts.

Within the example of vegetarianism, the complex reasoning comes in the form of the polythematic account. Nichols (1990) outlines that the polythematic account consists of two or more accounts to rationalize, justify, and/or excuse a deviant act. Early vegetarians tend to use monothematic accounts. There were exceptions, but most new vegetarians tend to justify their behavior with the use of one account. However, as they mature, the changing and addition of accounts show a complex reasoning that evolves and adapts to the actual circumstances of the social world. If the meanings attached to a form of deviance change, then the accounts change. Also, the longer one continues to "do the damned thing" as Matza jokes, then the more likely the person will develop additionally arguments for the continuation of the behavior. What is interesting is that the

deviance changes as well as the reasoning. Vegetarianism is not a static phenomenon. It is fluid in its development of both eating practices as well as reasoning. The behavior of eating can morph and shift with the passage of time, the development of problems, or the comfort level of the person. This section looks at the maturing and changing nature of the eating patterns of the vegetarians interviewed.

When actually investigating the phenomenon of maturing vegetarianism, the subjects revealed that the largest segment of people practicing vegetarianism at the time of the interview were actually pesco-vegetarians. To recall, a pesco-vegetarian is a person who eats dairy and eggs as well as fish as part of their diet. The only items eliminated are red meat and poultry. This was a revealing finding because one would assume that people would ease into vegetarianism and become more strict in their dietary ways. However, many of the interviewees revealed that their diets actually became less strict. Overall, 19 of the 45 vegetarians interviewed stated that their diets became less strict the longer they practiced. Actually, only twelve of the interviewees proceeded down the common sense path to their current form of vegetarianism and became stricter. In an interesting example, at the time of conversion, twelve of the overall 45 vegetarians became the most common form of ovo-lacto-vegetarian, where all meat, poultry, and fish are eliminated. However, as this ovo-lacto-vegetarianism progressed, these twelve moved to the less strict position of pesco-vegetarian.

For example, Summer was an interesting case. She moved from the original position of lacto-ovo-vegetarian to vegan before settling on her current position of pesco-vegetarian:

I didn't consume any fish, any chicken, or any meat when I first started...I've gone through phases where I didn't do

dairy. In the beginning, I did. I ate tons of bread and cheese. I didn't know any better...I'm not a big fan of eggs. Though if eggs are in things, I'll eat them. I'm not opposed to eating eggs [anymore]. (Summer 117)

Another pesco-vegetarian, Donna, who began their vegetarianism as a more strict form discusses her addition of seafood to her diet:

I try not to eat it [seafood] as much, but I do. Actually, I like shrimp, but I didn't like fish at the time because I lived up north [in the central part of the United States]. I wasn't introduced to it...I cam down here a couple of years ago, and I was exposed to better fish. Now, I love grilled fish. I like fish. (Donna 116)

The remaining vegetarians became less strict in a variety of different formats. One loosened the reigns on the diet by simply adding eggs while several others moved to add poultry or fish from a variety of stricter positions. For a specific example, Barbara moved from being a lacto-vegetarian to a semi-vegetarian. She explains that her shift to a more lenient form of vegetarianism had much to do with convenience as well as familial relations with her son:

As [my son] John was getting older, and he started seeing people eating meat, he started to eat meat because I made it his option once he went to school, as far as poultry and fish go. I would not cook beef or pork. I won't have them no matter what...I could live with him eating poultry or fish. When he started going to school, he started requesting things like bologna. I wouldn't get beef bologna, but would get turkey or chicken bologna. Instead of hot dogs, I'd get turkey or chicken [hot dogs]. I started making it for him, and then he started asking for things that he saw other people eating. I guess we had a compromise, and it was easier for me to make one meal than two meals. (Barbara 13)

The second most common phenomenon to happen was to get more strict with the vegetarianism. Fourteen of the 45 vegetarians interviewed actually eliminated more

animal-related products from their diets since the onset of the lifestyle. The most common form of diet reduction among the 14 interviewees in this group ended in veganism. Veganism is the attempt to eliminate all animal products from a person's diet or lifestyle. Seven of the 45 vegetarians matured into being a vegan. Four of the vegans began as the classic lacto-ovo-vegetarian where the other three vegans began as semi-vegetarians. Semi-vegetarians only eliminate red meat and can be considered the mildest form of vegetarianism. The movement from semi-vegetarian to vegan was the largest diet change among all of the vegetarians in the sample. In the first example, Andre explains how he dealt with his personal feelings that solidified his position on being a vegan instead of a lacto-ovo-vegetarian:

When I first changed [to veganism], I was overcome with anger for several months. I couldn't even concentrate on schoolwork. I was mad at everybody who ate dairy. I was mad at vegetarians especially, because they stopped thinking. They became comfortable with their thinking, and they thought that they were saving cute animals by not eating them. They didn't understand where dairy products came from. They didn't know what factory farms were. They didn't know what rennet was in cheese. I was mad at them for feeling good and being comfortable when there was suffering going on. I was mad at everybody else too for not knowing what was going on. Very, very angry for a while. I've never really been angry in my life. (Andre 06)

In the next example, Sherri does not have the extreme emotional response toward others and other vegetarians, but she does reveal an interesting moment in her path to veganism:

[A friend of mine] had just gotten a bunch of these "Why Vegan?" pamphlets put out by Vegan Outreach. He asked if anybody wanted one. I said, "I'll take one". I took it home and read it, and I was blown away. I never heard of any of that before. I was probably like most suburban Americans. Meat is just a commodity. People don't think of it as a living thing at all, an animal anyway. I think I went vegetarian [actually semi-vegetarian] three days later....A

month later, I had done a little bit more research, and one day, I just woke up and said, “I wonder if I could be vegan today”. (Sherri 11).

The remaining seven vegetarians who became more strict shifted eating patterns in a variety of ways. Some eliminated two types of animal products from their diets such as chicken and eggs. Others just eliminated one item such as going from an ovo-lacto-vegetarian to a lacto-vegetarian. These shifts developed over time as vegetarians learned that they could live without certain items and decided to restrict their diets even more. For example, Brandi began as a semi-vegetarian and slowly moved to becoming a lacto-vegetarian. Brandi never really ate seafood or ham due to their taste, but she describes her phasing out of beef, chicken, and eggs here:

Steaks and what not [chicken]...I phased out gradually. My family wasn't into having meat like every night, so it wasn't that hard.

INTERVIEWER: HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO PHASE OUT THE STEAK, CHICKEN, AND EGGS?

I'd say that only been the last three years....and probably where I'm at is where I'll stay.

The third possibility of maturing eating patterns among vegetarians was to remain with the diet originally chosen. a significant proportion (12 of the 45 vegetarians interviewed) maintained the same diet for the course of their vegetarianism. When asked to explain why they maintained the same level of diet, the respondents gave different, yet interesting answers. This stability of vegetarianism from initial to current practice tends to rest in the moderation of the practice. The most common type of consistent vegetarian was the ovo-lacto-vegetarian. Six of the twelve vegetarians who did not adjust their eating patterns began as ovo-lacto-vegetarians and remained this of vegetarian up to the

time of the interview. To give a specific example, Brittany points out that the decision to maintain the diet she began was actually quite a simple decision:

I feel good about myself, especially the more information that comes out. All this stuff is bad for you, and it's in meat. I'm like, "See". You know I think people generally perceive it [my ovo-lacto-vegetarianism] as fine because I wasn't an off-the-wall-activist-kind-of-extreme person. You know I'm kind of the normal, everyday, kind of average non-activist. (Brittany 15)

Brittany exemplifies the moderation that existed in the comments of vegetarians that remained consistent over a period of time. However, some vegetarians may remain consistent with what they eat, but they adjust how they eat. For example, Juliana acknowledged that her current eating patterns are the same as they were at the beginning of her conversion, but she adjusted how she ate and what she ate:

When I first started, I ate a lot of cheese. I still eat some cheese, but I eat a lot more protein. I take a lot of soy protein drinks. I have a lot of vitamins. I'm on a thing called M*****. It's made out of dried fruits, fresh fruits, and all that stuff. I eat a lot of organic stuff. organic vegetables, tofu. You know tofu hot dogs, veggie burgers, the whole thing. A lot of beans. Just enough protein that I can get. I didn't think about that stuff when I first started, but it didn't take me long. It took me about a month to start eating right. (Juliana 118).

The remaining six vegetarians who maintained a consistent diet for the duration of their vegetarianism were also quite moderate with their vegetable-based choice. The remaining interviewees were either pesco-vegetarian or lacto-vegetarian. Brittany's and Juliana's remarks really epitomized this path of maturation in vegetarianism. The people in this final category were not really the "activist" types looking to become extremely strict, nor were they the people who dove in too far initially with their vegetarianism and lessened the strictness of their initial choice.

This section of the chapter focused on the three paths vegetarians take once they adopt a supposedly meatless diet. Vegetarians as they mature can become more strict in their food choices, less strict, or remain the same. The most common posture for a maturing vegetarian was to become less strict. By becoming less strict, maturing vegetarians moved closer to the norm of eating animal products. However, just because the adjustment in diet most commonly led to less strict position did not mean that a significant number of vegetarians maintained or progressed further down the vegetarian path.

Maturing Accounts of Vegetarians

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, vegetarians become truly vegetarian when they accept the identity of being a vegetarian. The most important quality of identifying as a vegetarian is the reason or reasons one adopts such a lifestyle. Vegetarians are always answering the question “why?” regarding their dietary choice. The vegetarian who has just entered the signification phase of being deviant usually does so for one particular reason. Early signifying vegetarians usually give one account for their deviance. However, as one remains a vegetarian and is exposed to more of the vegetarian literature and ideology, one develops other reasons. In sociological terms, the mature vegetarian learns to move beyond monothematic accounts of the early signification stage into utilizing polythematic accounts.

A solid majority of those interviewed developed more accounts for their vegetarianism. The total number of accounts of a particular vegetarian only ranged from one to three accounts. Whereas a little over two thirds (n=31) of the initial vegetarians

offered monothematic accounts, 28 offered more than one account at the time of the interview. One vegetarian offered two accounts initially and shifted to three at the time of the interview. In total, there were 29 of the 45 vegetarians interviewed who actually offered more accounts as they matured within their vegetarianism.

The evolution of accounts becomes so important in the study of deviance. Nearly all of the studies on accounts and accounting systems simply attempt to identify the accounts surrounding a particular form of deviance. There is virtually no mention of how accounting systems are acquired or if they change at all. Nichols (1990) is one of the only theorists to acknowledge the polythematic account. The polythematic account is a vocabulary of motive that is a collection of two or more individual accounts that permit the deviant to excuse or justify his or her behavior in a more complete manner. Very few people who engage in deviance for any extended period of time utilize just one simple type of account or coping mechanism. However, the vast majority of studies allude to just that, a monothematic account.

One of the major goals of this study was to attempt to research how vegetarians evolve over time in regards to the negotiation of their deviance. More simply, this study asks how do career vegetarians negotiate their identity as compared to new or novice vegetarians. The reality, however, of the expansion of accounts can interestingly be seen in the numbers. A strong majority (75.6%; $n = 34$) of the vegetarians reported more than one account at the time of the interview. This included those who offered both two-themed accounts as well as accounts with three distinct themes. The most common number of accounts offered was two. There was a solid amount of vegetarians (20.0%; $n = 9$) who remained stable in the amount of motives offered. Only a fraction (4.4%; $n = 2$)

gave less motives. A point should be made here though. Two of the techniques that Nichols (1990) outlines as accounts, passing and deviance disavowal, were actually separated out from the more traditional vocabularies of motive for this part of the study. They will be discussed separately because at least one of the two denials, as Nichols refers to them, were utilized by all 45 vegetarians whereas an overwhelming majority used both. Another reason the denials of passing and deviance disavowal were not included in this part of the discussion of the maturing accounts was that they are not really verbal accounts at all. They are “behavioral” accounts. Passing involves the absence of explanation, and deviance disavowal is a refusal to not be seen as anything less than “normal”.

To get back on track, the most common number of verbal accounts that were presented to explain vegetarianism in this sample was two, and the most common polythematic account was the combination of the animal rights motive and the health-related motive. Fourteen of the 45 (31.1%) vegetarians interviewed claimed a polythematic account that included the health and animal rights-related vocabularies of motive. The animal rights motive is an appeal to higher loyalties whereas the health-related theme is the drive for self-fulfillment. Both of these accounts can be classified by Nichols (1990) as justifications. The most interesting part here is that the animal rights and the health-related accounts were the first and second most common form of initial, monothematic account, respectively. As the vegetarians, matured, they seemed to incorporate the two most common justifications for vegetarians into one fortified polythematic account. Below are two examples of how the polythematic account of

health and animal rights presents itself. Noel notes how a person can solidify on one motive regarding vegetarianism and then expand to another:

Because right now I feel like I'm doing the health thing fine because I'm not eating the bad, unhealthy meats, but now it's because of the poor animals...I don't think we should kill animals to eat them if we don't have to (Noel 108)

Eddie also points out how one position becomes almost automatic and another begins to emerge that seems to carry as much weight as the original position:

It's still health for me, but I guess also, like I said before, the cattle industry and the way meat is produced. I just think it's unethical the way animals are treated, and I don't agree with the fact that they use a lot of chemicals in the production of animals – hormones and antibiotics. (Eddie 105)

The second most common polythematic account involved the combination of the health motive and the aesthetic motive regarding vegetarianism. For the four (8.9%) vegetarians who mentioned this, the aesthetic motive adds the reality that some people do not enjoy the taste, smell, or even feel of meat. This aesthetic incongruence with meat for vegetarians best fits the account known as the appeal for biological drives. Mixing with the justification of the self-fulfillment motive, this polythematic account is interesting because it incorporates an excuse with a justification. According to Nichols (1990), an excuse admits the wrongfulness of the deviant behavior but denies responsibility for the action. However, a justification is the opposite. It denies the wrongfulness of the behavior, but admits responsibility. An inconsistency arises in the logic for being a vegetarian from an accounting perspective, but within the vegetarian subculture, this

inconsistency is quite logical and, ironically, very consistent. Megan tries to clarify this inconsistency with her comments:

It's interesting because in my case I became vegetarian by totally my own choice. It was a taste issue, but I read a lot of material after I became vegetarian just to make sure I was eating the right foods and wasn't neglecting my body of nutrients or anything like that. (Megan 10)

With regards to the two motive polythematic accounts, the only other combination that was reported by more than one person interviewed was the account that incorporated both the animal rights motive as well as the environmental motive. To reiterate, the animal rights motive can be classified in the accounting literature as an appeal to higher loyalties. However, the environmental theme can logically be designated as the justification known as condemnation of the condemners. Only three interviewees (6.7%) provided this polythematic account that included the two justifications. In the following quote, Beth explains how her original position of environmental reasons for vegetarianism reached out to incorporate another motive:

It's primarily for environmental [reasons], but it's kind of extended. Whereas before it was just kind of the environment and back here was animal rights...Now it's moved up dramatically to where they are almost equal. The environment is always my first reason, but a close second is animal rights. (Beth 09)

In an interesting finding, only the above polythematic accounts (animal rights and health; health and aesthetics; animals and the environment) garnered multiple responses. These three combinations of accounts accounted for 21 of the 34 (61.8% of the interviewees providing polythematic accounts and 41.7 % of the overall sample) people

who provided polythematic accounts for maturing vegetarianism. Only four other polythematic accounts were presented during the interview process that incorporated two different themes. The remaining four were as follows: social justice and the environment; religion and health; aesthetics and religion; and, finally, social justice and aesthetics. The social justice and environment combination utilized the denial of injury and the condemnation of the condemners as vocabularies of motive, respectively. Next, the self-fulfillment (health-related theme) and the scapegoating (religious) combination was presented by one interviewee. This particular polythematic account again brought together the odd union of a justification with an excuse. The third dual-theme account provided by one interviewee was aesthetics and religion. This combination is interesting because it is the only polythematic account to include only excuses – an appeal to biological drives and scapegoating. Finally, the combination of social justice and aesthetics was offered by one vegetarian. This was an incorporation of the justification, denial of injury, with the excuse, appeal to biological drives.

In an interesting find, nine individuals (20%) in the overall sample offered polythematic accounts that involved three distinct remedial accounts. The most common three-themed account was the combination of animal rights, the environment, and personal health. This polythematic account incorporated the three most popular monothematic accounts into one large coping mechanism. Three (6.7%) of the 45 vegetarians interviewed matured into this account that is constructed of the appeals to higher loyalties, condemnation of the condemners, and self-fulfillment, respectively. All three of these accounts are justifications under Nichols (1990) outline of remedial accounts.

The second most offered three-themed polythematic account involved the animal rights, health, and aesthetic positions. Two vegetarians (4.4%) stated that this combination of the appeal to higher loyalties, self-fulfillment, and the appeal to biological drives was their mature motivation for vegetarianism. This position involves two justifications and an excuse. This was one of the most complicated of the maturing accounts. Karma reaffirms that the mature vegetarian socialization can become quite complicated. Her quote below shows the depth and complexity of a well-thought out later stage vegetarian vocabulary of motive:

I feel much better about myself because I know no animals died for me. I just don't think our body is designed for it. I'm a bio [biology] major, and there are some things that point to the fact that we don't eat meat. I mean it's harder for our body to digest. You have to sleep more if you eat meat. Biological and health reasons don't figure. You don't get as much energy from it. You even begin to lose the taste for it. I don't understand why people eat meat anymore. (Karma 25)

The remaining four polythematic accounts that include three distinct accounting mechanisms were offered by one vegetarian each for their mature position. The combinations include animal rights, social justice, and the environment; animal rights, health, and social justice; religion, health, and animal rights; and, finally, animal rights, aesthetics, and the environment. As one can see the potential combinations can be nearly endless. This is the point of the polythematic account. Each individual is socialized differently and, therefore, takes with him or her specific and personalized responses. However, these combinations of accounts were built on the six major vegetarian motives that were researched and outlined by Beardsworth and Kiel (1992; 1996). Two types of remedial accounts that were organized by Nichols (1990) were presented by the

vegetarians interviewed, but they do not fit neatly into the “themes” of vegetarianism.

The accounts under Nichols’ category denials, passing and deviance disavowal, are more used to cope than to explain away the deviance.

Passing, Deviance Disavowal, and the Cuisine Counterfeiters

The two remaining coping mechanisms that Nichols (1990) offers up as accounts are the art of passing and the technique of deviance disavowal. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, passing is the process where the deviant refuses to tell anyone in the particular situation about the stigma in question (Goffman 1963). All of the 45 vegetarians who participated in the study initially utilized the passing technique and even continued to do so at the time of the interview. Vegetarianism only truly becomes an issue when the vegetarian chooses to reveal it, usually when eating comes into question. This type of denial is quite obvious and extremely useful regarding mild forms of deviance such as vegetarianism.

However, the other form of denial according to Nichols (1990), deviance disavowal, was also a widely used technique among the vegetarians interviewed. Thirty-three of the 45 vegetarians in the study stated that they used the technique known as deviance disavowal. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Davis (1961) presented this coping mechanism as a way for the deviant to deflect the negative reaction to the stigma by actually agreeing with the people’s verdicts. It is an attempt to show non-deviants that the person who is practicing deviant is quite ordinary themselves. Replicated meat products or analogs have grown incredibly popular among the vegetarian subculture in the United States. Almost every supermarket in the United States has now included the

sale of meat analogs like veggie burgers, replicated chicken products, faux sausage and bacon, and even deli meats that have been replicated from vegetable protein. Veggie burgers usually consist of vegetables, soy protein, and grain that can easily be fried, broiled, or barbecued. The veggie burger as well as the soy hot dog and replicated breakfast and deli meats attempt to resemble meat in such a way that these items even taste somewhat like ordinary hamburgers and hot dogs. One company that specializes in alternative food offers a “hamburger style” veggie burger that has the texture and appearance of a real hamburger. This veggie burger even comes with prefabricated grill marks. Other items in the cornucopia of meat analogs include vegetarian chili, veggie meat loaf, soy “chik’n” patties and nuggets that resemble products that have been popularized by major fast food chains, soy corn dogs, and a tofu-replicated turkey known infamously as “tofurkey”. The development of the meat analog becomes the perfect example of how a vegetarian can attempt to appear normal, which then permits others to ignore the stigma.

Of the meat analogs reportedly used by the vegetarians in the sample, the most overwhelmingly eaten meat replica was the veggie burger. This is quite obvious from just walking through the frozen food section in almost any supermarket. There are well over 20 different kinds of veggie burgers marketed by several brand names. They range from being tofu-based to grain-based to bean-based. The three major brands of veggie burgers are the Boca Burger, Morningstar Farms, and the Gardenburger brand. Thirty-one respondents of the 45 vegetarians interviewed said that they ate veggie burgers as a replacement for meat in their diet.

The second most common meat analog was the soy hot dog. Twelve interviewees mentioned the regular eating of the soy hot dog. Soy hot dogs are exactly what the name implies. They are a soy-based replica of a hot dog that can be easily heated or barbequed. The third most commonly reported meat analog was the replica chicken patty. This product is soy-based and is usually breaded. It is not a very healthy alternative, but it is an alternative. The soy-based chicken patty can come in a number of forms. Obviously, the patty form is used for sandwiches but nuggets are available as well. These nuggets even come in “fun” shapes marketed for the children of vegetarians. Six of the 45 vegetarians in the sample reported that they eat the replica chicken patties with quite regularity. Other mentioned meat analogs were the mock sausage products (n=3), egg replacements (n=2), soy replica shrimp, soy replica duck, tofurkey, soy-based bacon, and even soy-based buffalo wings, which are a spicy alternative to the soy chicken patties mentioned above. The data presented above regarding the meat analogs obviously is not cumulative. The type of meat analog eaten is not mutually exclusive. Some people chose to a wide variety of the meat analogs whereas others were very particular based on the nutritional quality of the replica. That is why the numbers do not add up to 45. The consumption of a meat analog is not mutually exclusive to one item. However, every person in the sample who claimed to eat meat replicas regularly all ate veggie burgers (n=31; 68.9%).

Conclusion

The final stage of the process for becoming deviant according to David Matza (1969) is signification. Signification has been reached when the person's identity and behavior become congruent. In this case of vegetarianism, signification is attained when the person practices vegetarianism as well as identifies himself or herself as a vegetarian. Matza continues this line of arguing by stating that a deviant can only be truly deviant if they are willing to live with the ramifications of the questionable behavior. The process of signification is similar to the affiliating stage in that it is a learning process. Young vegetarians are simplistic for the most part in their justifications and excuses for their dietary choice. As the vegetarians mature, the signification process involves a reorganization of their identity in order to adapt to the lifestyle more thoroughly. Early or developmental vegetarianism involves the novice vegetarian choosing an initial eating pattern. Also, this early stage of the signification process is the first time a young vegetarian organizes appropriate coping mechanisms in order to combat the questioning regarding the choice of a deviant lifestyle. Later stage or mature vegetarians have settled into a routine through trial and error involving their eating style as well as their definitions for adopting the alternative lifestyle.

Initially, the eating patterns of the vegetarians interviewed tended to be on the simpler side of the vegetarian spectrum. This is very logical because it is difficult to become a vegan or a fruitarian without first practicing some "less strict" form of vegetarianism. The most common form of early vegetarianism was the lacto-ovo-vegetarian. This classic form of vegetarianism involves the elimination of red meat,

poultry, and seafood. However, this type of vegetarian will consume dairy products and eggs. Other common initial forms of vegetarianism were the pesco- and pollo-vegetarians, where meat-related items were eliminated in a gradual fashion. In an interesting finding, a large minority (42.2%; n = 19) of the sample reported some health problems associated with an ill-informed conversion to vegetarianism. All of the vegetarians who mentioned the health problems sought medical help and were feeling fine physically and about their vegetarianism at the time of the interview.

During the early part of the signification process, the vegetarians interviewed provided accounts that rationalized and justified their dietary choice. The initial accounts provided a simple validation for themselves and a reason to sell their actions to other people who questioned it. A large majority of the respondents offered simplistic monothematic accounts during the early part of their vegetarian identity. The monothematic account is incredibly important in the evolution of a deviant behavior because it gives the novice deviant a beginning point from which other accounts can be added and/or subtracted. The framework for all of the accounts presented in this study was based on the work of Nichols (1990). Nichols offers a typology of accounts that remediates the questioned behavior to others. The remedial accounts include admissions, excuses, justifications, and denials. However, it is argued in this chapter that Nichols failed to include one type of account, deviance avowal, within his typology. This study classified the missing account as an admission. An important point about accounting mechanisms is that each form of deviance does not utilize all of the accounts presented within the typology. Each form of deviance is quite specific. Therefore, it is quite obvious that each type of deviance will utilize specific coping mechanisms congruent

with the behavior in question. Among the vegetarians interviewed, the commonly presented account was the justification known as the appeal for higher loyalties. Under this premise, the rights of animals to not be eaten was the major reason for this group's vegetarianism. Health and environmental reasons were also commonly offered by the vegetarians as justifications for their initial behavior.

As the vegetarians matured, shifts occurred in both eating patterns and the complexion of the accounts presented. In a finding that opposes common sense assumptions about vegetarianism, the largest proportion of vegetarians in the sample became less strict regarding their diets. Much of the phenomenon had to do with the difficulty of being vegetarian and the fact that many had developed some minor health complications with regards to the initial practice of vegetarianism. The second most common phenomenon in regards to eating was to become stricter. This happened in a variety of ways, but the largest movement was from a vegetarian who began as a semi-vegetarian to a practicing vegan at the time of the interview.

As the vegetarianism matured in terms of eating so did the reasons the interviewees gave. The maturity of reasoning came in the form of the expansion of accounts and coping mechanisms. Nearly two-thirds of the sample expanded the number of accounts presented when asked why they continued to be vegetarian. The most common movement was to go from one remedial account to two accounts. However it can be strongly argued that, according to Nichols' (1990) position, the accounts he classified as denials would expand the accounting mechanisms to as many as four to the majority of interviewees. It should be noted that the denials of deviance disavowal and

passing are more coping mechanisms than are actually classic accounts, which are usually thought of as excuses and justifications.

In summation, the signification process provided an interesting twist and proved to be quite a bit more complex than most studies involving accounts reveal. Matza (1969) argued that the signification stage of his theory of becoming deviant is where identity and behavior come together. Early vegetarians in the sample tended to be simplistic and stereotypical in their reasoning and aggressive in the adoption of an eating pattern. However, after time and the reality of the complexities regarding a meatless diet, many of the vegetarians interviewed tended to become more conscious regarding the reasoning behind their motivation and in the choice of what they consume. To put this more simply, they thought more about their food choices as well as the meanings they gave to meat and vegetarianism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Prognosis for Vegetarianism and Conclusions

At the end of each interview, each vegetarian was asked four questions that looked into a prognosis for the future of vegetarianism. This study was outlined as an investigation into the entering and being stages of a deviant career. However, all sociologists of deviance are interested in the potential for the exiting of a deviant career. The four questions that were asked involved personal, social, and stereotypical projections for their personal form of vegetarianism.

The four questions asked at the end of the interviews were constructed in such a way that provided the vegetarian an opportunity to offer their own opinions on the prognosis for their own vegetarianism as well as the vegetarian movement. The questions ranged from a possible exit from their own vegetarian practice to their own perceptions on the acceptance of vegetarianism as a normative dietary option. The sections that follow look into each question specifically.

Do you expect to continue to be a vegetarian in the future?

This first question attempted to investigate the probability that the vegetarian interviewed will give up the diet in the future. All of the vegetarians stated that they were going to continue vegetarianism in the short run. Interestingly, of the 45 vegetarians in the sample, 42 stated that they would continue to be vegetarian into the foreseeable future. Understandably, it cannot be assumed that all of the vegetarians will actually continue to be vegetarian 5 to 10 years from the time of the interview. However, it can be

pointed out that since western vegetarianism is a choice, a choice that the person to the time and energy to invest, that to give up vegetarianism would be currently viewed as not a possibility at the moment of the interview. One interesting point emerged from the conversations with the three individuals who were not emphatic about continuing their vegetarianism into the future. All three of these individuals said that they were going to continue to be vegetarian into the near future but were unsure whether they could continue in the long run. This uncertainty was based on the reality that vegetarianism was difficult and the potentiality that vegetarianism practiced without caution could lead to future health problems. These three individuals foresaw the potential difficulties, whether they were socially, familial, or medically. However, the overwhelming majority believed that vegetarianism was an acceptable form of dietary behavior and were determined to continue it.

Do you have any goals, either social or personal, for your vegetarianism?

This question was originally conceived as a general question that expanded on the notion of conversion. The question was quite vague and was just simply a minor portion of the original interview guide. The interviewees took the question as a question on performance, which completely reshaped its importance. In reality, the answers to this question really focused on the potential improvement of the vegetarians' own lifestyle. However, the largest group (n=18) answered that they did not have either any social goals or any personal goals for their continued vegetarianism. The vegetarians who answered this way seemed content in their dietary choice and felt no desire to improve or ease up on their current dietary performance.

The second largest group of respondents did have goals, but they were definitely more personal goals than social ones. Sixteen interviewees wanted to improve their vegetarianism by being more healthy. As mentioned in earlier chapters, it is quite easy to be a “junk food vegetarian” as Maurer (1997) calls them. There are plenty of fast food style options such as veggie burgers and even the “old reliable” of peanut butter and jelly or grilled cheese sandwiches. The vegetarians in this grouping were truly aware of the difficulty and the differences between being a vegetarian and being healthy.

The next, and last, sizable minority (n=11) of respondents to this question involved social goals instead of personal ones. Eight vegetarians believed that they could become better activists. Being able to convert more people into the vegetarian movement was the major goal of these individuals. Information and education about the vegetarian lifestyle became the main focus for the improvement of the natural environment according to these particular vegetarians. The remaining three vegetarians who answered this question attempted to just have very simple goals. One person stated that her vegetarianism must include a respect for those who do not adhere to her dietary choice, and the other two believed that they should go out of their way to not try and convert others. However, they should be role models and lead by example.

This question became quite interesting because nearly all of the respondents interpreted the meaning of the question as one regarding performance. The largest group believed that they did not really have to improve on their performance, and, therefore, had no obvious goals to report. As the interviews went along, there were a small group of vegetarians who did not take this as a performance question. However, the follow up comments and questions were then used to guide the interviewee back to the performance

question because all of the early interviews focused on performance inadvertently. This change was continued for all of the interviews to maintain a continuity of meaning for this question.

Do you attempt to convert others to the vegetarian lifestyle?

The third question asked regarding the future of vegetarianism involved the belief that vegetarians truly try to convert others to the cause. It was this practice that paralleled the deviant religious movements. From this study, however, it would have to be concluded that the practice of proselytizing is an overwhelming myth among vegetarians. A strong majority of the vegetarians in the sample (n=30) stated that they do not actively try to convert others. It was not their place to push their beliefs onto others. The overwhelming feeling was that they wished more people would become vegetarian, but it was not their responsibility to make an effort to convert them.

The remaining fifteen vegetarians did believe it was their responsibility to attempt to convert more individuals to the lifestyle. However, it was split on the tactics used by these vegetarians. Eight of the fifteen proselytizing vegetarians believed conversion was more likely if the proselytizing vegetarian acted more like a teacher or a source of information when someone seriously inquired about becoming vegetarian. An analogy would be that of a guide. The vegetarian promotes the diet and offers himself or herself as a guide to show the way to a better, more spiritual, and healthier life. The other seven proselytizers chose a more aggressive path. They were open and actively promoting the benefits of vegetarianism. Statistics, propaganda, and literature were readily available to be given to anyone whether they were really interested or not. The analogy here would be

one of a salesperson. These aggressive proselytizers attempted to make as many “sales” of vegetarianism as possible as if their commission depended on it. The activist group, Vegan Outreach (www.veganoutreach.org), promotes this aggressive salesmanship of veganism. They state on their website that if one person converted 5 people to veganism and those 5 people convert 5 others, then at that pace, it would be within a matter of a few years that the United States would be nearly totally vegan. It is these aggressive vegetarians that perpetuate the stereotype of the conversion-minded vegetarian. From the sample, it is quite obvious that the vast majority did not want to convert or attempted to convert in a less than obnoxious manner. It should be noted though that the vegetarians who were practicing for several years or more were not the aggressive proselytizing type. The aggressive ones tended to be newer converts who were also extremely strict (i.e. vegan) in their dietary choice.

Do you have any recommendations as to how vegetarianism can become more of the norm and more acceptable?

This last question present to the sample focused on the “deviant” nature of vegetarianism. Even though vegetarianism has a long history of being very deviant and even criminal in some respects, vegetarianism today is just viewed as a marginal dietary habit. Most people recognize some of the health benefits of eating more vegetables, but the entrenched social norm of meat eating has kept vegetarianism on the periphery. It seems that it is acceptable to have a vegetarian meal now and then, but it is not to be a vegetarian. The vegetarians in the sample gave several varying responses regarding the development of vegetarianism as a more “normal” option.

The largest group of people (n=18) stated that more education is needed to inform the general American public on the risks of high meat consumption and the benefits of a well-organized vegetarian diet. The education programs should be provided in the schools and by the government. A few of the interviewees mentioned the United States government's adherence to the food guide pyramid. The food pyramid that is taught in many schools and is recommended by the U.S. government is as much a political construction as it is a recommendation for healthy eating. The meat, dairy, and now the bread lobbyists since the advent of the Atkin's Diet pressure the United States government to include as much of their product as reasonably possible.

The second most common response came from two groups of eight persons each. The first group stated that they did not have any recommendations for vegetarianism to become more acceptable. This group essentially believed that vegetarianism will always be viewed as marginal or deviant. A couple even preferred the "deviant" nature of vegetarianism so that it would separate them from the norm. The other group of eight interviewees said that if restaurants offered more of a true vegetarian selection on their menus that people would opt for that on a more regular basis. They believed that this potentiality could reverberate and cause many to attempt to eat more vegetarian meals at home. The argument is that restaurants indirectly mirror the cuisine choices of the society they are serving. Most restaurants only have one or two vegetarian choices. The interviewees believed that more options would show that vegetarians have a more wide ranging cuisine than what usually appears on restaurant menus.

The next group stated that being more of an activist, and even recruiting others to become activists, would help spread the word about vegetarianism. Only five vegetarians

stated this as a program toward “normality”, but all five of these vegetarians also said that they were aggressive proselytizers in the previous question. The last two groups contained four and two people, respectively. Four interviewees stated that if practicing vegetarians lived well and healthy, then they would be role models for those who consistently ate meat but have become dissatisfied with that lifestyle. Finally, the last two vegetarians believed that the movement toward a more healthy society could see a shift to a more healthy diet, which vegetarianism would definitely be a central part. For example, the recent film, *Super Size Me*, was quite successful because it showed the incredible health risks one takes by eating a high fat, high sugar, and meat-based diet.

Concluding about Becoming Vegetarian

Historically, vegetarianism has always been construed as a form of deviance. Centuries ago vegetarianism as practiced in Western cultures threatened the stability and ideology of the catholic church (Spencer 1994). The reality is that vegetarianism has always been a threat because of the victimless or public order nature of the act. Therefore, an argument could easily be made for vegetarianism as positive deviance. Vegetarianism has always in Western cultures stood against the status quo. Vegetarians yearn and search for meaning, peace, health, and/or betterment for the world whether that be personally, socially, or environmentally. Vegetarianism provides for many a path less traveled, a path that provides a meaning and a purpose toward change. Vegetarianism as a lifestyle has historically been inclusive, not divisive. It encourages freedom, not conformity. It celebrates diversity, not hate and close-mindedness. In reality, it has rejected “progress” as defined in the west and, as a result, can be easily labeled “deviant”.

This dissertation attempted to meet three goals regarding the nature of vegetarianism and the state of deviance theory. The first and main objective was to employ a sequential model to understand the positively deviant career of vegetarianism. David Matza's (1969) theory presented in his book, *Becoming Deviant*, was the structure in which the entering stage of vegetarianism as well as the being stage of this lifestyle. The entering phase of vegetarianism included the realities that Matza outlined that he called the affinity for deviance as well as the second stage of his theory that is known as affiliating. The being stage within the deviant career of vegetarianism is very similar to Matza's idea of signification. Signification is where one actually has become deviant due to the union of the behavior in question and the person's identity.

The second goal of this research was to look at an intriguing form of deviance, vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is unique because it is both a negatively-valued form of social behavior as well as an esteemed behavior to some due to the discipline needed to perfect it. Becker (1963) argued that there have not been enough studies on differing forms of deviance. Each form of deviance has its own peculiar entering patterns as well as stigma management. Vegetarianism, as seen in this work, is no different.

The third and final goal of the study was the exploration into the vegetarians' life as a deviant. A number of theories were employed to give specificity to the structure that is Matza's theory of becoming deviant (1969). *Becoming deviant* is a text and a theory that is exceptionally well-constructed and fluid. It is compatible with many other theories explaining deviance. This theory is a perfect example of what many in sociology refer to as a mid-range theory. Matza's theory connects the theoretical paradigm of symbolic interactionism to numerous micro-level theories in the field of deviant behavior. This

study utilized several individual level theories to investigate the phenomenon of vegetarianism: the Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversions (1968); Ronald Akers' social learning theory (1998); Lawrence Nichols' typology of accounts (1990); Turner's deviance avowal (1972); Fred Davis' (1961) concept of deviance disavowal; Erving Goffman's (1963) stigma management technique of passing; and, finally, Scott and Lyman's (1968) classic theory known as accounts, which built on Matza and Sykes (1957) theory known as the techniques of neutralization.

The methods utilized to investigate the phenomenon of vegetarianism were qualitative. The interview guide technique outlined by Michael Patton (1990) was used in order to provide open-ended answers with a minimal structure. This style was chosen to overcome the lack of personal interaction that a survey questionnaire creates. The open-ended nature of the interview questions permitted the respondent to answer with all of the description and detail of real experience. The snowball sample of 45 vegetarians was collected from two regions in the country in order to get a broad look at the marginality of vegetarianism. Since vegetarianism can be hidden so effectively by the practitioners, the snowball sample technique was the best and most cost-effective method for finding vegetarians willing to participate.

The data analysis was explored in such a way in order to lead the research to find what kinds of coping mechanisms vegetarians employ to negotiate their deviance. The structure of the analysis centered on David Matza's theory of becoming deviant (1969). Matza's theory is a three-step theory that is quite broad in scope, which permits other theories to work at the most individual level. Chapter four dealt with the affinity process, the first stage of the theory. Chapters five and six outlined the middle stage where one

enters and becomes socialized into the vegetarian lifestyle. These two chapters made up what Matza called the affiliating stage. The seventh chapter presented the changes people made from people who were novice deviants and later became more mature and savvy norm violators. This last stage is known as signification. The next section of this concluding chapter will attempt to tie all four preceding chapters together into one theory of becoming vegetarian.

Becoming Vegetarian: An Integrated Theory of a Positively Deviant Career

In order to start outlining the overall process of becoming vegetarian, one must first delineate between types of career deviance we are discussing. Is vegetarianism an institutional form of deviance or is it non-institutional? Since vegetarianism is currently regarded as a choice in Western societies, it is therefore a non-institutional career. Also since it is a non-institutional career, the choice of becoming deviant usually involves the practice of learning. However, bringing in people to learn is not necessarily a recruitment-oriented process. Recruiting to a deviant career has a militaristic connotation. Vegetarianism has rarely been conflict-oriented in the West. Therefore, the military analogy is not of much use. However, vegetarianism has always been viewed in western societies with religious parallels (Twigg 1979; Spencer 1994). Vegetarians are not then recruited, but converted. It is in this religious vocabulary that a specific theory of becoming vegetarian developed.

According to David Matza (1969), the first stage in the process of becoming deviant is affinity. Affinity can be simply defined as the personal desire to become deviant. It is an attraction or an interest that draws individuals to a peculiar form of

deviance. The problem with Matza's notion of affinity is that it is quite vague. Matza, however, did argue as a key point to the affinity process is that deviants are converted, and deviance itself is not preordained. He rejected the notion of the institutional career. Deviants are transformed, but they first must have the attraction for that form of deviance.

How, then, does someone develop an attraction for a said form of deviance? This is essentially the question that every scholar of deviance wishes to answer. The problem becomes how does one acquire an affinity? Matza's theory really does not address this issue. Matza does provide the mid-level framework, but he does not get specific. However, he does leave open the possibility that each form of individual deviance has its own attractive qualities, whether it be drug dealing or a deviant sexual proclivity or vegetarianism.

Since vegetarianism has so many parallels with religious conversion experiences, a specific model was utilized that dealt with the conversion process one would take to become part of a deviant religious organization. The Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion (Lofland & Stark 1965) is a seven step theory that takes the disenfranchised individual down the path from potential convert to being newly converted. The theory's seven steps are broken down into two phases: predisposing conditions and situational contingencies. The first step in the entire process is the development of tension. According to Lofland and Stark, tension arises when there is discrepancy between what is desired for the individual and what is the reality in the person's life. This first step in the Lofland-Stark model, tension, is very similar to what David Matza referred to as affinity. Lofand and Stark noted that their theory did not have

to be confined to deviant religious movements alone. It is a theory that can be applied to most any form of deviance that requires a “conversion” process. It is not useful for institutional forms of career deviance, and it is also not relevant for the study of differing forms of deviance that lean toward more of a “recruitment” model, such as becoming a gang member or entering organized crime.

The blending of the Lofland-Stark Model with Matza’s theory of becoming deviant was necessary to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of vegetarianism. For a person to become a vegetarian, there simply must be tension. The tension also must be how Lofland and Stark (1965) define tension, as the discrepancy between what is ideal and what is real. Tensions must interact with an individual’s personal history to create movement toward a new behavior. Matza also argues that tension must be present to have an affinity for deviance. The vegetarians in this study presented five distinct types of tension that led to the development of the vegetarian lifestyle. The five tensions are as follows: disturbing tensions, health-oriented tensions, relationship-maintaining tensions, independence tensions, and moral-political tensions. These tensions are unique to each other, but they are not mutually exclusive. These tensions also evolve. They evolve into the rationales for vegetarianism that are a part of post-conversion vegetarianism.

The five tensions provide a “draw” or a “pull” to something out of the context of normality. The reality of what constitutes “normal” food consumption is at odds with the ideal in the mind of the potential vegetarian. However, the existence of tensions that would pull or draw someone to avoid meat is not the only factor that creates an affinity for vegetarianism. Matza (1969) points out that demographic characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, educational level, familial socialization, and

problems during childhood and/or adolescence could potentially pull someone down a deviant path. In this sample, there was a common theme among the biographies of the interviewees. The vegetarians that participated in the study were predominantly white, European-American, and female. This was very consistent with some of the other national and historical data on vegetarians (www.cowles.com; Spencer 1994; McIntosh 1995; Adams 1994). The vegetarians in the sample ranged in age from 18 to 61 years. Also, the median income range reported was between \$40,000 and \$59,999. Age and income were also consistent with prior studies on vegetarians. Even though the sample was biased due to the snowball nature of the collection method, the demographics of both subsamples from each college town were relatively consistent with the previous demographics collect about vegetarians in the United States.

After the affinity stage has been achieved where the attraction of possibly becoming a vegetarian has entered the person's mind, the person must come to a point in time where a decision to adopt the deviant lifestyle. This point in time or incident can be called the turning point. Matza (1969) stated that affinity can only be known in its natural context, but that the natural context can only be studied after the reality of conversion. Also, affinity can only become truly meaningful at the point where the next stage, affiliation, begins. Matza has also argued that each type of deviance will have its own process of affiliation. The entire point of the affiliating process is to learn and understand how to practice the particular form of deviance that one has developed an affinity toward. Matza does not, however, ever state how the learning process begins. That is the other step from the Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion that was utilized.

The Lofland-Stark model outlines a point where one can argue that the beginning of conversion takes place. It is a specific place in time in which a person decides to make a conversion. This is truly the most attractive and useful point of their theory. Lofland and Stark (1965) argue that for one to have a “conversion” one must reach a point to decide to move in that direction. As mentioned above, they call this place in time the turning point. What happens is that the tension that continually build during the affinity stage reaches a time where they must be reduced. According to Lofland and Stark, the turning point is the moment in time where the old ways of reducing tension are not working, and the acceptance of a new way becomes apparent. The turning point is the awareness of a new option. In this study, vegetarianism is the new option to deal with the building tensions of the affinity stage. While doing the research, it was revealed that there were five types of experiences that can be called turning points. They are discussions, interactions with media, health problems, excursions, and aesthetic experiences.

Turning points that arrived as discussions can be defined as a talk with another person about the ideology and the lifestyle that triggered a conversion to becoming vegetarian. Discussions could be with friends, significant others, or acquaintances and was by far the most popular turning point. The second most common turning point was the interactions with media. The media in this context are either written, visual, or interactive like the internet. The third most reported turning point revolved around health concerns. A solid minority of the vegetarians admitted that a health issue prompted their conversion. The next turning point is an excursion. Excursions can be defined in this context as a short trip that a person took for education, health, or recreational reasons, which resulted in a decision to convert to vegetarianism. The excursions ranged from

school trips at meat-processing plants to trips with vegetarian friends in order to get away from the hustle and bustle of the everyday world. The least common of the turning points was the one involving aesthetic experiences. These individuals who experienced this type of turning point came to realization where the disgust of meat and meat-related products became too overwhelming to ignore anymore. It is a redefinition of meat from a pleasant experience to one involving death, violence, and/or suffering. An interesting fact about the turning point among vegetarians is that it is not necessary. It is only necessary with vegetarians who actually “convert”. Those people who are raised in a vegetarian household did not experience a “conversion experience”. However, they do experience the next two stages of affiliating and signification.

When the turning point is finally achieved and the person decides to reduce tension by becoming vegetarian, an affective bond must develop with members who currently hold the deviant perspective. Some researchers (Snow & Phillips 1980) believe that the development of a bond is the most critical point in the conversion process. David Matza (1969) proposed that Edwin Sutherland’s (1947) theory of differential association was the process in which the neophyte deviant learns once the bond is developed. According to differential association theory, deviant behavior is learned as a member of small, informal, and impersonal groups. This major assumption is also consistent with David Matza’s theory of becoming deviant (1969) and The Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion (1965). The only problem with Sutherland’s theory is that he passed away before he could extrapolate the propositions regarding learning within his theory. The development of Ronald Akers’ Social Learning Theory (1998) extended the original work of Sutherland to include more recent research on human learning. Akers’

main position is that Sutherland was ultimately on the right track. However, Akers believed that the learning process needed to be outlined in a more complete fashion. Akers' theory focuses more on the concept of definitions. Definitions are a person's own attitudes or meanings that are attached to any given behavior. The key to this is that these definitions are learned while interacting with others who model, practice, and/or support the deviance in question.

The affiliation process for vegetarianism attempts to find out from whom does the novice vegetarian learn. Through the interviews with the 45 vegetarians, it was discovered that new vegetarians learn to affiliate with vegetarianism from three primary sources: other people, written material, and visual media, which includes the Internet. Individuals can teach the young vegetarian either directly or indirectly (Bryant 1990). Direct learning involves hands on instruction whereas indirect learning occurs through modeling or imitation. One of the most bond-creating experiences a young vegetarian can have is to participate in a vegetarian potluck dinner. The vegetarian potluck provides a context where direct and indirect instruction on how to become vegetarian comes together. The vegetarian potluck creates the small, informal, and intimate setting that is necessary to learn under the major assumption of differential association and social learning theory. The comfortable environment of the potluck structures a safe environment for the new vegetarian to ask questions and explore the lifestyle.

The second major source of vegetarian affiliation, or socialization, was written material. Vegetarian manuscripts are more than abundant. They come in every written form imaginable: books, magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, and flyers. An interesting fact is that there is virtually no scholarly literature on the nature of written material as a

source of deviant socialization. Major works by Frances Moore Lappe, Jeremy Rifkin, John Robbins, and Peter Singer were mentioned by the interviewees as well as promotional literature provided by pro-vegetarian groups People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Vegan Outreach. The final source of affiliation was media. Media included films, television, music, and the Internet. From the interviews, it seemed that the Internet provided a seemingly limitless source of material for new vegetarians. The Internet provides access to online cookbooks, chat rooms, web pages, and even access to libraries that can open up a new world to anyone with an affinity to vegetarianism.

The final part of the theory of becoming deviant as proposed by Matza (1969) is signification. Signification by definition is the point in the deviant socialization process that the person has redefined himself or herself as a part of the alternative lifestyle. Basically, the deviant reorganizes his or her life to become like the deviants he or she has emulated (Vail 1999). Matza notes that a person has reached the final signification stage when that person's behavior matches his or her identity. The major problem is that Matza never really specified the signification process. This study attempted to address a more specific process of signification among vegetarians that occurred in two steps, early and mature. Early or developmental vegetarianism is the stage where the newly self-identified vegetarian develops an initial eating pattern and adopts appropriate definitions to defend the lifestyle when questioned. Mature vegetarianism has been reached when the person has settled into a pattern of eating and has come to a person understanding for the reason or reasons he or she has become vegetarian. Mature vegetarians have become comfortable with their diet as well as their motivations and justifications. The eating

patterns of vegetarians used for this study was based on the categories recommended by the National Council on Science and Health (Meister 1997). According to this U.S. governmental group, there are eight distinct forms of vegetarianism. The only consistency that pushes someone into the category of vegetarian is the avoidance of red meat. The motivations and justifications used in this work are based on the comprehensive organization of accounts theorized by Lawrence Nichols (1990). The key component to accounting systems in the deviance literature is the fact that accounts are offered after the behavior has occurred. This is consistent with Matza's concept of signification. Matza's theory provided the structure where accounting systems can be employed quite effectively. Also, Matza's idea of signification can only be studied after one has reached that particular point.

Early or developmental vegetarianism begins when someone decides to eliminate any meat-based products from his or her diet. The eight major types range from the less strict semi-vegetarian, which is just the elimination of red meat, to the very strict fruitarian, which eliminates all meat, animal products, and only eats vegetables where the plants were not killed or injured (See Table 7-1 in Appendix A for the complete list of vegetarians). Of the eight types of vegetarians, only five types were represented among the 45 interviewees at the starting point of their vegetarianism. No one claimed to be the very strict vegan or fruitarian when they began their vegetarianism. The most common type of vegetarianism that subjects chose as an initial form was lacto-ovo-vegetarianism. Sixty percent of the sample decided to eliminate all meat, poultry, and seafood from their diet when they began. This complete decision led many, 19 to be exact, to have some medical difficulties resulting from the diet. The reality that a major shift in diet can cause

medical problems if done in a quick, uninformed manner showed that in many cases ideology was put before health and common sense.

The key factor in the signification process is the emergence of congruence between identity and behavior for the new deviant. The behavior here was a change in eating. The identity is built on the justifications and rationales for adopting a vegetarian diet. The reasons one becomes a vegetarian can only become known when the person finally articulates the motive. C. Wright Mills (1940) referred to these justifications to redefine behavior as vocabularies of motive. Vocabularies of motive have a long legacy in the study of deviant behavior. This study primarily used the accounting theory proposed by Nichols (1990). Part of Nichols' theory focused on the notion of remedial accounts. Remedial accounts are vocabularies of motive that are given after the behavior has been completed. The nature of remedial accounts led to an interesting finding. Remedial accounts permit the signification stage to be an evolving and ever changing process that ebbs and flows as time goes by.

Novice vegetarians are qualitatively different in their motivations as compared to mature, long term vegetarians. The novice vegetarian usually presents an account that is simple in design. Nichols (1990) refers to these simple accounts as monothematic because they essentially are built around one major theme. In the sample, over 70% of the interviewees provided monothematic accounts for their early vegetarianism (See Table 7-2 in Appendix A for a presentation of the major monothematic accounts). Of the fifteen differing accounts outlined in the literature, vegetarians only used ten in the defense of their identity. This is true for all forms of deviance. Not every form of deviance will utilize every defense mechanism. This flexibility within the theory of accounts is what

makes it so compatible with Matza's theory of becoming deviant. The most common type of account used by vegetarians was the appeal to higher loyalties, which involves the avoidance of meat due to respect for animals. The other accounts included deviance avowal, appeal to biological drives, scapegoating, denial of injury, self-fulfillment, condemnation of the condemners, the sad tale, passing, and deviance disavowal.

As the vegetarians matured, there was a shift in eating behavior as well as rationalizations and motives for the behavior. The most surprising shift occurred with the eating behavior. The common sense ideal would say that vegetarians would convert to vegetarianism initially as one of the less strict forms and move to eliminate more animal-related products. A problem arose when the majority of the vegetarians in the sample claimed to have become the classic lacto-ovo-vegetarian at the initial stage of their career. This left little room to become stricter in their diet. The reality of mature vegetarianism was that the largest portion of the sample actually became less strict. The most common shift being from the classic lacto-ovo-vegetarian to a pesco-vegetarian. A pesco-vegetarian consumes dairy, eggs, and seafood products. This counters the prevailing common sense progression of vegetarianism. However, this shift to adding some animal-related products may be the result of some of the health issues many of the vegetarians reported. The second most common shift was the movement to a stricter diet. This included the seven vegans in the sample. None of the vegans in the sample were practicing veganism when they converted to vegetarianism. Finally, there was a large minority (n=12) of the interviewees who did not change their diet over the course of their vegetarian career.

The next portion of the maturing vegetarian career is the shifting of accounts. Vegetarians truly become vegetarians when they accept the identity of being vegetarian, and this acceptance begins the final stage of becoming deviant. Early or developing vegetarianism was dominated by individuals who converted to vegetarianism using a monothematic account to rationalize their behavior. Whereas a little over two-thirds (n=31) of the initial vegetarians offered a monothematic account, twenty-nine of the 45 vegetarians expanded their accounts beyond what was initially offered. This is incredibly important because it shows that deviant socialization can be an ever changing phenomenon. Attitudes and beliefs can shift as well as behavior. The attitudes and beliefs can be revealed through the interviewees use of accounts whereas the change in eating patterns reveals a shift in behavior. The most common form of multiple, or polythematic, accounts was the combination of health and animal rights. To use the accounting vocabulary, this polythematic account combined the self-fulfillment account with the appeals to higher loyalties. These accounts can be both classified as justifications. The other two-motive accounts involved the union of self-fulfillment with the appeals for biological drives and the combination of the appeals to higher loyalties and the condemnation of the condemners.

There was a large minority (20%) of the sample who utilized a three-motive polythematic account as a mature vegetarian. Only two specific three-motive accounts were offered by more than one vegetarian. The first involved a combination of health, animal rights, and the environment. This is an incorporation of all of the three most popular reasons for becoming vegetarian. The accounts provided were self-fulfillment, appeal to higher loyalties, and condemnation of the condemners. The second three-

themed account involved animal rights, health, and aesthetics. This polythematic account involved the appeal to higher loyalties, self-fulfillment, and the appeal to biological drives.

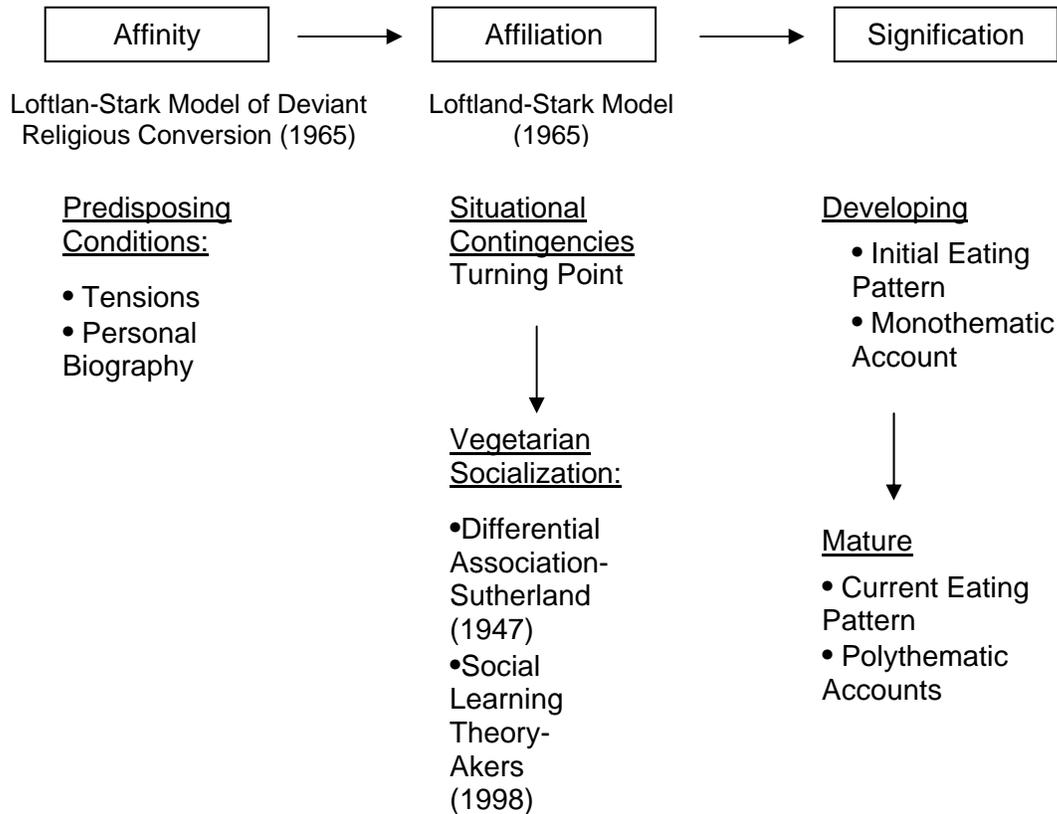
The final portion of the signification phase for vegetarianism was the utilization of certain accounts by the vegetarians that were interviewed. In reality, all of the vegetarians used a polythematic account when you include the accounts included in Nichols' (1990) theory of passing and deviance disavowal. The major problem with Nichols' theory is that the thematically-based accounts are verbal and the action-oriented accounts are behavioral. The polythematic and monothematic accounts are based on perception and the attempt to change the perception of others. The behavioral accounts are ways the deviant can act to prevent awkwardness. The two types of behavioral accounts are passing and deviance disavowal. Passing was utilized, to some extent, by all 45 respondents in the sample. This is simply due to the avoidance of the vegetarian to inform "normals" of their deviant lifestyle. Vegetarian is quite amenable to passing because vegetarianism only becomes obvious during an encounter that involves eating. The second behavioral account, deviance disavowal, was used by more than two-thirds of the sample. In this case, the vegetarians who used meat analogs to replace meat in their diet actually acquiesced to the prevailing norm of meat eating in American society. This behavior shows the conforming people that the person they are eating with is perfectly normal but just chooses to avoid meat for a number of particular reasons. These last two types of accounts that Nichols (1990) refers to as denials reveals the obvious complexity of any form of deviance.

Vegetarianism is just not a simple choice that remains stagnant as one matures. It is dynamic, and it is constantly shifting across the “lifetime” of a vegetarian. The integrated theory used here to explain a very complex form of deviance took a broad mid-level theory known as becoming deviant as outlined by Matza (1969) as its structure. This structure held three “phases” or “stages”: affinity, affiliation, and signification. The affinity phase of vegetarianism was best explained by a micro-level theory of deviant religious conversion known as the Lofland-Stark model (1965). However, not all of the theory applies to all conversions as Snow and Philips (1980) discovered. The Lofland-Stark model provided a more specific structure regarding the tensions that draw somebody to the vegetarian lifestyle. Affiliation, as described by Matza (1969), is the process of deviant socialization. This stage utilized two process-oriented theories, the Lofland-Stark model and Ronald Akers’ social learning theory (1998). The Lofland-Stark model of deviant religious conversion was employed because of the idea of a turning point. In any conversion experience, there is a point that the decision to convert is made. This is the beginning of the affiliation process. Matza argued that affiliation resembles the classic criminological and deviance theory known as differential association (Sutherland 1947). However, since Matza’s theory was published, new developments in the area of learning theories of deviance have occurred. The most widely accepted revision of Sutherland’s differential association is Akers’ social learning theory. Akers’ most recent adjustment to the theory was presented in his book, *Social Learning and Social Structure* (1998). Therefore, Akers’ theory was used in this study as a replacement. Finally, the last phase, signification, is the point where the deviant’s attitudes and behavior become congruent. This can only be studied after the fact of

conversion. However, there are a number of theories that exist in deviance that address the management of a deviant identity. Nichols' (1990) theory of accounts was used for this study because it was an attempt to create a classification scheme for the vast, yet awkward, literature on accounting methods that deviants use. The part of the theory that was used for this study involved what Nichols calls remedial accounts. These are accounts given after the person adopts the behavior to negotiate a more "normal" identity. Vegetarianism is a type of deviance that does not employ all of the accounts organized in Nichols' theory, and it also included one type of stigma management technique, deviance avowal, that Nichols overlooked. In the end, the theory presented here of becoming vegetarian reveals that any form of deviance is complicated. There are many motives for each act, even a marginally deviant act such as vegetarianism. Simplified theories that attempt to explain all deviance or a vast majority of deviant behavior truly do not understand the nature of an unaccepted act. To understand the actor in his or her context is arguably the most effective way to understand the meaning behind the act. Only then can effective alternatives be developed in order to provide acceptance for or solutions to any form of deviance.

Development of the Vegetarian Career

David Matza's Theory of Becoming Deviant (1969)



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APPENDIX A

Table 7-1 Initial Eating Patterns of Vegetarians Interviewed

Eating Pattern	Number of Interviewees
Semi-Vegetarian	5
Pollo-vegetarian	4
Pesco-vegetarian	4
Lacto-ovo-vegetarian	27
Ovo-vegetarian	0
Lacto-vegetarian	5
Vegan	0
Fruitarian	0

Table 7-2 Current Eating Patterns of Vegetarians Interviewed

Eating Pattern	Number of Subjects
Semi-vegetarian	2
Pollo-vegetarian	3
Pesco-vegetarian	15
Lacto-ovo-vegetarian	9
Ovo-vegetarian	1
Lacto-vegetarian	8
Vegan	7
Frutarian	0

Table 7-3 Changes in Eating Patterns from Developing to Mature Vegetarianism

Change Reported	Number of Subjects
More Strict with Eating	14
Continue with same pattern	12
Less Strict with Eating	19

APPENDIX B

Vegetarianism Interview Guide

- I. Entering Vegetarianism
 - A. Recruitment and Socialization into the Vegetarianism Option – How did you become involved in vegetarianism?
 1. Agents of Socialization
 - Persons or self-discovery
 - Important monographs
 - Influential Media
 2. Conversion Process
 - Time frame (e.g. abrupt vs. gradual)
 - Critical experiences
 - Difficulties in changing eating practices
 - B. The Beginning Vegetarian
 1. Food Consumed
 - Vegetables
 - Fruit
 - Dairy
 - Seafood
 - Poultry
 - Red Meat (e.g. pork and beef)
 2. Primary motivation for vegetarianism
 - Pragmatic – health, gustatory
 - Ideological – animal rights, environmental
 3. The Vegetarian Identity
 - a. Personal feelings concerning vegetarianism when first began practice
 - b. Past perspectives on others feelings – Were you accepted or criticized?
 - Family

- Peers
- Other acquaintances

c. Managing the Vegetarian Identity – How did you handle other peoples’ behaviors and/or reactions?

- Certain types of people
- Certain situations
- Can you give an example of difficulties with others when you first began vegetarianism?

II. Being or Practicing Vegetarianism

A. Food Consumed

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy
- Seafood
- Poultry
- Red Meat (e.g. pork and beef)

B. Primary motivation for vegetarianism

- Pragmatic – health, gustatory
- Ideological – animal rights, environmental

C. The Vegetarian Identity

1. Current feelings about personal practice of vegetarianism

2. Current perspectives on others feelings – Do you currently feel accepted or criticized?

- Family
- Peers
- Other acquaintances

3. Managing the Vegetarian Identity – How do you currently handle other peoples’ behaviors and/or reactions?

- Certain people
- Certain situations
- Can you give a recent example?

III. Vegetarian Careers – The development of the person’s vegetarianism

- Relapses
- Time periods when the person was not practicing vegetarianism

IV. The Future of the Vegetarian

- Do you expect to continue to be a vegetarian in the future?
- Goals for your vegetarianism
- Do you have any recommendations as to how vegetarianism can become more of the norm and more acceptable?

V. Demographics

- Personal Information – Background Data Sheet that each interviewee will be asked to complete
- Other organizations, clubs, social groups

APPENDIX C

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY **Informed Consent for Participants**

Title of Project: *Identity Management of Vegetarians*

Principal Investigator:

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I. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the application of theories regarding the negotiation of a deviant or questioned identity to the context of vegetarians. Participants will be asked to report their experiences as practicing vegetarians.

II. PROCEDURES

Participation in this research project requires you to participate in a one-on-one interview that lasts approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes. To participate in this study, subjects must be at least 18 years of age. Signing this form acknowledges your informed consent regarding the participation in the interview process as well as allowing the principal investigator, Joseph E. Boyle, to tape record the interviews and to create transcripts of conversations.

III. ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The results of this study will be kept strictly confidential. The researcher will not release the names of the participants in this study to anyone without your written consent. Your names, location, and any other possible identifying information will be changed for your protection.

The interviews will be tape-recorded and a verbatim transcript will be completed with all personal identifiers changed for your protection. Transcripts will be identified and coded using only the assigned interviewee number. The tape recordings and transcripts will be erased or destroyed after the research is completed.

IV. BENEFITS OF THE INTENDED RESEARCH

Your participation in this research project will provide information regarding the social phenomenon of vegetarianism. It may offer insight into your own situation as well as providing understanding to those who do not practice a vegetarian lifestyle.

