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Young South African vegetarians: constructing identities and negotiating relationships

Chapman, Sarah

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was an exploration of vegetarian identity and relationships among young South Africans. The sub-aims of this study were to explore young South Africans' reasons for adopting and maintaining a vegetarian diet and to explore how young people negotiate and maintain their vegetarian identity within their family, peer groups and romantic relationships. Finally, the study also aimed to explore how people's reasons for adopting and maintaining a vegetarian diet relate to larger social and political issues in South Africa and globally.

This study was interesting and an important topic to study because of the lack of research done of this topic in the South African context as well as the importance and meaning of food in everyday life. Food is an important and interesting area of study because it forms a part of every person's everyday life, not only as it is a biological need but also because practices involving food, the consumption of food and thoughts about food are meaningfully intertwined with cultural norms and socio-political values (Caplan, 1997; Fischler, 1988; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002).

Food is a tool to create and maintain social relationships and works to develop ties of both sameness and difference in terms of ethnicity, culture, nationality, class and gender (Brewer & Yuki, 2007; Fischler, 1988). Making the choice to be vegetarian is an expressive response to food involving practices, which signals identity (Fox & Ward, 2008). The choice to be vegetarian is a choice that often goes against the norms in today's society especially in a South Africa context.

The celebratory practice of the braai forms part of the South African identity and experience (Powell, 2013). In African culture, ritual slaughter is part of ancestor worship and spiritual life and is therefore a critical part of cultural identity and participation (Yirael, 2013). It is

therefore interesting to see how a person navigates their unconventional choice to be vegetarian in the context of indigenous beliefs, practices and products in South Africa.

This study focused on vegetarian's in early adulthood and their relationships, including peer, romantic and family relationships. It is useful to view food in a family setting because the home is the usual setting for sharing food (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009). Families are the first and very influential space of socialisation into society and into a particular culture (Langiellier, 2002; Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009). Friendship groups and romantic relationships, which are important for young people as they enter into adulthood, are also often the setting for the consumption of food and have been shown to have a strong influence on what a person eats especially in the life stage of early adulthood (Arcelusa, Yatesa & Whiteleyc, 2012; De la Haye, Robins, Mohr & Wilson, 2013).

This study explored the reasons that young university students adopt a vegetarian diet within the South African context. University students are relatively food-secure which means they have the freedom to make choices about what they eat and why, by contrast with many people living in South Africa. However, inequality and high rates of poverty and unemployment in South Africa mean that food insecurity is a pervasive problem and is not absent from even among the student population, a relatively privileged-sector of society (Altman, Hart & Jaccob, 2009; Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014). Consequently, financial constraints may make it impossible for some students to eat meat even if they wish to. However, the primary focus of this study was to explore identity construction and relationships among young people who do not eat meat as a matter of choice.

Participants' reasons for not consuming meat link to wider discourses and sets of values: religious or cultural, health and political or ethical reasons (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). Issues around religion or culture are especially important in a society such as South Africa, as it is a

multicultural society with fluid boundaries between identities and shifting value systems (Koenig & De Gucheneire, 2007).

First, participants may practice a religion which advocates for vegetarianism such as the Hindu religion and the Seventh Day Adventists. Globalisation has led to the expansion of access to information and communication; therefore, people have access to different cultures from around the world (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). The socio-economic threats to health are of great concern in South Africa with HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and many other health problems becoming more prevalent. Health related threat to humanity are a prevalent issue globally, including hunger, poverty, access to clean water and the global economic burden of disease (Bhutta & Reddy, 2012).

Second, beyond these basic right to health, the question of healthy lifestyles and diets is a dominant concern of the middle classes, as manifest in the proliferation of health shops, alternative medicines and health related popular media, which is widely shared on social media platforms (Young, King, Harper & Humphreys, 2013). As it has recently become in the interest of the middle class to seek a healthier lifestyle the vegetarian diet may offer a healthy alternative to mainstream diets, but conversely, may create health problems or a lack of critical dietary needs such as protein or iron (Key, Davey & Appleby, 1999).

The third set of reasons for not eating meat are political or ethical concerns (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). Although South Africa has one of the best human rights bills in the world, animals do not receive the same protection (Christie, 2010). Many individuals oppose eating animals and other do not consume meat because of the conditions in which live stock are kept (Christie, 2010). Some people do not eat meat out of concern of the environment (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). The meat industry is said to have a significant impact on the environment worldwide contributing largely to issues such as global warming and deforestation (Frith,

2006). Therefore, these peoples' reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet relate to larger social and political issues of equality and development both in South Africa and the world.

This study is useful in providing new information around the connection between food, identity and relationships in the South African context. This will add to psychological knowledge through the exploration of an unconventional identity and how people negotiate this identity in terms of their relationships within a South African context.

Vegetarian participants between the ages of 18 and 26, the majority of whom are students at the University of Witwatersrand, took part in the research with the main aim of exploring the vegetarian identity and relationships among young South Africans.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature from three primary fields has been drawn and integrated to frame and inform this study: 1) food practices in the South African context and global food politics; 2) theories of identity development and 3) food choices and the influences and prominence of different relationships. The first field frames the study in terms of the South African and global context in which the participants are located. The South African context is important to investigate because of various factors such as food security which is especially significant in the South African context. Another influential aspect is social media which has recently become a factor in terms of food as fashion which is very much connected to the early adult stage of life. South Africa is also a unique place in which to eat in a vegetarian way because of practices such as the "braai" which is often seen as a celebration of South African heritage as well as the involvement of meat in indigenous African rituals and traditions. The global context in which people eat in a vegetarian way is also important to consider because the context of the modern world can supply or add to a persons' reason/s for adopting this identity which include religious reasons, health reasons as well as political and ethical reasons.

The second field which frames the study is concerned with a theoretical account of identity development, including a review of previous literature on the vegetarian identity. Erikson's (1968) identity crisis will be used as the participants are in the stage of "identity versus role confusion" and are also entering the stage of "intimacy versus isolation" which is the focus of the research. The Bio-psycho-social model is used to look at the participants in their specific context taking into account biological, psychological and social factors which shape their identity and experiences. It is also important to explore a persons' identity salience which

encompasses where, when and how often a particular identity plays out as well as how power is connected to identity. Relational identity must be considered as a persons' identity is connected to other people in their life.

In addition, the last field discusses food choice in terms of relationship because food is so closely related to the creation and maintenance of social relationships. Families are of primary interest here because people often eat in a similar way to their family as this is the first space of socialisation and includes behaviours such as the bonding experience of eating together. The influence and dynamics of peer partners as well as romantic relationships are also influential and need to be highlighted and explored as they become increasingly important to the life stage of the participants. Studies on people who have adopted the vegetarian lifestyle and how this is maintained and negotiated in terms of their relationships need to be discussed in order to highlight similarities and differences.

2.2 Food practices in the South African context and global food politics

2.2.1 Food security

As a country, South Africa has one of the highest rates of income inequality in the world, with extremely high levels of absolute poverty and therefore high levels of food insecurity (Altman et al., 2009). Income security is seen as a key factor in increasing food security, however, unemployment remains a huge problem in South Africa (Altman et al., 2009). The unemployment rate in South Africa has increased from 24.1% in the last half of 2013 to 25.2% in the first quarter of 2014 (South African government News Agency, 2014). As a result food security is a problem for many people living in South Africa (Altman et al., 2009).

Food security is a complex problem with many facets (Timmer, 2012). The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1996) defines food security in terms of physical and economic factors: the availability of sufficient food, having the resources to obtain food and an adequate

knowledge of food. The feeling of food security is difficult to achieve because of factors such as food price fluctuation which evokes a hostile response from struggling consumers (Timmer, 2012).

South Africa has experienced many people moving from rural to urban areas for better employment and educational opportunities (Van der Merwe, 2011). This has resulted in a lack of space in urban areas and therefore problems with access to food (Van der Merwe, 2011). The "door gardens" project is one initiative, implemented to combat the lack of space and provide access to food in urban areas (Van der Merwe, 2011). This project teaches people to make vegetable gardens the size of a door therefore providing them with healthy food in an economical and space effective way (Van der Merwe, 2011). Consequently door gardens have been one way to try to deal with the problem of access to food in South Africa (Van der Merwe, 2011).

Food security is even a problem among a relatively privileged sector of South Africa society, university students (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014). A study found that two thirds of students at the University of the Free State went hungry during the academic year (University of the Free State, 2013).

Dominguez-Whitehead and Whitehead (2014, p. 2) did a study which examined "the interactional reproduction of inequality" through examining the interactional practices of students around food within the South African context. This study focused on the extreme inequality and uneven distribution of wealth in South Africa in relation to food, evident in the student community (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014). Students either described "food-related troubles" or "food-related jokes" (Dominguez-Whitehead &Whitehead, 2014, p. 2). This analysis was done through the use of specific language use such as pro-noun use, how speech was formulated and laughter (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014).

While poorer participants who described "food-related troubles" had more of a shared/community idea of food problems, participants who described "food-related jokes" had more economic resources and viewed food as an individual choice (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014, p. 2).

2.2.2 Food and Social Media

The majority of users of social media, although relatively widespread, are young people, who are part of the student population (Pew Research Centre, 2015, p. 1). Of the age group 18 to 29 90% of individuals use social networking sites, with the next highest user group being 30 to 49 year olds of which 78% use social media sites (Pew Research Centre, 2015). The most popular of the social networking sites for the youth being Facebook, with 67% of the 18 to 25 year old age group possessing a profile (Widrich, 2013). According to Widrich (2013) the average Facebook user is approximately 25, female and has a college degree. As the youth are the most active users of social networking sites they will be most affected by social media's effect on food and eating.

Eating has always been a social event but recently this social event has been affected by individuals being able to connect through technology however these individuals are more seldom physically together (Holmberg, 2014). By contrast, with these concerns with lack of food security, the global media reflects a surge in interest in "food as fashion" with a rise in popularity of food TV reality shows, such as "Come Dine with Me", celebrity chefs, such as Nigella Lawson and Jamie Oliver, presenting food as plentiful (Levine, 2013). The question of healthy lifestyles and diets is a dominant concern of the middle classes, as manifest in the proliferation of health shops, alternative medicines and health related popular media (Young et al., 2013).

"Food porn" is another trend which has erupted on social media cites such as Facebook and Instagram in which users post photographs of food which is about to be consumed capturing the delicious visual appeal of the food on a wide platform (Holmberg, 2014; Levine, 2013). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide a level of connectivity which is new in that people can tailor make their profile and choose what the world sees of them (Levine, 2013). Social media allows people to make public aspects of their lives that in the past would have been private and therefore people can connect via social media, 24/7 (Levine, 2013). In this way, people construct the food they eat as more than simply for survival but as a matter of 'style' and personal choice, through the intersection of social media and food (Levine, 2013).

Middle class people are increasingly eating meals away from the home which has led to an increase in the purchasing of fast/convenience food, which can be connected to certain food related health problems (Holmberg, 2014). According to Holmberg (2014) people earning a middle class income consume fast or convenience food more than any other income group, this is in contrast to lower income families who consume more meals prepared at home. Various food blogs are either devoted to informing read about food in a nutritional capacity or food as a pleasurable indulgence, therefore, showing that different people will identify differently with food identities (Holmberg, 2014).

For example, in Korea the increase in work hours and single person households has led to less people eating within a family context, in combination with excessive eating trends and digital technology this has led to a trend called, "Muk-bang" (Holmberg, 2014). "Muk-bang" which translates into "eating rooms" involves a person eating vast amounts of food in front of a webcam while talking with and watching other people eat (Holmberg, 2014). This practice has become increasingly popular and has generated "celebrities" who get paid to consume food online (Holmberg, 2014). Social media is a powerful force which has an effect on what

people eat, how they eat it, in connection with whom it is eaten and when they eat it (Holmberg, 2014; Levine, 2013).

2.2.3 Food traditions in South Africa

The "braai" is a defining contemporary South African practice that crosses multiple cultures (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013). The word "braai" originated from the Afrikaans word "braaivleis" which means roasted meat (Oplan, 2014). However, this practice is no longer the preserve only of Afrikaners and is in fact one of the few "cultural" practices that is shared among all cultural groups in South Africa.

Braaing, as opposed to other cooking tasks in the kitchen, is an almost exclusively male task, linking meat and the cooking of it, to conceptions of gender roles and masculinity (Oplan, 2014; Foster-Towne, 2013; Tinker, 1990). Ruby and Heine (2011) highlight that there is a strong connection between meat and masculinity which is evident through perceptions of vegetarians as being less masculine and the large number of masculine words associated with meat.

Of even greater significance than the common celebratory or relaxing weekend cultural practice of 'braai-ing', is the central role of meat in indigenous African beliefs and rituals (Oplan, 2014; Yisreal, 2013). In African traditions, the ritual of slaughtering livestock marks important events such as deaths, births and weddings and connecting the living to the ancestors (Oplan, 2014; Yisreal, 2013). Ritual slaughter defines peoples' collective cultural identity and provides individual identity recognition (Oplan, 2014; Yisreal, 2013). The vegetarian identity is of particular importance to study because most African people who adopt this identity weren't born into a family already practicing vegetarianism (Ruby, 2012). A person choosing to eat a vegetarian diet therefore goes against multiple norms and cultural practices in South African society (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013; Yisreal, 2013).

For many cultural systems meat, specifically red meat, is associated with masculinity, an identity which is reproduced through various aspects of society such as art and speech (Rogers, 2008). Rogers (2008) reviewed convenience food television advertisements, including Burger Kings "Manthem", Del Taco's "Feed the Beast" and Hummer's "Tofu" which appeared on American television between 2006 and 2007, and observed the link between meat and masculinity. The advertisements connected the eating of meat with "primitive" masculinities which linked to the historic concept of hunting and threats to hegemonic masculinity (Rogers, 2008). The traditional masculine picture of men is resistant to "threat" against the consumption of meat which are brought on by environmental organisations and animal rights groups (Rogers, 2008). Twigg (1979) highlights that meat symbolises strength and power because it was conceptualised as taking on the force of the animal and is therefore masculine whereas vegetables are viewed as more feminine (Roger, 2008; Twigg, 1979). This idea of meat and vegetables may also relate to the different ancestral roles men and women in a hunter gatherer community were assigned, men hunted for meat which was seen as a more skilful and essential task within the community (Rogers, 2008; Twigg, 1979).

Vegetarianism has a gendered aspects to it and there are significantly more women who are vegetarian then men (Ruby, 2012). More women may feel inclined to make the choice to become vegetarian as opposed to men because there is no masculine image on which to be judged (Ruby, 2012). More men than women endorsed the fact that humans are meant to eat meat according to Ruby (2012). Research done on men in the UK in 2003 indicates that men predominantly eat more meat and less fruit and vegetables than women (Ruby, 2012). Men also see the vegetarian identity as less socially desirable then women do (Ruby, 2012). Kwan and Roth (2011) found a clear relationship between vegetarianism and traditional gender role non-conformity. Women often linked their vegetarian diet to feminism and having a more

critical world view (Kwan & Roth, 2011). Looking at meat specifically in South African culture is unique because of its tradition involvement in contemporary practice (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013; Roger, 2008). In South Africa different practices around the preparation and consumption of meat highlights gender roles in society (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013; Rogers, 2008).

People may adopt a vegetarian way of eating for a variety of reasons (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). South Africa has a very diverse population, containing 52 million people, 11 official languages and diversity across race, religion, culture, traditions, memories, stories, family structure and ideas about life (Koenig & De Guchteneire, 2007). Globalisation through the opening of boarders between people and countries has led to increased interconnectedness and interdependence of people and countries across the world (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). This has resulted in the flow of ideas, increased cultural exchange and social and cultural changes which all influence behaviour and experience (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011).

2.3 Reasons for adopting a Vegetarian diet

This study focused on vegetarian people who are food secure and therefore have the freedom to make choices about what, how and when they eat. These people had different reasons or combinations of reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet such as, religion, health and political and ethical reasons which relate to larger issues of equality and development within South Africa and the world. Motives for adopting a vegetarian identity can multiply or decrease as they are often modified over time (Ruby, 2012).

2.3.1 Religious reasons

The world is becoming more aware of different types of practices, ideas and ways of doing things, however, this is especially important in South Africa because of the diversity of people and ways of living (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). Although many religions have mixed

ideas and practices on the consumption of meat, some advocate vegetarianism for spiritual, ethical and health reasons (Gregerson, 1994).

Certain religious beliefs describe vegetarianism as a pure state of being, advocating care for all living creatures (Gregerson, 1994). For example, in the Hindu religion there is a large population of vegetarians who practice this for spiritual reasons connected to ideas of purity and keeping their bodies free from pollution (Ruby, 2012). Seventh Day Adventists are a branch of Christianity and is increasing growing in membership, specifically in the developing world (Nutrition 411, 2014). Seventh Day Adventists encourage a vegetarian diet in promotion of health of the mind and body, as well as self-control (Nutrition 411, 2014). In the Hindu religion individuals, avoid eating beef because of their belief that the cow is sacred (Hooper, 2012). Not all Hindus are vegetarian however it is an encouraged practice because of its connection to non-violence and spirituality (Hooper, 2012).

Therefore, religion and ideas about life and living may affect why some individuals make the choice to become vegetarian. This is important in South Africa because of the diversity of religions as well as the world because people are becoming increasingly exposed to diverse ideas about life (Gregerson, 1994).

2.3.2 Health Reasons

People also become vegetarian because they believe it is a healthier way to live (Izmirli & Philllips, 2011). Health is a huge issue in South Africa as well as globally including hunger, poverty, access to clean water and the global burden of disease (Bhutta & Reddy, 2012). Nutrition related or derived health concerns are prevalent in South Africa for example the increase of obesity has led to an increased rate of diabetes across the population (Sainsbury, Schonfeldt & Van Heerden, 2011). Another prevalent disease in South Africa is Kwashiorkor

is a condition resulting from extreme malnutrition, which relates to unclean water, poor hygiene, poor diet and other diseases (Sainsbury et al., 2011).

Malnutrition is a huge health risk for children in South Africa, "malnutrition is a major underlying cause of death in 64 per cent of children under the age of five in South Africa" (Unicef, 2015, p. 1). This means that many children are not consuming enough food to get enough vitamins and minerals to support their development (Unicef, 2015). Getting the right nutrients is especially important for individuals living with HIV/AIDS which is becoming increasingly widespread in South Africa, eating a healthy diet can strengthen the immune system and slow the progression of the illness (Haddad & Gillespie, 2001). Heart Disease, which is connected to diet, is acknowledged as one of the number one causes of death worldwide (World Health Organisation, 2009).

Although meat and animal products provide certain essential nutrients, there are health risks to over consumption, such as increased rates of toxemia, nutritional deficiencies through lack of food diversity, uric acid accumulations and putrefaction in the intestines, arthritis, kidney disease, atherosclerosis, cancer, lower life expectancy, osteoporosis and heart disease (Smil, 2013). Protein derived from an animal source in the form of meat is the most potent form of protein, of which excessive consumption can result in various negative health effects, however, this is also the case if excessive plant protein is consumed (Smil, 2013). The vegetarian diet is generally considered a healthy way to eat as long as adequate nutrients are obtained (Smil, 2013).

The vegetarian diet tends to be high in fibre and low in fat and cholesterol which may result in lower risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, lower risk of obesity, decreased digestive problems and longer life expectance (Smil, 2013). The vegetarian diet is associated with unhealthy elements such as being deficient in vitamin B12, zinc and protein (Smil, 2013).

The burden of disease, including the financial and psychological cost to society, is felt both in South Africa and globally therefore vegetarianism may offer a seemingly healthy and cost effective alternative to mainstream ways of eating (Smil, 2013).

2.3.3 Political and Ethical reasons

Another set of reasons for not consuming meat are political or ethical reasons (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). South Africa has one of the best human rights bills in the world; however, animals do not have the same level of protection (Christie, 2010). Animal rights issues have also been discussed on a global stage, however, are often tied up in economic interests (Christie, 2010). Some vegetarians eat the way they do because they don't believe in killing animals in order to feed themselves when alternative food is available (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). Some vegetarians don't eat meat because they believe the conditions in which animals are kept make the consumption of meat unethical (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011).

The global meat market is highly profitable, therefore, the issue of animal rights is a threat to the profits of this market (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). According to Otto and Lawrence (2006) the beef industry is huge and generates large agricultural profits with over a million beef producing farms benefitting from the high demand. Otto and Lawrence (2006) highlight, "Gross receipts from sales of cattle and calves in 2000 totalled $40.76 billion accounting of 21% of all agricultural receipts making the beef sector the largest single agricultural enterprise." (p. 1). The sale and high demand of meat both directly and indirectly benefits the US economy (Otto & Lawrence, 2006).

In South Africa the meat industry is seen as profitable however infrastructure is being activated to ensure the meat industry grows to its full potential as an economic market in preparation for the growing middle class, "…the South African beef industry is ideally positioned to take advantage of Africa's increasing middle class expenditure and projected

population growth from one billion to two billion people by 2015…" (Phillips, 2013, p. 1). The production and market of meat is focused on supplying the economic elite with a product which cannot necessarily be afforded by lower economic classes (Christie, 2010).

Goldblatt (2014) stated that in South Africa the rise in economic growth has caused a rise in the consumption of meat. Meat is increasingly associated with economic elite. The economic elite control the contents of the preferential diet through what they choose to eat and thus what becomes a desirable diet across society, Gossard and York (2003) found that beef consumption rises as income does which is connected to the high price of beef. The amount of meat which is consumed in society is disproportionate to its nutritional value and therefore the high value placed on meat is symbolic (Gossard & York, 2003; Twigg, 1979). Twigg (1979) refers to this as the "dominant meat-consuming ideology" (p. 17). Food exists on a hierarchy in which red meat occupies the top position followed by other animal products whereas vegetables are at the bottom (Twigg, 1979). A larger support for animal rights will led to more people abstaining from consuming meat as well as challenging the norms in society not just in South Africa but globally (Gossard & York, 2003; Twigg, 1979).

Certain individuals eat a vegetarian diet because of environmental concerns (Izmirli & Phillips, 2011). Vegetarianism relates to environmental concerns in South Africa and the world because of the significant environmental impact of the meat industry including greenhouse gas, deforestation and the degradation of habitats (Firth, 2006; Tuomisto & Teixeira de Mattos, 2011). South Africa has one of the most extensive biodiversities in the world, however, this is threatened by the expansion of human living (Webb, 2013). It is estimate that around 69% of agricultural land in South Africa is used to feed and breed livestock (Webb, 2013).

Gossard and York (2003) highlight that food production and dietary trends have large consequences for the global environment and economy. Environmentally significant consumptions (ESC) is a term which connects consumption activities to their environmental impact (Gossard & York, 2003). Modern meat production threatens ecosystems, requires a large amount of natural resources such as land, water and energy to make food to feed the livestock around the world (Gossard & York, 2003). A person choosing to not consume meat is not participating in the negative environmental impact of the meat industry as well as making a political stand (Gossard & York, 2003).

The context in which a person is eating in a vegetarian way is important as well as their reason/s for choosing this diet because these reasons are directly influenced by larger political issues of inequality in South Africa and the world. Choosing to eat in a vegetarian way will affect and adapt the person's identity especially in the life stage of early adulthood (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003).

2.4 Identity development

2.4.1 Vegetarian identity

The vegetarian diet is defined by not consuming meat (including fish) in a person's diet for a variety of reasons; it may however still contain the consumption of other animal products such as dairy products and eggs (Fox & Ward, 2008). A vegan diet however, is defined by not consuming meat as well as any animal related products (Fox & Ward, 2008). Therefore veganism can be seen as a more extreme version of vegetarianism (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Hornsey and Jetten (2003) conducted a study which showed "authentic vegetarians'" contempt for "imposters" who are individuals who label themselves as vegetarian however occasionally still eat meat. These "imposters" are judged negatively because they threaten the valued vegetarian identity by breaking the norm of what this identity consists of (Hornsey &

Jetten, 2003). Willetts (1997) highlighted that vegetarian people who expressed that they consume meat, only did so on unpremeditated occasions to prevent social awkwardness, which strongly relates to family relationships. The vegetarian identity is associated with the recognition of rules specific to the identity which creates a reproduction of norms, therefore it is an identity operated by boundaries (Fox & Ward, 2008). A persons values, beliefs, attitudes and motivation are strongly attached to what they consume on a daily basis especially when I person chooses to eat in a vegetarian way (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Larsson, Ronnlund, Johansson and Dahlgren (2003) conducted a study on vegan youths and found identity to be connected to family members' level of encouragement of this lifestyle change as well as in certain cases, a desire to rebel against their parents' wishes. Vegans, especially females, expected more support from their mother figures then fathers and extended family (Larsson et al., 2003; Santos & Booth, 1996). The younger vegans also connected their dietary choices to fashion, music and other trends in pop-culture (Larsson et al., 2003; Santos & Booth, 1996).

Larson et al. (2003) identified three types of vegans: "conformed vegans", "organised vegans" and "individualistic vegans" (p. 66). "Conformed vegans" were individuals who had strong relationships or were surrounded by other vegetarians or vegans (Larson et al., 2003). "Organised vegans" had more ethical and political reasons for adopting the diet and were more involved in activism (Larson et al., 2003). Both these types of vegans were more influenced by their significant others, were more vocal about their veganism and were more superficial in their commitment to the diet compared to "individualistic vegans" (Larson et al., 2003). "Individualistic vegans" were seen as being more devoted to the diet in terms of making a conscious life decision and only communicated their ideas about their diet to interested parties (Larson et al., 2003).

Vegetarianism and veganism could be viewed on a continuum which expresses the degree to which a person avoids meat and/or animal products and thus reproduces the rules of vegetarianism or veganism (Larsson et al., 2003; Ruby, 2012). Vegetarianism is a complex identity which people bend to fit their own needs, this identity can be viewed in connection with Erikson's (1968) identity crisis as individuals in this research are in the stage of "identity versus role confusion" (Erikson, 1968; Hornsey & Jetten, 2003; Latouf & Dunn, 2010).

2.4.2 Erikson's identity crisis

This study will be focused on individuals who are in early adulthood thus between the ages of 18 and 26 (Whiteman, McHale & Crouter, 2011). According to Erikson's (1968) theory of development, people of this age group are emerging from the adolescent crisis of "identity versus role confusion" and entering into the early adulthood crisis of "intimacy versus isolation" (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003). These two stages can arguably be thought of as overlapping rather than two distinct stages, particularly for students who remain in some ways dependent rather than fully autonomous adults, enjoying an extended phase identity exploration but also engaged in the adult process of finding an appropriate intimate partner as well as finding a purpose/direction in life (Erikson (1968).

With regard to the stage of "identity versus role confusion", Mortimer (2012) states that, in adolescence, individuals create a fluid identity and dynamic selves because of the various opportunities this life stage presents. Erikson (1968) highlighted the crisis of "identity versus role confusion" as the person figuring out what is unique about themself (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). Erikson (1968) highlights that in this stage a sense of self must to be developed, some values may come from the person's parents, however, there is a struggle to

form one's own individual identity (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003; Pressley & McCormick, 2007).

According to Erikson (1968) in order to achieve a sense of one's own identity, trust needs to be established and as a result, there is an increase in the importance of friends and relational connections. Positive outcomes of this stage of development include: reliability and responsibility, knowledge of roles in society, increase in the initiating of goals and feelings of uniqueness of self (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003). Whereas negative outcomes include: being unable to identify certain roles in society, loneliness, lack of commitment to goals and difficulty forming and maintaining future intimate relationships (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Additionally, Erikson (1968) states that if a person fails to construct an identity, this will hinder the person from forming and maintaining strong relationships in the next stage of development, which is "intimacy versus isolation". Erikson (1968) describes the crisis of "intimacy versus isolation" as young people developing intimate relationships with others. Positive outcomes at this stage according to Erikson (1968) relate to the development and maintenance of relationships such as friendships and loving sexual relationships. Negative outcomes of this stage include: social isolation, distain for relationships and loneliness (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). These difficulties could be related to a failure to resolve the crisis of identity at the previous stage (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).

Erikson (1968) believed that genuine intimacy with another could only be achieved by two people who have already established a strong sense of identity, therefore advocating for the fixed order of the development of identity and then intimacy. Participants in this study are at the age where they are forming their personal identities including a vegetarian identity and they are developing crucial intimate relationships and friendships for adulthood. The crisis

and resolution of these crisis in the two stages presented are important when interpreting and understanding the choice to adopt the vegetarian diet and the unique effect this will have on the individuals relationships (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). The choice to eat in a vegetarian way can also be understood in terms of its biological, psychological and social components of the Bio-psycho-social model (Suls & Rothman, 2004).

2.4.3 The Bio-psycho-social model

The bio-psycho-social model will be more effective than Erikson's (1968) identity crisis theory in understanding a person's reality and experiences as framed in the particular context of South Africa (Suls & Rothman, 2004). However Erikson's (1968) theory is still useful in understanding the different crisis of identity and intimacy. The bio-psycho-social model applies a more holistic approach to study this topic in considering the bio-psycho-social context of the participants. The bio-psycho-social model is not without its own criticisms, Read (2005) states that the model claims integration however, is heavily weighted on the biological aspect of the model.

When looking at a person's experience of being a vegetarian, it is important to take into account the broader bio-psycho-social context (Suls & Rothman, 2004). The Bio-psycho-social model encompasses the idea that social, psychological and biological processes are all involved in a person's experience (Suls & Rothman, 2004). The biological component connects to vegetarianism because it is directly related to the body and nourishment (Dziegielewski, 2013). The biological/nourishment aspect of food and eating can be directly related to why a person chooses to cut meat out of their diet (Dziegielewski, 2013). Additionally, the psychological component includes aspects such as self-esteem and self-worth as well as their personal morals and ethics (Dziegielewski, 2013). In terms of the social

component the social environment of the individual as well as the vegetarian community and social media are important to consider (Dziegielewski, 2013). This approach must take into consideration the microenvironment factors and macro-environment factors and how these may work together to develop an individual's identity or experience (Suls & Rothman, 2004).

A person navigating their vegetarian identity needs to be considered in terms of their biological, psychological and social aspects as well as the microenvironment and macro-environment (Suls & Rothman, 2004). These components may link to the reasons for people to choose to adopt a vegetarian diet and are relevant in terms of South Africa and the world and could relate to gender roles and inequality (Dziegielewski, 2013).

The individual's unique micro-environment must be considered such as their everyday experiences related to where they live, attend university and work so these factors will have a huge impact on how they see the world (Suls & Rothman, 2004). Larger macro-environmental factors also need to be considered which includes which other influences from South Africa and the world should also be closely considered (Suls & Rothman, 2004). All these processes and environments are factors in shaping a person's reality and identity therefore the Bio-psycho-social model is effective in gaining a holistic picture of a person's experience in regard to vegetarianism. It is however important to look at other identity theories and how these might help to explain the participants experience including the identity salience, identity and power and relational identity (Rubel, 2004; Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

2.4.4 Identity salience

Serpe (1987) and Stryker (2002) highlight the idea of identity salience which can be seen in an "identity salience hierarchy", which describes the different levels of identity salience across different identities. If an identity has higher salience the person will seek opportunities

to act it out, for example, in social opportunities (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002). More salient identities are more often accessed by the individual (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002). When a person associates themselves with other people who share a particular identity, such as the vegetarian identity, the identity is more likely to be acted upon making the identity more salient (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002). Higher levels of commitment to this aspect of identity, will mean that an individual chooses to express their vegetarian identity in a variety of ways and platforms increasing the salience of this identity (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002).

Giddens (1991) highlights how self-identity is a reflexive process which is conducted through continuous work and adjustment. A person through their reflexive understanding will create, maintain and revise their identity (Giddens, 1991). This self-identity is based on continuity or the person "keeping a certain narrative going" (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). For this to take place the narrative needs to be integrated into events in the external world (Giddens, 1991). The reflexive process can be demonstrated in relation to eating and displayed through mechanisms with which participants maintain their vegetarianism and the social networks they buy~~,~~ into which directly or indirectly effect their dietary choices (Giddens, 1991). The reflexive process of Gidden's (1991) self-identity extends Erikson's (1968) notion of the identity crisis beyond adolescence and conceives of it as an ongoing process whereby individuals create their own narratives and moulding this narrative which results in the development of a role in society, increasingly setting goals as well as a feeling of uniqueness (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003).

2.4.5 Identity and power

Socially, identities work to inform a person of their individual place in social interactions and hierarchies of power, which then guides that person's behaviour in particular contexts (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stets & Serpe, 2013). A particular "identity script" denotes how

a person should behave, according to a particular known expectation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wood, 2009). According to Hall (2000) identities are constructed through difference; therefore comparing an identity to what it is not, this is referred to as the "constitutive outside" (p. 16).

Vegetarianism, the majority of the time, goes against the identity scripts set for individuals, going against this script which is particularly interesting (Stets & Serpe, 2013). This links vegetarianism as many individuals who adopt this identity don't come from family who are vegetarian.

2.4.6 Relational identity

Identity is seen as being in relation to other people in a particular person's life (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Stets and Serpe (2013) view identity as based on the persons understanding of themselves in a social situation, within society. Fay (1996), states that a person cannot be separate from another person, that person is a part of the other. Much of an individual's identity can be derived from their culture, Fay (1996) states, "you acquired from them not merely the contents of your psyche but also the capacities distinctive of your selfhood" (p. 40). A person derives their identity in the context of other people in their life (Fay, 1996). Rubel (2004), highlights that a person's identity is strongly established by to the context of their relationships with other people in their life. A person's identity is dependent on their relations with other people and can't be separated from them (Fay, 1996). Vegetarianism needs to be viewed in terms of the person's relationships with friends, family and their partner. Erikson (1968) highlights how an individual establishing a secure identity will have a positive impact on their development of important intimate relationships.

Identity is also connected to the roles a person assumes in their life (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Stets and Serpe (2013) understand identity in relation to roles people play, as members of

different groups. A single person belongs to multiple groups and therefore has multiple roles (Stets & Serpe, 2013). According to Fay (1996), the process of becoming a person means that that persons role is social defined. Hall (2000) states that "identification" is created by, "a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristic with another person or group, or with an ideal" (p. 16). Therefore identity can be thought of in terms of a person's relationship and the roles they assume in their life (Rubel, 2004; Stets & Serpe, 2013). These roles can also be broken down into biological, psychological and social components as in The Bio-psycho-social model.

2.5 Food and Relationships

2.5.1 Food and Social Connection

Food is a tool in the creation and maintenance of social relationships (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Food works to establish sameness and difference among people and therefore socially defines people in terms of cultures, ethnicities, classes, nationalities and genders (Fischler, 1988; Mintz & du Bois, 2002). A significant connection was found between cultural identity and food selection, in that people usually consume or choose to consume foods associated with their culture (Cantarero, Espeitx, Gil & Martin, 2013).

Food associated with a person's culture, "reinforce(s) their sense of belonging" (Cantarero et al., 2013, p. 881). Culture has an important influence over what a person eats. Meigs (1984) highlights that in Papua New Guinea, the Hua, protect males entering puberty from feminization through food. Females are not allowed to touch the young males food and any foods considered feminine cannot be consumed (Meigs, 1984). Food and the preparation of food is linked to ideals of masculinity in many ways (Meigs, 1984).

Food is also connected to status and social organisation for example Fischler (1988) states, "the way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organisation"

(p. 175). Additionally, Mintz and du Bois (2002) state that food can be understood as symbolic, to either question or reinforce hierarchical power. Food is a socio-cultural indicator of a person's place in society including their culture and how much they identify with this culture (Cantarero et al., 2013; Mintz & du Bois, 2002).

The food a person eats, according to Sobal, Bisogni, Devine and Jastran (2006), is influenced by ideals, personal factors, social factors and contexts. An individual's different social influences, their specific life stage as well as how these two factors develop and change over time result in that individual's personal food choice (Sobal et al., 2006). Sobal et al., (2006) highlighted, "dietary individualism, where people make different food choices from others, is based on the priority of personal factors over other influences" (p. 6). For example, the vegetarian diet. This means that a person may put their personal views or values above what is socially expected of them/what they were socialised into eating culturally (Sobal et al., 2006).

Bisogni, Connor, Devine and Sobal (2002) state that, over time, dietary choices foster self-images and are ongoing cues for reflection and self-evaluation. This means a person creates/ define their identity in connection with how they specifically consume food (Bisogni et al., 2002). These identity processes stabilise eating behaviours, establishing a feedback loop that is resistant to change (Bisogni et al., 2002). Lindeman and Sirelius (2001), state that higher socio-economic contexts food choice emerges from lifestyle decisions and is a form of self-expression to express personal and philosophical views. Therefore, making an alternative dietary choice such as excluding meat and other animal products from your diet is connected more to a person's values and personal views then to their culture (Lindeman & Sirelius, 2001; Sobal et al., 2006). As a result a person may decide not to consume meat for moral reasons related to the treatment of animals however that person's family may value the consumption of meat because of its link to tradition and take offense to someone from their

family refusing to participate in this meaningful practice (Cantarero et al., 2013). This relates to Erikson's (1968) idea of the struggle to form one's own identity which may be separate from that of their family.

2.5.2 Families

People often eat in groups and will therefore need to coordinate and negotiate their food choices with those of others (Sobal et al., 2006). A person adopting a vegetarian way of eating will have an effect on their relationships specifically their family relationships, friendships and romantic relationships because they are eating in a way, which goes against the norm (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009).

Many food related actions take place in the home within a family context. Skolnick and Skolnick (2009) highlight how families vary in many ways according to factors such as membership criteria, emotional environment, living arrangements, ideologies, social networks and economic situation. Definitions of what a family is are evolving and the nuclear family is only one version of a family structure (Parssinen, 2012). Families could comprise of single parent families, childless households, dual earning households, blended families formed after divorce, homosexual couples, extended families and many more combinations (Oswald, 2003). Families are constantly in flux and are influenced by the social, economic and cultural circumstances of a particular time and place (Langiellier, 2002; Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009).

A "family" could comprise of a group of people living together, for example students sharing accommodation or in residence (Oswald, 2003). Although a family consists of individuals it is a social unit which forms part of a larger social network (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009).

Families work to reproduce the wider society through the socialisation of children (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009). The family possess a collective identity as well as multiple unique other identities within the family unit (Langiellier, 2002).

The family is the setting for diverse identities and practices which coexist and interact with everyday experiences (Langiellier, 2002; Parssinen, 2012). Families work to reproduce societal norms through socialisation (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009). In constructing identities, families can be faced with competing or contradictory interests, as is the case when one member adopts a vegetarian identity (Langiellier, 2002; Parssinen, 2012).

Agate, Zabriskie, Agate and Poff (2009) state that family life includes leisure time which strengthens family relationships and a core leisure activity often is the preparation and consumption of meals. Although eating is a necessary task for survival it is also a leisure task which is embedded in cultural meaning (Agate et al., 2009). Therefore, dinner time could work to enhance family identity, feelings of closeness and bonding (Agate et al., 2009). Food is one of the earliest ways in which parents negotiate power relations with their children and enculturate them into social norms and practices (Roth, 2005).

Intergenerational influences transmit beliefs and resources to the next generation through socialization, ensuring that specific beliefs, traditions and values are passed on within a family (Agate et al., 2009). Valentine (1999) states that, consciously or unconsciously, different family members, through their actions, tell or show the family what the norms and expectations of members are. Behaviour in a family is also affected by positive and negative reinforcement factors, for example in relation to food (Valentine, 1999). Consequently, food is closely related to family relationships in a person's life (Agate et al., 2009; Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009).

It would be interesting to see how the family reacts and how a person negotiates their alternative choice to be vegetarian within a family unit (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009). Roth (2005) did a study on vegetarianism within families in Missouri USA and found that vegetarians were described by their families as unpatriotic and as being anti-family. Consequently, vegetarianism challenged food traditions and thus affected the person's belonging in the family (Roth, 2005). The families handled this choice in different ways; in some families it was labelled and treated as "just a phase" (Roth, 2005). In other families the vegetarian person was pressured, persuaded or tricked into eating meat (Roth, 2005). In some families, the logic and philosophical nature of the choice was debated and in other families there was anger at the perceived betrayal of family values (Roth, 2005). Some vegetarians stated that they consumed meat on special occasions with their family in order to avoid conflict (Roth, 2005). Therefore the decision to eat in a vegetarian way affects the family unit as well as family life, sense of belonging and levels of conflict (Roth, 2005).

2.5.3 Peer relationships

Peers become more influential during adolescence and therefore have a strong influence over a person in relation to motivation and behaviour (Gruber, 2008). Salvy, Elmo, Nitecki, Kluczynski and Roemmich (2011) did a study on peers and eating situations which showed that females are more likely to actively display healthy eating in front of female peers than male peers. McFerran, Dahl, Fitzsimons and Morales (2010) highlight that the extent to which a person wants to disassociate themselves with a particular group will reflect in their adjustment of food choice away from this particular group norm. The context of eating with peers or friends could lend itself to people eating in a certain way or making food choices which to display a message of complying with social norms (Mcferran et al., 2010).

This can be seen in that as group size increases people conform more and more to the group average (Mcferran et al., 2010). McFerran et al. (2010) found that people consume food taking into account the qualities of the people around them and what they select to eat, but the persons proportions of food are adjusted according to the weight of the other consumers. This is not the case if one of the consumers is overweight and the other is relatively thin (Mcferran et al., 2010). Therefore, peers indirectly offer control over people's food choices which are adjusted depending on the circumstance (Mcferran et al., 2010; Gruber, 2008; Salvy et al., 2011).

2.5.4 Romantic partners

Romantic partners often eat together, negotiating their food choices "symmetrically" or "asymmetrically" (Sobal et al., 2006). "Symmetrically" describes the two persons coming together in their food choice whereas "asymmetrically" describes one person adopting the food choice of the other (Sobal et al., 2006; Bove, Sobal & Rauschenbach, 2003). Markey, Gomel and Markey (2008) indicated that people rely on their social network especially their romantic partner to implement and maintain healthy eating. Romantic relationships have greater positive health effects for men because of the care-taking role that the women usually assume (Markey et al., 2008). Results of the study showed that partners do at least attempt to exert control over what their partner consumes (Markey et al., 2008).

In another study Markey and Markey (2011) showed that people who were significantly heavier than their partners were the most likely to express weight concerns. Therefore romantic partners are heavily influenced by each other when it comes to food choice (Markey et al., 2008). Young, Mizzau, Mai, Sirisegram and Wilson (2009) did a study which showed that a woman eating with a woman friend consumed more calories but when a man and a woman ate together, the woman consumed a dish of significantly lower calories. When eating

in a group situation the amount of calories consumed by a woman decreased with the increase in the number of men in the group while men's calories remained unaffected (Young et al., 2009). Eating situations show a significant gendered aspect (Young et al., 2009). A person adopting a vegetarian diet may have a challenging task of negotiating their choice to eat differently in their relationships, therefore how an individual maintains this particular identity is of interest (Jabs et al., 1998).

2.5.5 Maintenance of the Vegetarian identity

Jabs et al. (1998) did a study on the maintenance of the vegetarian diet and stated, "the maintenance of a vegetarian diet is supported by personal factors, social networks and environmental resources" (p. 375). The "personal factors" associated with maintenance included, "internal belief, skills and habits and physical feedback" (Jabs et al., 1998, p. 375). Social resources include, "…organized vegetarian groups, animal rights actions, environmental action, health groups and vegetarian friends" (Jabs et al., 1998, p. 375). "Environmental resources" included availability of vegetarian food at shops and restaurants also heavily influence the adoption and maintenance of a vegetarian diet (Jabs et al., 1997, p. 375).

Fox and Ward (2008) highlight that vegetarianism follows a certain trajectory in which initial reasons for adopting the diet are added to over time to include additional reasons for sustaining or further restricting their diet, for example adapting from a vegetarian way of eating to a more extreme, vegan way of eating. Therefore, trajectories of vegetarian diets indicate the persistence and continuity of the diet and identity which are determined by values (Jabs et al., 1998). Jab et al. (1998) highlights how health vegetarians gradually adopt the diet whereas ethical vegetarians adopt it in a sudden way to show strong support for their views; however both groups seem to get stricter and more intense over time. Vegetarianism shows

continuity and development over time, this development is strengthened by increased of practices and beliefs associated with the diet (Fox & Ward, 2008). There are multiple factors involved in the maintenance of the vegetarian diet over time (Fox & Ward, 2008; Jab et al., 1998).

Fox and Ward (2008) highlight how adopting a vegetarian way of eating has consequences for a person's identity and sense of self in terms of how their behaviours and beliefs adapt over time. Rozin, Markwith and Stoess (1997), discuss vegetarianism in relation to moralization. Moralization is the process, which works at an individual and cultural level involving the acquiring of moral qualities through an object, or action that were previously morally neutral (Rozin et al., 1997). Individuals who adopt a vegetarian way of eating have taken food which was previously not a political object and moralised it at the individual level (Rozin et al., 1997). Which may create tension in their relationships because of different individuals' views on this topic (Rozin et al., 1997).

According to Rozin et al., (1997), "We therefore suggest that values are more likely to promote cognitive consistency, and hence the accrual of multiple justifications for the relevant action or avoidance" (p.67). This relates to the fact that values associated with food are much more durable than preferences associated with food therefore an ethical vegetarian will more strongly avoid meat and in doing so create a moral associated with their practice which may have consequences for the person in their family relationships, friendships and romantic relationships (Rozin et al., 1997).

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review has created a base of information, through the discussion of various relevant concepts and topics, which is used in discussion of the results in Chapter four. The context of the participants in terms of both South African and international issues is

significant in assessing their experiences. Aspects such as the South African braai culture and indigenous African rituals and traditions involving meat are important to consider in the South Africa context of today. The state of South Africa in terms of socio-economic issues such as food security are discussed even though they don't related to the participants directly as they are students and therefore relatively privileged however they are present factors in the South African context.

Social media was discussed because it has affected the way individuals consume as a matter of personal preference which is particularly evident in the young adult life stage. An individual's personal food choices that may be made public on social media are related to both their immediate microenvironment as well as their macro-environment. Macro-environmental issues related to reasons for consuming a vegetarian diet and how this plays out on a global stage were addressed as they relate directly to why participants consume the way they do.

The literature also provided a frame in terms of identity theory which will be used to explain the results including Erikson's (1968) identity crisis which is useful in terms of explanations of identity and relationships and the bio-psycho-social model which can explain the participant's experiences in terms of different dimensions of different contexts. Other identity theories such as identity salience, identity and power as well as relational identity are also explored in relation to the vegetarian identity.

In addition the literature review also provided an overview of food and relationships including, family, peer and romantic relationships and how an individual adopting a vegetarian identity may affect these relationships. How an individual may maintain their vegetarian identity is explored to order to provide a literature framework from which to assess the data collected in this study. Relevant topics and theory have been explored to

provide literature and theoretical framework which will be used as a knowledge base to critically interpret the research results.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodological Approach

In order to explore the research aims in an in-depth way a qualitative research method was employed. It was important to capture the meaning of the participants in regard to how and why they adopted the vegetarian lifestyle as well as capture their relationship experiences through their own descriptions. This approach worked to provide a vast amount of in-depth information and data on each of the participants. Focusing on how people explained and give meaning to their experiences, and how they constructed their worlds (Merriam, 2009).

The interpetivist research perspective assumes a person's reality is socially constructed and that there can be many interpretations of the same event (Merriam, 2009). The study focused on gaining an understanding of young vegetarians' identities in connection to their relationships. In this study, the researcher was central to exploring the subject and assessing how participants made sense of reality, with the goal of capturing the participants' unique experiences (Klende, 2008). The qualitative research method was most effective in gathering the amount and type of information needed from each participant to answer the research question.

3.2 Participants

The criterion for participation in this study was that individuals had adopted vegetarianism for a minimum of six months, but there was no restriction on a maximum length of time and some participants had adopted this diet in childhood, even from birth. A minimum of six months was required because it shows commitment to a vegetarian way of eating and is long enough for the decision to have had an impact on their relationships. The participants were eleven vegetarian individuals between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. The sample size allowed in-depth data from each individual to be collected. People could participate regardless of different reasons for being vegetarian.

This was an appropriate sample because it offered rich data and understanding from young vegetarian individuals within a South African context. This study involved a non-probability purposive sampling method, because participants were required to have certain characteristics (Stangor, 2011). The study also involved convenience sampling, as most participants were students at the University of Witwatersrand. Potential participants were located in queues in a vegetarian restaurant on the University of Witwatersrand west campus and different societies such as: The Vegetarian Society of South Africa, The Wits Hindu Students and Seventh Day Adventists Student Movement. Additional participants were also sourced through existing participants to gain a larger and more diverse sample; therefore snowball sampling was also a technique employed.

3.2.1 Diversity

The participants which were sourced for this research were a diverse group in terms of gender, race and religion. This diversity was achieved in order to provide a more interesting participation group and access an array of different population groups in the diverse South African population. However this sample may not have necessarily represented the vegetarian

population in South Africa. Finding participants who were black vegetarians as well as finding male participants was particularly difficult whereas white female vegetarians were easier to locate. For this reason two black male vegans were included in the study in order to keep the participant group as diverse as possible. For the purposes of this study, veganism was defined as a more extreme form of vegetarianism and therefore, vegan participants were included. It is important to note that both the vegan individuals included in the project were black males, and were the only black males in the study. It may be that males adopting the diet take it to a more extreme application to more assertively show their views.

Most of the individuals in the sample were studying degrees in the Humanities faculty, this may have been a result of the researcher also being located in this particular faculty and the convenience sampling method being employed. The participants did represent a diversity of religions including: Hindu, Seventh Day Adventists and Christians as well as non-religious participants. Although the interviews in phase 1 of data collection were attended by all participants the focus group in phase 2 of data collection was however, only attended by white students which will have affected the results of the study.

3.3 Table 1: Demographics of research participants:

Participant	Age	Race	Gender	Vegetarian/vegan
Lizel	23	White	Female	Vegetarian
Kaylee	24	White	Female	Vegetarian
Shelly	23	White	Female	Vegetarian
Kai	23	Indian	Male	Vegetarian
Brian	22	Black	Male	Vegan
Dinah	21	Indian	Female	Vegetarian
Lauren	25	White	Female	Vegetarian

Samuel	23	White	Male	Vegetarian
Tsepho	26	Black	Male	Vegan
Thandeka	23	Black	Female	Vegetarian
Tristian	19	White	Male	Vegetarian

3.4 Table 2: Additional information about the research participants

Participant Pseudonym	Religion	Vegetarian family	Phase 1	Phase 2	
			Interview	Focus group	Interview
Lizel	Christian	No	X	X	
Kaylee	Christian	No	X		
Shelly	Non-religious	No	X	X	
Kai	Hindu	Yes	X		
Brian	Christian	No	X		
Dinah	Hindu	Yes	X		
Lauren	Christian	No	X	X	
Samuel	Christian	N	X	X	
Tsepho	Seventh Day Adventist	No	X		X
Thandeka	Seventh Day Adventist	No	X		X
Tristian	Non-religious	Yes	X	X	

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3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Phase One

Phase one of data collection involved the eleven participants taking part in a semi-structured interview. Potential participants were given a participant information sheet (See appendix A). If the person wished to participate, which time would be convenient for them was then asked. A time and venue was then set up for an interview. The interviews then took place. (For the interview consent and recording consent forms see appendices B, and for the interview schedule see appendix C). Both the interviews, in phase one and the focus group in phase two were conducted in English, as students of the University of Witwatersrand are proficient in the language. The interviews lasted just under an hour and focused on the participant's reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet and how this has affected their relationships, specifically their family, peer and romantic relationships. The method of semi-structured interviews provided a flexible method to probe vegetarianism using both open-ended and close-ended questions (Klende, 2008).

3.5.2 Phase Two

Phase two of data collection which consisted of a focus group with the same eleven participants interviewed in phase one was then completed. After the interviews were complete the researcher reviewed all participants' convenient times and chose an appropriate time for all participants to meet for the focus group. However this was extremely difficult and as a result not all participants were able to attend the focus group. A central venue was then booked which was at the University of Witwatersrand (For the focus group consent form and recording consent see appendix D and for the focus group schedule see appendix E). However, not all of the participants could attend the focus group in which case a second interview was conducted with some of the participants unable to attend the focus group.

The focus group lasted about an hour and a half and the additional interviews done in phase two with the individuals who couldn't attend the focus group lasted about half an hour each. The focus group was attended by five of the participants and a second interview was conducted with two of the participants who could not make the focus group time, using the focus group questions. The focus group was only attended by white participants, this may have been due to the researchers own demographics and involvement in the research. A more diverse group of students may have attended the focus group had the researcher been of different demographics or had the researcher been more awareness of these dynamics and how to negotiate them in within the research process. These extra interviews were done to ensure a diverse group of participants answered the focus group questions.

The focus group happened in a mealtime situation. Each participant was required to bring one vegetarian food taster to the focus group. The focus group began by sharing all the participants' food tasters. This created an environment similar to that of popular television show "Come dine with me", in which participants who don't know each other could come together to share food, usually with a common interest in food. The focus group began by sharing the six food tasters. This helped to connect the group and facilitate conversation around the vegetarian food.

In the focus group phase of data collection the sharing about the food started with the researcher who brought a Moroccan chickpea salad and then moved around the table to each participant who attended the focus group. The food which was brought to share at the focus group was: spinach muffins, red velvet cupcakes, vegan coffee tart, a vegan chickpea roasted butternut salad and a vegetable wrap. These delightful dishes highlighted how delicious, nutritious and creative vegetarian food can be, which it is often perceived to be the opposite. The focus on the sharing of vegetarian food at the beginning of the focus group highlighted the participants' interest in this way of life and passion for making delicious food. The

sharing of the common interest of being vegetarian recreated in the research situation, a small vegetarian "community", which was an important community in each of the participant's lives.

The researcher then asked questions which led to group discussion. Conducting a focus group with the same participants who were interviewed allowed a rich amount of data to be collected. The focus group questions focused more on the connection between vegetarianism and larger social and political issues in South Africa and the world.

The focus group was useful in exploring ideas and concepts with a number of different participants at the same time which worked to obtain in-depth information. The focus group environment also allowed participants reactions to the ideas and statements of other participants to be recorded as well as allowing the researcher to probe interesting or relevant topics and engage a range of opinions in a relatively short amount of time. The focus group allowed for group interaction, therefore, similarities and differences in the views of participants became apparent. However, focus group discussions yield more information from those participants who are more talkative, skewing the data analysed. In this particular study, a more significant imbalance in the data collected in this phase of the study emerged in that only white participants arrived for the focus group. This may have been due to black participants being less comfortable with the "come dine with me" format and/or due to the dynamic between the (white) researcher and the participants. Follow up interview were therefore included with a few black participants in an attempt to include their voices on the issues under focus in the second phase.

3.6 Data analysis

Data were analysed through thematic analysis. This method involves the identification and analysis of patterns in a data set (Braun & Clark, 2006; Guest & MacQueen, 2008). A theme

comprised of constant occurring ideas from the data, which related to the research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis allowed themes to be analysed in terms of frequency of occurrence therefore providing data to answer the research question (Guest & MacQueen, 2008).

The steps involved in thematic analysis were transcription and familiarisation with data; generating initial codes through reoccurring ideas and selecting the most dominant themes to represent the research (Braun & Clark, 2006; Guest & MacQueen, 2008). The next step included the reviewing of initial themes and the defining and naming of the most prominent themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The ideas in the data were constantly compared in order to highlight differences and similarities (Ezzy, 2002). These steps were completed for the data as a whole therefore including both phase one and phase two of data collection. Findings of the study were also viewed in accordance with previously conducted research (Ezzy, 2002). The results were written up in themes and integrated into a discussion with reference to previously conducted research and theoretical foundations (Ezzy, 2002).

3.7 Ethical considerations

The research proposal did receive ethical clearance from the University of Witwatersrand before data collection began ensuring ethics were taken into full consideration. A participant information sheet was given to all prospective participants (See Appendix A). In the participant information sheet individuals were invited to participate in the research and the nature of the research was explained in accessible language. This clarified to the prospective participant what exactly participation would entail. Participants were informed that everything said in the interview would remain confidential and that everything said in the focus group should remain confidential among the group, however, this cannot be guaranteed. This may have caused participants to omit information in the focus group

therefore affecting the quality of the data obtained. The focus group also offered a safe space with other individuals whom ate in the same way, often for similar reasons which may have made participants feel more comfortable in expressing their feelings then in the interview stage of data collection.

Participation in the research was voluntary and participants were informed that they could request to leave the interview and/or focus group at any time or after the interview and focus group, they could request that information pertaining to them be disregarded from the project. Participants were informed that there identity would be confidential in the final project through the use of pseudonyms. Participants could also refuse to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable answering. Participants were asked for permission for the interview and focus group to be recorded and informed that the recording would not be accessible to anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor (See Appendix B).

Participants were informed that if they would like to access the finished research project it would be available in the University library and on the internet and would therefore be widely accessible. However, no identifying information of the participants would be included in the final project. Anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms therefore nobody reading the report would be able to tell whom the participants were. There were no perceived benefits or dangers in taking part in the research and participants were not in any danger of being hurt in any way. Although this topic is not sensitive, in the unlikely event that emotional issues had come up, the participant would have been given information of available counselling services.

3.8 Reflexivity

At the start of the research I had recently become a vegetarian for health reasons. As a result, I am very interested in how vegetarians negotiate this identity in their lives. I have my own

experiences of how vegetarianism has affected my relationships. I chose to do research on this topic because I think it is interesting and relevant in today's world. I brought a vegetarian taster to the focus group, therefore; I facilitated the focus group and offered a limited contribution as a participant. This did set up a basis for rapport with participants but I understood that the reasons for my decision to become a vegetarian may be very different to that of other participants. My experiences may differ substantially to that of the participants and I needed to listen to their views. I was aware of this and didn't interpret findings solely through my own experience.

3.9 Conclusion

To meet the aims of this particular research project the qualitative research method was most useful and therefore employed. Participants were carefully searched for and selected according to their demographic traits in order to create a diverse and interesting participant group which representative of the population groups in South Africa. Data collection was done in two phases in order to provide a rich amount of data on each participant about their unique experiences and how they felt vegetarianism relates to larger social and political issues in South Africa and the world. Using food in phase 2 of data collection was employed to achieve a community among the vegetarian participants and unite the group in their interest in food. Ethical issues were taken into full consideration, although this topic was not of a sensitive nature. Reflexivity was also important to consider because of the researcher being involved in bring a food-taster to the focus group and being a vegetarian herself.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the data collected in the two phases of data collection. These themes were the most prominent ideas which consistently came up in the research. The themes are organised to display different issues at the levels of individual identity, and social context specific and global issues related to the vegetarian identity. The themes discussed are organised into the following clusters: ethics, health, and socio-political issues, such as vegetarianism's link to alternative identities, South African identity, race and class, masculinity and femininity as well as gender roles. Individual identity is also analysed in relation to the vegetarian community, family, friends and intimate partners.

4.2 Ethics

Many of the participants sited ethical reasons as instrumental to their choice to become vegetarian however, for other participants this was a secondary reason. For example, although health was her primary concern, ethical concerns became a secondary reason for Thandeka, she stated, *"…linking more towards the slaughtering of animals and, initially it was not the main reason but as I continued it started becoming a concern".*

Shelly also stated ethical reasons for eating vegetarian:

...we are supposed to be living off the earth not killing animals who are also living on the earth, they are equal to us, and I love nature and I love animals and I don't see why we should be eating them…

The majority of participants stated they ate in a vegetarian way because of ethical reasons related to not wanting to consume animals, environmental impact and objections to the way animals are kept and treated. In terms of not killing animals to consume, Kai and Dinah stated that they followed the Hindu religion which advocated not killing animals for food. Kai stated, *"Ja, I was born vegetarian because of my parents are vegetarian because of religion because we don't believe in killing animals to eat them as food"*. In relation to this Dinah stated, *"It's part of our culture, our religion but that all we like all vegetarian we just abstain from meat and stuff like that."* and *"…we just don't believe in killing animals for food and stuff like that..."*

These results are consistent with Gregerson (1994) who stated that some religions advocate vegetarianism for spiritual reasons related to a pure state of being and care for all living things. These practices and beliefs are specifically relevant in South Africa because of the diversity in the population (Koenig & De Guchteneire, 2007). Vegetarianism as a result of Hindu beliefs is an example of Larson's (2003) "conformed vegans" in which the person is surrounded by other like-minded vegetarian people.

Lauren stated, *"Well, I've never had red meat never because when I was younger we had a pet pig and I just didn't want to eat red meat because I love him"* and *"I love animals and I didn't want to eat them".*

Both Samuel and Lizel stated ethical reasons related to not killing animals as well as environmental reasons. Samuel stated:

I try live my life in a way that's non-harmful with anything I come into contact with …Very much into low impact living…I love animals so I love pigs and cows and I can't really eat them and I did the research on the environmental impact…

In this regard Lizel stated, *"…I always hated meat. Not the taste necessarily but I couldn't dissociate the meat from the animal so….contributing factor to global warming and um about all the injustices that go in and about all the antibiotics that go in…" and "…trying to make the world a better place and for trying to minimise my contribution to well animal suffering…"*

These reasons link to Izmirli and Phillips (2011) who highlighted that some vegetarians eat the way they do because they don't believe in killing animals in order to feed themselves when alternative food is available as well as other vegetarians not consuming meat because they believe the conditions in which animals are kept make the consumption of meat unethical. These results also connect to the significant impact of the meat industry on the environment including greenhouse gas, deforestation and the degradation of habitat according to Firth (2006) as well as Tuomisto and Teixeira de Mattos (2011).

The context in which a person is eating in a vegetarian way is important as well as their reason/s for choosing this diet because these reasons will relate to larger political issues of inequality in South Africa and the world. Choosing to eat in a vegetarian way will affect the person's identity especially in the life stage of early adulthood (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003). This is the life stage when a person identity for adulthood and future life is established therefore a person's morals become more important expression of who they are (Cardwel & Flanagan, 2003).

Both Brian and Tristian stated ethical reasons related to how animals are kept. Brian stated:

> *…it's not like I oppose people eating animals it's just that the way they are treated doesn't really justify you know. It doesn't justify keeping them this way. Like I know there are a lot of farms which keep like cattle in the size pen like this, you know, trying to prevent them from moving because if they move they will develop muscle and muscle isn't tender…They also pump a lot of hormones into, like, chicken.*

Brian therefore shows a strong support of the ethical treatment of animals however it is evident from his quote that there is also a health aspect to Brian's decision not to consume meat.

Additionally Tristian stated:

> *We just decided that killing animals is bad…Well I just don't agree with the way that animals are treated and kept in captivity in those cages and really awful living conditions, it's really no quality of life. They are basically bred to die for us to eat.*

Participants highlighted the ethical issue of animal rights and quality of life. Lauren and Lizel highlighted how they insisted their meat-eating partners only consume ethically obtained meat, this was also connected to environmental and health reasons. Lauren stated:

> *I will cook him fish and that's all, but we have to get it from Woolworths…because the other ones, if they use nets, which they do for a lot of them, other products, dolphins and sharks, can get stuck in the nets and then they die. And then also for the environment, when they catch with nets, they catch more than they need. So it's sustainable at Woolworths.*

In this regard Lizel stated, *"Even though he hasn't made the decision himself, but I told him only Woolworths' meat, because if he has to bring meat into our house one day"* and *"…there is so much crap in meat these days unless you buy it from Woolworths…"*

Brian also highlighted his dietary choice in connection with animal rights stating:

> *Um, but it has made me more sympathetic towards animals. Sometimes I'm like ooo not really sure, if I walk past the pet store and I see puppies and there are like thirteen of them in a small cage, like aaa I'm pretty sure I shouldn't be doing that for a profit motive.*

Brian also stated, *"…rules about human dignity but we don't translate it too animals. It's just not seen as something that is necessary, it's tough, it's really tough".*

Participants highlighted the lack of animal rights, this connects to Otto and Lawrence's (2006) literature that the production of meat is a business and therefore animals are treated as a commodity for making money in the most effective way. The beef industry is huge and is growing in South Africa specifically (Phillips, 2013). Animal rights policies and procedures might affect the profits of a very lucrative market (Phillips, 2013). The consumption of meat is mainly done by the economic elite who can afford it therefore meat takes on a status in society which is disproportionate to it nutritional value and therefore eating meat connects strongly to class (Goldblatt, 2014). Food exists on a hierarchy in which red meat is more revered, followed by other animal products whereas vegetables are at the bottom (Twigg, 1979). Larger support for animal rights will led to people abstaining from consuming meat as well as challenging the norms in society not just in South Africa but globally (Gossard & York, 2003; Twigg, 1979). Ethics are therefore strongly connected to participant's reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet in relation to animal rights and environmental concerns.

4.3 Health

Many of the participants stated that they adopted the vegetarian diet for its perceived health benefits. Tsepho and Thandeka, who are Seventh day Adventists stated that their religion advocated for vegetarianism for health reasons, although this health aspect is more related to

spirituality and purity rather than traditional health. According to Gregerson (1994) Seventh Day Adventists encourage a vegetarian diet in promotion of health of the mind and body as well as self-control (Nutrition 411, 2014). This links to Larson et al. (2003) definition of "conformed vegans" which are vegan individuals who have a strong relationship with or who are surrounded by other vegans.

In this regard Tsepho stated *"Yes, because at church they were always encouraging you know a healthier lifestyle and the benefits…"* and *"…the book was scary cause it is telling us ja it was sharing some interesting facts about meat and what it does to the human body and I couldn't look at meat in the same way…"*. In relation to this Thandeka stated:

> *Um, yes, mainly for health reasons, actually I think I got to a point where I started becoming a lot more concerned about all the things they were feeding animals actually…I started to make a decision for all those reasons, purposes which is something they advise a lot at church as well.*

Thandeka also highlighted, *"Yes, so I am Seventh Day Adventist and its part of our, our mission to promoting the health of, to a more healthier youth, longer life and ja"* and:

> *…try to eliminate anything that could do damage or harm to my body. I feel more spiritual exclaimed in a sense that I feel like I am creating more of an accommodative living space for the Holy Spirit to actually work within me.*

Thandeka and Tsepho highlighted there choice to eat in a vegetarian way as related to health reasons however these reasons were more related to spirituality and purity in relation to the teachings of their religion.

Shelly's primary reason was also health, she stated:

I decided to become a vegetarian because I used to do fitness competitions last year (2013) and if you do fitness competitions you need to get a lot of protein in …after my comp I just woke up one morning and said 'I am done with all this meat'.

In addition Shelly stated*, "I felt like I was sluggish, there was a health aspect to it*" and *"…now I am getting that all in my natural vitamins. So I don't have to take supplements now to benefit me".*

These health reasons are consistent with Izmirli and Phillips (2011) who stated that people sometimes become vegetarian because they believe it is a healthier way to live. Health is an important issue in today's society because of the wide-spread nature of health related diseases which have had a huge effect not just in South Africa but globally (Sainsbury et al., 2011; World Health Organisation, 2009). Health is also increasingly a concern of the middle class; this is evident through the surge of health related content on social media in recent years (Key et al., 1999).

Throughout the interviews and in the focus group it was clear that there were contrasting views on whether the vegetarian diet was in fact healthier than a traditional meat-eaters diet. Many of the participants stated their reasoning for eating in a vegetarian way was directly connected to health however other participants believed it in fact wasn't healthier than a traditional meat diet.

Lauren and Tristian didn't agree with the vegetarian diet being a healthier alternative to meat-eaters diets. Lauren stated, *"Um, for me, I think I was healthier when I used to eat white meat because I got a lot more protein…."* In addition Tristian highlighted, *"I don't think it's any more healthy or less healthy than being a meat eater depending on what you choose to eat…."* Whereas Lizel stated, *"…I think it's harder to be unhealthy as a vegetarian cause you can't fry as many things, so less oil…"*

Additionally Lizel highlighted, *"They also have fair trade like you know how we have the cancer stamp like, 'this is good for your heart'"*

There was a clear contrast in different of the views of the participants' on vegetarianism as being a healthier alternative to traditional diets. In confirmation of the vegetarian diet being healthier Smil (2013) states that the vegetarian diet has various health benefits including being lower in fat which confirms Lizel's view. The burden of disease is felt both in South Africa and globally therefore vegetarianism may offer a seemly healthy cost effective alternative to mainstream ways of eating, especially for individuals with HIV/AIDS (Smil, 2013). However, on the other side of the debate, the diet is also associated with unhealthy elements such as being deficient in vitamin B12, zinc and protein (Smil, 2013). There is evidence which suggests the vegetarian diet is both a healthier and unhealthier alternative to tradition meat diets, therefore the perception/view on this topic is greatly affected by the given individual.

4.4 Socio-political issues

The socio-political issues themes include: vegetarianism link to alternative identity, South African identity, Race and class, masculinity and femininity as well as gender roles. These themes all discuss the participants' experience of vegetarianism according to a specific social position or context and as relating to lager political issues.

4.4.1 Vegetarianism link to alternative identity

The socio-political issues and concepts which emerged from the data connected vegetarianism to other "alternative" identities and ways of being in the world which moved away from the traditional. "Alternative" identity is and identity which were described by the participants as being different from the norm. Alternative identities are identities which differ in idea and practice from mainstream/traditional/majority practices, therefore only a small

percentage of the population comply with or identify with this identity. For example most of the population is heterosexual however a small percentage of the population is homosexual therefore homosexuality is an alternative identity.

Vegetarianism as a mind-set was linked by the participants' to more *"open minded"* and less traditional way of thinking as well as a society which is *"questioning"* and constantly evaluating their way of life, therefore going against cultural hegemony as well as the "dominant meat-consuming ideology" (Gossard & York, 2003; Twigg, 1979).

Lauren highlighted:

> *People who are constantly questioning what is real, what is not real. What are the boundaries, um if things are, I think, if things are like religion is more and more young people are questioning it and I think it's that questioning society which allows for things like vegetarianism.*

In this regard Lizel stated:

> *I also think, it's like, people aren't as traditional anymore, because I mean it's the same. Ok, this is probably an assumption but in Alberton you probably if you said you were gay, all hell would break lose. But in Joburg it's different from Pretoria even, I think it's just that people are more open minded in general. I don't know if it's because it's a large city, or I don't know what it is*

Lizel added by stating, *"Like my grandmother who grew up in Cape Town, she is still very conservative and traditional, like she will tolerate other people's ideas…"*

More free thinking in relation to "alternative identities" links to the idea of cultural hegemony (Gossard & York, 2003). According to Gossard and York (2003) the consumption of meat is connected to the economic elite and is a symbol of socio-economic status therefore an

individual actively abstaining from eating meat is taking a stand against the power and privilege of meat.

Not consuming meat will lead to less consumption of animals and a larger support for animal rights as well as challenging the norms in society not just in South Africa but globally. Not consuming meat is connected to taking a stand against cultural hegemony and in support of alternative identities and ways of being in the world (Gossard & York, 2003; Twigg, 1979).

The idea of going against the traditional cultural hegemony is linked to issues such as gender roles, sexual orientation, racism and even dress by the participants. For example Samuel stated:

> *I think anything with a stringent culture is a problem because they have very set ideas and they are not used to expanding on them. So I think cultures who are used to being approached by something different, who are used to being able to adapt their thinking and adapt their traditions, I think they cope better than things that are different not just with vegetarians but like homosexuality and even dress.*

In addition Lizel stated, *"Whereas my family from Alberton are a bit racist, really obsessed with meat and a bit, women should be in the kitchen, you know, all those things"*. Lizel is referring to her Afrikaans family and a place which she perceives to be backwards in its thinking around alternative identity and gender roles. Tristian asserted, *"Europe is very accepting of vegetarianism and homosexuality…".* Lizel connected this issue to the South Africa constitution stating, *"we were the first country to actually implement, um, make it punishable by law to discriminate against sexuality, sex. The first country in the world, but it doesn't mean we are tolerant…"*

In connection with these results Kwan and Roth (2011) found a clear relationship between vegetarianism and gender non-conformity. Women often linked their vegetarian diet to

feminism and having more of a critical world view in terms of traditional gender roles (Kwan & Roth, 2011). This idea is consistent with the results which appear here.

These results also confirm the idea of identity scripts because vegetarianism goes against the norm and therefore often against the individuals' expected identity script, however this is not always the case (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stets & Serpe, 2013). The concept of "identity script" states that individuals learn what their particular role should be, in a world dominated by the meat-eating diet eating a vegetarian diet is often going against the role that was prescribed to the person (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Other alternative identities such as homosexuality are additional examples of going against a given identity script and therefore relate to vegetarianism in terms of socio-political ideology (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stets & Serpe, 2013).

4.4.2 South African identity

The South African identity is very strongly associated with meat's inclusion in rituals and celebrations. This link was highlighted by the participants, for example Lizel stated:

> *…here I am scared to tell people because people are always so traditional. Like my family are also all Afrikaans so it's like meat and how it measures your masculinity or they can't understand why you want to help about global warming.*

Meat was seen as intertwined with all aspects of South African society for example when Kai was asked if he has ever eaten meat he stated, *"…when I was smaller at my one friends birthday party I think they were we were having a braai and I just ate a hot dog. I didn't really know what it was. I think it was in primary school.".* In addition, Kai also stated, *"…restaurants have vegetarian food but it's always such a small section…"*

In this regard Tsepho stated:

> *I know there was a sense by where earlier during the year whereby they found out the meat that is being eaten is, apparently whereby it's not from cows but from other animal species. But even then it was supposed to be, at least people were supposed to be made aware, at least that there are other forms of like lifestyle to avoid eating you know wild animal product. But you it never came through.*

Tsepho is referring to the meat scandal in which horse-meat was labelled and sold as containing only beef, "That does not mean to say that these horses pose a risk for the consumer but they should never have found their way on to diners' plates," (Fin24, 2013, p. 1). The results of the scandal were that labelling and legislation around food labels were enforced more harshly however there was no discussion in the media about which animals it is acceptable to consume and why or a discussion of alternatives such as not consuming meat at all (Fin24, 2013)

Thandeka highlighted:

> *…the other day I was looking at the top ten dishes in South Africa and it was meat and chicken feet and something something and then there was not, not a dish where meat was not involved…we have heritage day and that's like just braai day and we have a lot of braai environments…*

Heritage day is a national public holiday occurring on the 24th of September in South Africa (Oplan, 2014). Heritage day is significant in that it encourages South Africans to celebrate their diversity across beliefs and traditions (Oplan, 2014). Heritage day is also referred to as "National Braai Day" on which all South Africans are encouraged to celebrate their heritage with family and friends with a braai therefore directly connecting South African heritage to the consumption of meat, something vegetarians choose not to take part in (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013).

One role of food in popular contemporary culture is through the construction of the "braai" as a defining contemporary South African practice (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013). This practice is no longer the preserve only of Afrikaners and is in fact one of the few 'cultural' practices that is shared among all cultural and racial groups in South Africa (Oplan, 2014).

While most participants connected meat and the South African identity in a general sense, two of the black participants also connected it specifically to race and African culture. In African tradition the cultural practice and the role of meat is essential to indigenous belief and rituals (Oplan, 2014; Yisreal, 2013). The ritual of slaughtering livestock marks important events such as deaths, births and weddings and connecting the living to the ancestors (Oplan, 2014; Yisreal, 2013).

For example Thandeka stated:

> *...within the black culture when you come with the whole notion of, "no I'm vegetarian" the first thing is "you crazy", "how can you not have meat on your plate?" because it makes no sense to have food without meat. And then I have realised that in other cultures, as well. I have found that they have more vegetarians in other races than within the black race.*

Additionally Thandeka also stated*, "...from back home, looking at the fact that there is a huge rural area as well I've realised that the less knowledgeable they are about certain thing the less likely they are to want to try something"* and *"Um that was the biggest challenge in the beginning and now what I used to do when I knew we were actually going to lobola where there is a huge consumption of meat…".*

"Lobola" is a Zulu word which translates into "bride price" and is a customary ritual in which a man pays his fiancée's family for her marriage to him (New24, 2013; Oplan, 2014). The bribes family, usually the male relatives decide what is price will be and is traditionally in the

form of cash and live cows (Oplan, 2014). The ritual represents the connection or emerging of the two families, this exchange is customarily done with cattle, historically a mark of wealth (News24, 2013; Oplan, 2014).

Tsepho highlighted, *"Some are intimidated by that coming from a black culture if you don't accept, if someone's food, it sends a negative thing towards them…" and* "*My friends think I'm crazy, my friends think that I am not Zulu enough, because Zulus consume a lot of meat…"*

Tsepho's experiences show just how important the consumption of meat is in African culture and how not taking part in this part of the culture can result in exclusion by other members (Oplam, 2014; Yisreal, 20130.

By contrast, the vegetarian identity was linked with the ideals of conserving South Africa's rich biodiversity which is in stark contrast to consuming animals and the environmental impact of meat consumption. Vegetarianism relates to environmental concerns in South Africa and the world because of the significant environmental impact of the meat industry including greenhouse gas, deforestation and the degradation of habitats (Firth, 2006; Tuomisto & Teixeira de Mattos, 2011).

The contrast shows the contradiction in the South African identity and lifestyle between the consumption and preservation of animals. In this study participants weren't involved in meat consumption, a typical South African activity, however, were very connected to the preservation of South Africa's wildlife and biodiversity. The South African identity although strongly linked with the preparation and consumption of meat, is also connected to the pride of its wildlife and rich biodiversity. This highlights the paradox of these two competing conceptualisations of what it means to be South African as well as the national imagine of South Africa.

South Africa is one of countries with the most extensive biodiversity in the world however this is threatened by the expansion of human living (Webb, 2013). It is estimated that around 69% of agricultural land in South Africa is used to feed livestock (Webb, 2013). By a person not consuming meat they are reducing demand and therefore making a stand in terms of the environmental effects of meat production (Firth, 2006; Tuomisto & Teixeira de Mattos, 2011).

Participants connected with conservation of both nature and wildlife aspect of the South African identity, Samuel stated, *"As a country we are doing a lot especially conservation…"*. Lizel highlighted *"and we have awards for like green architecture…"*. In additional Samuel highlighted, *"Onderspoort has dna tagging rhinos"* and:

> *I just think about it, there is a big movement towards a lot of ideals that come from vegetarianism and veganism, like boycotting circuses and um buying ethically and buying places like, don't tell me Woolworths is not great I don't want to hear it. So like buying from Woolworths buying free range there is a movement towards it.*

This comment in support of *Woolworths* is in contrast to the boycotting of Woolworths which occurred towards the end of 2014 (Fisher, 2014). A group called "Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA)" did flash protests outside *Woolworths* stores in protest of the company's support of the Israeli state under which Palestinian people are suffering (Fisher, 2014, p. 1). Therefore the ethical nature of this company has in fact been in question (Fisher, 2014).

These results are linked with environmental reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet and are therefore in line with Gossard and York (2003) who highlight that food production and dietary trends have large consequences for the global environment and economy. The Environmentally significant consumptions (ESC) is a term which connects consumption

activities to their environmental impact (Gossard & York, 2003). An individual choosing to not consume meat is actively reducing their contribution to environmental damage connected to the production of meat industry as well as making a political stand (Gossard & York, 2003).

Throughout the research it was clear the South Africa identity was strongly associated with the consumption of meat, however, the participants connected much more strongly with the conservation aspect of the South African identity in terms preservation of wildlife and biodiversity.

4.4.3 Race and Class

In terms of race and class, participants related the adoption of the vegetarian diet to people of difference races and social classes. For example when asked if she thought vegetarianism was related to culture in any way, Thandeka stated, *"I don't think it related to culture. I think being vegan, how I see it, I think it's western. In the African or black culture we don't have that…."* In this regard Tsehpo stated, *"I think from the white denomination, those people are exposed. Or you middle class…"*

In addition, Lauren highlighted, *"…I think it's a lot more common for, um like the educated white people to be vegetarian. I don't think it's part of the African culture …."* Lauren also stated:

> *..I think if you look at a big portion of our population they have got poor and they have labour intensive jobs. So would they go get a sandwich and cheese bread and cheese or go get something some sort of polony something with some sort of protein, even if its rubbish. Um just so they can get through the day…*

However this comment was made by a white student and may not represent an accurate picture of food in poorer communities. In the townships of South Africa the word

“cheesekids” is a tongue-in-cheek reference to children from more wealthy families who could afford to have cheese on their sandwiches (Media Club South Africa, 2014).

Both black and white participants used to concept and practices around vegetarianism to highlight issues of class as well as race. These results connect to the already discussed prominent feature of meat in African culture in terms of belief and ritual as discussed by Oplan (2014) and Yisreal (2013). The vegetarian identity is of particular importance to study because most African people who adopt this identity weren’t born into a family already practicing vegetarianism (Ruby, 2012).

Vegetarianism is a cheaper diet because of the high price of meat and therefore is used to highlight class especially in South Africa specifically because of the high rate of income inequality, high levels of unemployment high levels of absolute poverty and high levels of food insecurity (Altman et al., 2009; South African government News Agency, 2014).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1996) defines food security in terms of physical and economic factors: the availability of sufficient food, having the resources to obtain food and an adequate knowledge of food. Timmer (2012) highlights how food security is difficult to achieve with factors such as food price fluctuation, which evokes a hostile responses from consumers (Timmer, 2012). South Africa has experienced many people moving from rural to urban areas for better employment and educational opportunities (Van der Merwe, 2011). This has resulted in a lack of space in urban areas and therefore problems with access to food (Van der Merwe, 2011).

A study found that two thirds of students at the University of the Free State went hungry during the academic year (University of the Free State, 2013). Therefore vegetarianism is dependent on social class and having enough financial support to make these kinds of food choices however it is a cheaper alternative to tradition meat-eaters diets.

4.4.5 Gender roles

The results relieved traditional gender roles and gender bias in terms of cooking and shopping. Most of the female participants reported shopping and cooking for themselves. For example, Shelly shopped for and cooked for herself, *"I shop for it because I live by myself".* Kaylee shopped for and cooked for herself, *"Well, I don't live at home anymore so generally it's me"* and Lizel stated, *"I cook for myself…"* Additionally Thandeka when asked who shops for the food she eats she replied "*I do"* and when asked who cooks the food she eats she replied *"Um, I live, I left self-catering res…so ja I cook for myself."*

Participants the majority of which were male, also mentioned these tasks being done by their mothers or other female figures, for example Tristian when asked who shops for the food he eats replied*, "My, um, mom."* When asked who cooks the food he eats, he replied, *"Um, my mom pretty much and my sister…"* and in terms of work food he stated, *"If my mom packs for me…."* In terms of shopping Dinah stated, *"My mom mostly and we just tag along but she mostly shops*" and in terms of cooking, *"My mom, my sister, sometime I do but she [her mother] does most of the cooking".*

Other participants stated that their shopping and cooking was more gender shared however the majority of these tasks were done by a woman. Lauren stated, *"Um, the special vegetarian stuff I shop for, but the normal groceries that me and my boyfriend both eat we will do".* In terms of cooking Lauren stated, *"I will cook him [her boyfriend] fish and that's all…"* Samuel highlighted, *"Um, my mom and I go shopping once a week…"* and in terms of cooking, *"We take it in turns…."* In addition Brian stated that with shopping, *"I usually do and my mom helps out…"* and cooking "…*I guess my mom mostly cooks*…" Brian

highlighted, *"… he [his father] is like one day what are you going to do one day when you have a wife and how is she going to cook for you…"*

In terms of shopping Tsepho stated that this task was done by, *"Me and my vegetarian friend"* and cooking, *"Before I met my friend,,. I used to do most of the cooking myself. But now when I met my friend, she does most of the cooking, ja"*. Finally Kai stated, *"I shop for myself because I live by myself so I have to do everything myself"* and in terms of cooking *"Ja, um, but like sometimes like when I come up from home I'll bring food from home [cooked by his mother]."* Kai also stated, *"Ja, she [his girlfriend] cooks lots of vegetarian for me, she cooks like pasta and soya curry and um, some baked bean stuff and mushroom stuff."*

These participant's comments show a compromise and acceptance for the meat diet despite their strong views against it which is very interesting and highlights the importance of relationships over dietary choices.

The results show that shopping and cooking are still very much done by females. These results were not consistent with the previous theme of *vegetarianism link to alternative identity* in terms of vegetarianism being a stand against traditional gender roles. Results were also not consistent with Kwan and Roth (2011) who found a clear relationship between vegetarianism and gender non-conformity. Women often linked their vegetarian diet to feminism and having more of a critical world view (Kwan & Roth, 2011). These participants despite having the critical world view didn't translate into practice (Kwan & Roth, 2011). The resilience of gender roles in connected to South Africa in terms of contemporary practice and highlights gender roles in society (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013; Rogers, 2008). The practices associated with eating such as shopping and cooking which are still gendered according to these results.

In terms of the Bio-psycho-social model, both the person's microenvironment, such as development and socio-cultural factors, and macro-environment, such as the wider community, are influential factors in a person's experience must be considered in this approach (Suls & Rothman, 2004). In this case both the participants' microenvironment and macro-environments advocate for traditional gender roles (Suls & Rothman, 2004). Although they might be exposed to environments such as university and the vegetarian community which challenge these traditional beliefs and results show that participants do challenge these beliefs (Suls & Rothman, 2004). However, these non-traditional beliefs haven't translated into practice (Dziegielewski, 2013).

4.4.4 Masculinity and Femininity

Most participants agreed that actual practice and decision to become vegetarian should not be connected to gender however acknowledged that they often are connected by society. Therefore meat was acknowledged as associated with masculinity.

Shelly stated, *"I don't know why female male comes into it"* and Tristian agreed, *"As I say for me it was easy, no one really cared"*. In addition, Lizel highlighted, *"From a personal choice I don't think it matters"* and *"…it's like do you love animals, like do women love animals more than men, I don't think so."*. Finally, Tsepho stated, *"I don't think its gender specific, anyone can be…for me I don't think it connects."*

These results were inconsistent with literature, for example Ruby (2012) stated that more women are vegetarian then men, less women than men endorse the statement that humans are meant to eat meat and men eat more meat then women. In the television and advertising industry it is also evident according to Rogers (2008) reviewed convenience food television advertisements the link between meat and masculinity is stronger than the link between meat and femininity. However the vegetarian group of participants were speaking from their point

of view as vegetarians within their group and this view may be different as referred to from a meat-eating population.

One participant who disagreed with the group stating that there was a gender aspect to a vegetarian diet was Thandeka who stated, *"I think the typical vegetarian person in South Africa is female…"* In addition, Thandeka stated:

> *Funnily enough, I have come across more females who are vegetarian then males. I think we are genuinely health conscious and body conscious than males usually are. So I think we are more prone to want to be curious to things of diet than guys…*

This also connected to Thandeka's reasons for adopting the vegetarian diet which were health related. The vegetarian diet tends to be high in fibre and low in fat and cholesterol which may result in lower BMI measurement as well as lower risk of obesity (Smil, 2013). Thandeka's comment also displays a gendered expectation of the female body and how individuals have been socialised to have certain expectation of what is considered beautiful/acceptable in terms of the appearance of the female body (Britton, 2012). This expectation while also enforced onto male appearance is not as strongly conveyed as the female expectation (Britton, 2012).

Although it was predominately not connected to masculinity or gender by participants in terms of their own choices it was seen to be associated with masculinity by people outside the vegetarian community for example, Lauren stated, *"I think also meat is associated like being masculine so a man who doesn't eat meat people might. I mean I think it's completely false, but they might have like, he is not a real man"*

These findings are consistent with Ruby and Heine (2011) who highlight that the strong connection between meat and masculinity which is evident through perceptions of vegetarians as being less masculine and the large amount of masculine words associated with

meat. Twigg (1979) highlights that meat symbolises strength and power because it is seen as taking on the force of the animal and is therefore masculine whereas vegetables as inferior to meat.

In line with these results Brian stated, *"…like my dad says it, like you know so, do you think that a lion feels bad when he kills a buck…"* and *"…they have always thought I was strange like aaa why don't you eat meat there are a lot of like masculine things like contained with boxing so they are like if you're a sissy…"*. When asked how he thinks people perceive vegetarians Samuel replied, *"Soft like almost wippie people…"*

Lizel stated, *"…when he [her brother] was vegetarian they were a bit more resistant…"* and *"…exactly what people would tell him like what are you gay…"*

In addition Lizel highlighted:

> *Maybe if the female and a male and both of them are considering what the consequences would be. Maybe that way a male might feel like my friends are going to kill me, whereas I felt like my friends will be fine*

Finally, Lauren stated, *"I think socially it's more acceptable for a woman to be seen as compassionate…"*

This links with the idea that men also see the vegetarian identity as less socially desirable (Ruby, 2012). It is evident that there was a gendered aspect to being vegetarian which strongly connects to masculinity as perceived by the participant.

It is important to consider that the way the question of gender was phrased to the participants during data collection as well as the interpretation of data by the researcher may have resulted in the contradictory results which offered in response to the topic of gender and its relationship with vegetarianism.

4.5 Vegetarian community

The vegetarian community was a prevalent concept throughout data collection and was physically created through the use of food in the focus group. This is confirmed by Fischler, (1988) who stated that food works to establish sameness and difference, in this case vegetarianism food was used to establish a connection between individuals eating this way. The vegetarian community was established in social media contexts as well as religious groups and the influence of this community was referred to by all participants (Fischler, 1988).

Kai and Dinah were both part of families who were vegetarian for religious reasons. Kai is Hindu and was brought up in a family who was vegetarian, *"Ja, I've been vegetarian since I was born and so have my parents and my sister and also my grandparents".* When questioned about meat at a special occasion Kai responded, *"Well, it's usually with my family so it's usually all vegetarian, so that's easy"*. Dinah is also Hindu and was brought up in a family who was vegetarian, *"I was born vegetarian, so my father's family is all vegetarian"*. For Dinah this connected to where she lived, which accommodated the vegetarian community, *"Well I live in Lens, so Lenasia, so there are a lot of Indian shops that are there that we know are vegetarian…".* For these participants the vegetarian community was very close to them, contained in their family and religious communities, which made the maintenance of the diet easier because to their access to support in the form of like-minded people. In confirmation of these results Canterero et al. (2013) stated that there was a significant association between cultural identity and food selection. The selection of food works to "reinforce their sense of belonging" (Cantarero et al., 2013).

Both Kai and Dinah highlighted the influence of meat-eaters knowing other vegetarians and as a result being more comfortable with the diet. Kai stated in a braai situation with friends the vegetarian community was present and helped, *"Well they are really chilled because one or two of my friends are also vegetarian so we just share it…"* and *"They are fine with it because most of my friends are used to it because they also know other friends who are vegetarian…".* Dinah stated when talking about a braai, *"No cause like usually my friend there is someone else that is vegetarian so we usually like cater for ourselves together, it's not difficult"*

Tristian is also part of a family in which the majority of family members are vegetarian:

> *I live with my two parents, um, they are married. Um, I've got two sisters, the one is thirteen years old and the other one is 21 years old, so I'm in the middle there. We all still live at home. In this household everyone is vegetarian except for my father*

This helped because his mother did the household shopping, *"Yes, yes, she [his mother] is vegetarian so no complications there…"* For Tristian special occasions were also less challenging, he stated, *"Um, Christmas yes well in terms of food well my sister has been vegetarian pretty much her whole life so there have always been vegetarian options".*

Tsepho and Thandeka are both vegetarians for religious reasons however don't have vegetarian families support, Thandeka highlighted the religious community as being more important than Tsepho did. Thandeka's vegetarian community was also her religious community, *"…I feel more spiritual exclaimed in a sense that I feel like I am creating more of an accommodative living space for the holy spirit to actually work within me.*" and *"Um the majority of my friends are Adventist it didn't like, ja go for it".* Tsepho shops with a vegetarian friend*, "I met my friend I used to do most of the cooking myself but now when I*

met my friend she does most of the cooking, ja". Therefore the vegetarian community helped participants maintain their food habits.

Tsepho's experience was similar to that of Lizel, Samuel and Shelly. Lizel, Samuel and Shelly whose immediate families were not vegetarian and were not themselves vegetarian for religious reasons highlighted vegetarian friends as important. Lizel, when asked who she eats with at university stated, *"Sasha my friend, Sasha, because she is vegetarian now as well"*. When talking about friends she stated:

> *Well luckily I was in a friend group of like five girls and two of them were already vegetarian. So and because it's so common in New Zealand people don't think it's weird at all. And then I moved back to South Africa and I didn't really have any friends and then my one friend ended up being vegetarian…*

Samuel highlighted*, "…I met Catherine one of my closest friends and she is very vegetarian and I started eating vegetarian around her and my riding instructor we were both at the same stage at the same time we discussed it a lot…".* In addition Samuel stated "…*his [brother] fiancé is vegetarian also…"* and *"um, like, Christmas I'm lucky in that there is more than one vegetarian in our family…"* Shelly highlighted, "*Well, my one friend started becoming vegetarian and she told me how much healthier she was feeling…."*

Participants may have been actively seeking out friendships with individuals who are also vegetarian, this connects to Fitzsimons and Morales (2010) finding that highlight that the extent to which a person does not want to emulate as a member of a certain group will reflect in their adjustment of food choice away from this particular group. In a context such as a friendship group members may eat a certain way which works to convey a message of complying with social norms (Mcferran et al., 2010). Having a vegetarian friend would make this experience less removed and more normal and consequently less challenging (Mcferran

et al., 2010). This also relates to Erikson's (1968) stage of "intimacy versus isolation" in the stage of early adulthood friendships become more important (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).

Brian and Lauren both expressed knowing very few people who were vegetarian, however, Lauren expressed this as a difficulty whereas Brian didn't. For example Lauren highlighted, *"Um, it was quite difficult because a lot of restaurants don't cater or it's quite limited, your options and also I don't know anyone else who is vegetarian so that was quite difficult."* In addition Lauren stated, *"I always felt that no one else was thinking like that so it was quite difficult."* additionally *"…when I meet other vegetarians I'm like instantly I really like them even before I know them so it makes me feel like well its creates this sense of community in a weird way".*

Brian didn't express the same longing for like-minded people as Lauren did, however, they both expressed searching for vegetarian information/support on the internet in the form of a virtual vegetarian community. Brian *"…especially as an athlete you need to make sure you are getting the right type of nutrients and all that stuff so I spend a lot of time on the internet…"* and *"Um, like websites, like, live strong like vegan directory um what the other one called like vegan health 24 I think or whatever it is like Dr Oz they all give you recipes…".* In terms of media Lauren stated, *"I think I started off with the animal thing you know PETA ….found a South African company called "Leaping Bunny" so they have a little logo of the products if they are not tested on animals".* Both participants engaged with a vegetarian community online as they didn't have access to a physically present vegetarian community.

Jab et al. (1998) highlighted that "social networks" are important in helping a vegetarian individual maintain their vegetarian identity. These social resources include "…organised

vegetarian groups, animal rights actions, environmental action, health groups and vegetarian friends" (Jabs et al., 1998, p. 375).

In terms of accessing a vegetarian community through social and online media Shelly stated, *"Um, I researched on google and also I spoke to other vegetarians and found out how they prepped meals and also on Instagram you can follow pages and stuff".* In addition, Shelly stated she also used social media:

> *Like, normally, I'll make like, oats and put chia seeds and bananas and strawberries and I like to make my food look pretty and then I Instagram them. And then I'll hashtag vegetarian and hashtag all these things eat and being healthy and then people can obviously tap onto those hashtags and find everything that's been tagged under that link. And you find more followers and get more connected. That's really helped me, I didn't have the back up from my family but I had the back up from social media which sounds weird but there are other people out there its very comforting and motivating.*

Technology has opened up a whole new way of sharing food and accessing individuals, who may be unable to access otherwise, who are part of a different sort of vegetarian community made possible by technology (Holmberg, 2014). These communities involves information directly or indirectly relating to vegetarian food (Holmberg, 2014). Shelly uses social media to display her food as being part of her identity and personal choice and connect with other vegetarians which reflects the concept of "food as fashion" according to Levine, (2013).

The vegetarian community was evident throughout the results including participants' vegetarian family members, religious communities, friends and media connections.

4.6 Relationships

The theme of relationships deals with patterns of avoiding conflict, intergenerational relationships, and tolerance. These themes showed how the participants negotiated their vegetarianism within the context of their relationships and the common behaviours displayed in connection with their relationships.

4.6.2 Avoidance

Many participants described avoidance techniques in dealing with food and relationships, including activities around food. The micro-environment would include where a person lives, attends university and/or works and the macro-environment which includes other influences from South Africa and the world should also be closely considered in accessing their experience (Suls & Rothman, 2004). The strong South African meat eating culture may have caused participants who don't participant in these practices to avoid discussing their vegetarianism so it goes against the general South African norm (Oplan, 2014; Powell, 2013).

Participants' not eating meat is divergent to the South African identity and is therefore unexpected and participants may choose not to reveal it (Oplan, 2014)

For example Kaylee stated, *"...I don't often make a statement like: "I am vegetarian"..."* and *"...generally if I can keep quiet about it I will".*

Likewise Tsepho highlighted:

> *Hmmm, I use a method to avoid it, I eat before because you can't take your own Tupperware everywhere. I can't take my own food to a special occasion so I usually eat the food that does not contain any animal products. If there is none, I refrain from eating.*

Tsepho also stated, *"I just walk away, if the debate gets heated then I just walk away."* In this regard Brian stated *"Hmm, I have stopped going to braais you know and all these events cause I am avoiding…"* as well as, *"…there are internet forums but aaa, when you read comments on the internet forums its best to stay out of any sort of arguments…"* In addition Brian stated *".....it doesn't bother me like aaa you get criticism everywhere you go just let it roll off you shoulder."* Thandeka highlighted that in response to conflict she reacts by doing, *"Nothing, I just leave it alone so ja…."*

Additionally Lizel stated *"…I would usually just be completely quiet and eat what I can"* Brian highlighted, *"She's [his mother] like what can you eat you are just going to starve just make your own food. So when she does I rather just not say anything…."* Tristian, after conflict over ideas with his extended family stated, *"We [his extended family] just finished eating and walked away we just forgot about it…."*

Lauren displayed the most amount of avoidant tactical behaviours, she stated, *"Um, and ja, it's also quite awkward because people always ask you why are you vegetarian and it's like quite embarrassing saying I care about the animals. But I'm not trying to imply that you know you don't care"*. Additionally she stated, *"…you don't want to be isolated and also its quite difficult and being different from everyone"* and:

> *I feel like I get a lot of attention which makes me uncomfortable. So we will go to a restaurant in a big group and then a couple of people will be looking for vegetarian options for me and kind of point them out to me and that kind of gives me anxiety and I hate that.*

Lauren also stated, *"…I think maybe just kind of being prepared, just knowing or not putting myself in a situation where I end up in a steak house…"*

Lauren may have displayed the more avoidant behaviours because of her lack of physical access to a vegetarian community.

Avoidance techniques in anticipation of future debates or uncomfortable dialogue around participant's vegetarianism were evident. Even though these vegetarian identities may have a high salience according to Serpe (1987) and Stryker (2002) in specific social situations these identities have a low salience, therefore this is not an opportunity in which participants seeks to act out this identity. Individuals choose to stage their vegetarianism with other vegetarians not necessarily their meat-eating friends and family (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 2002).

This self-identity is based on continuity or the person "keeping a certain narrative going" (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). For this to take place the narrative needs to be often integrated into events in the external world however, it is clear that social settings with meat-eaters is not the platform these vegetarian individuals choose which works to minimise this identity to their family and friends therefore trying to minimise the conflict or difference the identity represents (Giddens, 1991).

Avoidance techniques may be the result of the participant not wanting to impose their moral judgement onto others. According to Rozin et al. (1997) vegetarianism takes food which was originally a morally neutral object and moralised it on an individual level. The individual acknowledges that this moralisation may be unique to them and therefore avoids the topic with meat-eating individuals in an attempt to reduce any potential tension or conflict (Rozin et al., 1997).

Dinner time could work to enhance family identity, feelings of closeness and bonding (Agate et al., 2009). Fitzsimons and Morales (2010) highlight that the extent to which a person does not want to emulate as a member of a certain group this will reflect in their adjustment of food choice away from this particular group. The specific social context of eating with one's

peers/friends is embedded in meaning, in that people use food as a means of complying to the group norm (Mcferran et al., 2010). As a result a vegetarian individual may be trying to minimise their vegetarianism in order to not threaten their relationships, as they enter the stage of "intimacy versus isolation" where these connection become more important according to Erikson (1968) (Agate et al., 2009; Sobel et al., 2006).

Participants also anticipated food situations and catered for themselves in order to make it easier, Kia highlighted, *"Ja um, like sometimes like, when I come up from home I'll bring food from home and store it in the freezer".*

In confirming this Tristian stated:

> *Oh well since I stay at res I make sure that when I cook, I cook a lot ja larger quantities. So I don't get to cook everyday so it's in that particular soup on Monday when I will probably eat it again on Wednesday.*

This connects to being prepared for food situations such as packaging food for consumption at university, for example Samuel stated:

> *My friend that we do lifts with cause we are in class together but I bring food from home because it is expensive to buy food all the time here and there is not really real healthy vegetarian options here.*

Brian stated, *"…I mean most of the time I bring my own food".*

Jab et al. (1998) stated that maintenance of the vegetarian diet so associated with personal factors which includes habits and physical feedback, a common habit in these results was the preparation of food for future days. This is also connected to environmental resources such as the availability of vegetarian food according to Jabs et al. (1997).

4.6.1 Across generational relationships

Many of the participants stated that their decision to become vegetarian had not affected their friends and family and they had made little or no compromises for this decision. However, many of the participants did experience some sort of conflict especially with their parents and extended family which was telling of these particular relationships.

Food works as a tool in the creation and maintenance of social relationships (Mints & DuBois, 2002). Food works to establish sameness and difference, for the majority of the participants their vegetarianism meant difference from their families (Fishler, 1988). According to Fay (1996) a person is not separate from their relationships and a person's identity such as vegetarian identity needs to be viewed in terms of their relationships. The vegetarian identity can be used to illustrate the relationship an individual has with their parents, extended family, friends and romantic partner (Fay, 1996).

Identity is connected to a person's roles, for example, being a child to their parents, however, this relationship of dependence is challenged by the young adult making their own decisions which can be met with hostility (Stets & Serpe, 2013). However participants whose families already ate in a vegetarian way stated less conflict, for example Dinah stated, *"My whole family eat together, we eat at the table"* and in terms of friends she highlighted, *"Well, in the beginning I told them I was vegetarian and that was like it. They didn't ask for an explanation, no debates ja, nothing like that"*

Viewing these results through the Bio-psych-social model, vegetarians from vegetarian families don't have the same negative views from their families as vegetarians from meat-eating families because it is the norm in this particular context (Suls & Rothman, 2004). As a result the environment and expectation is very different which creates a different environment where there is less hostility (Suls & Rothman, 2004).

Although the majority in Tristian's family was also vegetarian he did experience conflict from extended family:

> *…around the table my aunts and grandparents and stuff it wasn't like a conflict but ok, we were saying it's not fair on the animals ….my um, grandmother and uncle um said that if it wasn't for us keeping and feeding the animals they wouldn't be alive anymore they would kill themselves or something…*

In terms of friends Tristian stated, *"They didn't have anything to say really like no opinion, it's really not a big deal to them I think".*

Friends may be more accepting of identity decisions because they are also experiencing identity discovery and the role of friends has a different power dynamic and expectation to that of a child-parent relationship (Stets & Serpe, 2013).

Many participants described their friends and/or family making compromises for their diet. For example Kaylee stated, *"Um, I think I had more anxiety about telling them [her parents] this is the decision I had made"* and *"I don't know I was fifteen so maybe I thought this might be a battle around food or something but ja they kind of like ja ok and we just re-adjusted the menu*". In addition Kaylee added:

> *My brother tends to make more jibes about, ja "you should eat some meat it would be convenient". Occasionally, if it's just me and my mom, and I, we just do vegetarian cause its easier but ja, my brother now lives at home and it's like, "why do we have to eat vegetarian, where is the meat?"*

It was more difficult with Kaylee's extended family, *"my immediate family were like ok and then extended family it took a little bit more to like negotiates because I think… it was suddenly a thing of like if you come to supper we need to be careful*". Kaylee added:

Um, with some of my family members yes, we have this discussion often, often, of why I am not eating meat. But it's just pointless to me, you know, I'm vegetarian and I don't eat meat and that's not going to change by you questioning it. It just seems to be like one of these things, see me and see the meal, oh yea, must ask 'why don't you eat meat' or the comment, 'you really should try it.'

Brian also experienced some conflict with his mother in the beginning, however, she has made many compromises for his diet.

Brian states:

Now when I'm a vegan she kind of lets it slip every now and then, she sort of lets it slip that I'm vegan. I think she still thinks of me as a vegetarian, so she will still try and like, make food like puddings with gelatine…

In addition he stated:

She was like, "oh ja that's your choice as long as you know you can't eat this and that" like, ja, I know, I know what it's about. I think she mostly, she thought I think both times she thought it was a phase…

These results are in line with Larsson et al. (2003) who stated that vegans especially females expected more support from their mothers then their fathers.

Brian describes how sometimes he compromises and eats meat for the sake of his relationships, when questioned if he ever consumes meat he stated:

I have to because I am still a human in human relationships and I understand that people have feelings and if I just reject it but I'm hurting someone's feelings. So I just say actually I don't usually do this but I understand you made it from a good motive…makes me feel very very guilty when I do.

This shows that although participants are passionate about the beliefs and reasons for eating in a certain way they still show an overwhelming support of their family and friends who consume meat and therefore put their relationships above their dietary beliefs. This connects to the idea that vegetarianism is on a continuum and is used to fit the individual's specific needs in different situations while still maintaining the identity (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003). This identity is managed in terms of different relationships according to Hornsey and Jetten (2003). Roth (2005) found that some vegetarians consumed meat on special occasions in order to avoid conflict, which is consistent with Brian's experience.

Rozin et al. (1997), discuss vegetarianism in relation to moralization, the process, which works at an individual and cultural level involving the acquiring of moral qualities through an object, or action that were previously morally neutral (Rozin et al., 1997). People who adopt a vegetarian way of eating have taken food which was previously not a political object and moralised it at the individual level (Rozin et al., 1997). The moralization of food will have consequences for the person in their relationships as people may disagree with why meat has been moralised or will be uncomfortable with this decision (Rozin et al., 1997).

However, Brian's mother has made compromises for his diet, he stated, *"Ja, she definitely, I mean, I stay with her so she has definitely made the most compromises and I am thankful for that"* and *"…she brought it's called veganase [vegan version of mayonnaise]…"*. However, the same is not true for Brian's father, Brain stated:

> *Well, he [his father] doesn't really need to because he doesn't so he tries to talk me out of the decision like, you know, like ok I'll compromise …he's like, "oh no you can't eat this" or he will try tease me, like, he can't finish his fish and he will ask if I want…*

Samuel's family also made compromises,

> *...in the beginning like for example we made spaghetti bolognaise and for example we made mine with lentils and um, like tomato base and that kind of thing and my dad walked in and he is like, 'why are you making two meals just make the vegetarian one'*

Samuel also stated, *"I mean my brother doesn't care sometimes he just like ooo look at this pig and then he eats it..."*

Shelly, however, did not experience the same compromises from her parents, she highlights:

> *Oh gosh, my parents looked at me and said "you crazy" because I started becoming vegetarian when I still lived with them, they were like, here we go another phase...they will be like ooo don't you want to have a bite...*

In addition Shelly states, *"Well, when I talked to my gran last year, 'listen gran I don't eat meat and stuff, can you make something else' and she like, made potato bake"*

Many of the participants stated that they experienced no compromises on the part of their family in adjusting or accommodating their diet. Hall (2000) stated that identities constructed through difference are called "constitutive outside" identities (p. 16). Vegetarianism are out of the norm for any of the participants families which in turn challenged expected identity scripts. Larsson et al. (2003) did a study on vegan youth which showed that the identity is connected to family member's stimulation or inhabitation. Roth (2005) highlights that families handled this choice in different ways; in some families it was labelled and treated as "just a phase" (Roth, 2005). In other families the vegetarian person was pressured, persuaded or tricked into eating meat (Roth, 2005). In some families, the logic and philosophical nature of the choice was debated and in other families there was anger at the perceived betrayal of

family values (Roth, 2005). Therefore the decision to eat in a vegetarian way does create tension in family relationships.

For example Tsepho stated:

> *Alone, I eat alone. I am subjected to cook at home because they don't get the aspect, ja, of not eating meat. So they don't cook for me, they don't even ok, they buy food, my sister buys food and she even asks like, what to buy for me. But when I am at home, they tell me, to cook for me because they don't understand the whole concept.*

Tsepho also highlighted:

> *Ok, my family were very negative they were like "are you crazy?" You can't stop eating meat, you know. Cause, 2006 I was attack, I was attacked by a stroke and those doctors recommended that I eat a lot of liver, chicken liver…I've stopped eating meat, they were like, "no dude you are going to get sick".*

In addition, Tsepho stated in relation to his family, *"No, mine haven't, no compromises at all. The only compromise that they have made is accepting that I don't eat meat"*. Tsepho also highlighted:

> *Yes, at home since I am staying with my sister, sometimes I feel like going home on a weekend and I get there and they have already cooked and they know that I am coming, so we will get to an argument, like dude, 'I told you I am coming couldn't you prepare something'.*

Tsepho displayed a clear distinction between his Adventist and non-Adventist friends, stating, *"My friends think I'm crazy, my friends think I am not Zulu enough …they just make fun of it especially my non-Adventist friends…"* and *"It hasn't affected them at all, ja, it hasn't affected them cause most of my friends most of them are Adventists so its normal"*

Thandeka stated that her family said:

> *…'you crazy', you really not going to eat meat. We will never visit you, there won't be meat at your wedding …they thought I was joking in the beginning but the more they saw it I was actually serious then they leave it they don't actually force me…*

Thandeka highlights meat in connection with her wedding which is a cultural event and therefore very much connected to family.

In addition, she highlighted, *"…they used to attack me on, that is why you are sick, because you aren't eating according to your blood group…"*

Lizel also stated:

> *Well, because they didn't make food for me, in all honesty, I just really didn't used to eat. If they would call me and say dinner's ready and it was just steak and chips and I would pretend I was just showering because it, it was really embarrassing for me. I felt humiliated that they didn't want to make food for me…*

Additionally Shelly stated:

> *Well, I think with my family there is not like act of conflict but it definitely causes discomfort to me…it is the butt of every body's jokes…so I would say more discomfort then conflict and it definitely separates you, so you are not part of that social, um event that usually takes place you are completely excluded from that.*

Lizel also highlighted, "*…I think my household family, I don't think they made any compromises because they didn't even buy vegetables for me, I had to buy them myself and make my own food".*

Lauren, in connection with her family stated, *"He [her father] says like when are you going to start, getting over this phase? You need to start eating fish. And my friends think too much*

soy and so everyone has an opinion". Lauren also stated, *"Um, I don't actually think, I think, think any even small things like if we go to a restaurant and my dad orders veal, I feel like he shouldn't do that"*. In terms of friends Lauren stated, *"I think they are more willing to go to those restaurants with me. Um, they are just a bit more positive about it and more accepting"*

Some participants' families were willing to make compromises for their decisions and other weren't. Extended families seemed to be difficult and resistant in most cases. Friends were seen as more understanding than parents therefore there was a definite difference across generations in thinking and acceptance.

Families work to reproduce societal norms through socialisation (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009 Agate et al. (2009) state that family life includes leisure time which strengthens family relationships and a core leisure activity often is the preparation and consumption of meals. Although eating is a necessary task for survival it is also a leisure task which is embedded in cultural meaning as it is incorporated into traditions and events within a given culture (Agate et al., 2009). Therefore, dinner time could work to enhance family identity, feelings of closeness and bonding however this may not the case if an individual chooses to eat differently (Agate et al., 2009).

Peers become more influential during adolescence and therefore have a strong influence over a person in relation to motivation and behaviour (Gruber, 2008). McFerran et al. (2010) highlight that the extent to which a person does not want to emulate as a member of a certain group this will reflect in their adjustment of food choice away from this particular group norm. Eating with peers creates a social meaning in which food is used as a medium to display the standard of social norm which should be adhered to (Mcferran et al., 2010).

Agate et al. (2009) states that family leisure time strengthens family relationships which includes activities around food. Food is embedded in cultural meaning. Dinner time is

connected to enhanced family identity, feelings of closeness and bonding which can be absent or challenged if someone decides to eat in a different way to their family depending on the family's reaction to this change (Agate et al., 2009).

Food is also a way to negotiate power in the child-parent relationship therefore the child taking an individual stance which is moralised could be a source of conflict (Roth, 2005). Food can be a source of belief and traditions through food inter-generationally however, this is challenged if the child chooses to eat differently (Agate et al., 2009). This connects to the fact that some participants found family gathering around food to be challenging and prepared for these occasions beforehand. Roth (2005) found that vegetarians were perceived as being anti-family and affected their sense of belonging in the family. Some participants avoided conflict and tried to minimise their vegetarian habits in front of family in order to not be singled out as different or create tension. In many families it was labelled as and treated as a phase, with the choice often being debated (Roth, 2005).

This connects to Erikson's (1968) crisis of "identity versus role confusion" this stage involves a person figuring out what is unique about themselves which could be seen as going through "phases" from their parent perspective. This stage of identity development involves a struggle to form one's own identity which can be different to that of their parents which may cause conflict for example parents using the label of their adolescent being "crazy" (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Erikson, 1968).

Participants conflictual situations due to their vegetarianism illuminated the quality of the participants' different relationships. Relationships across generations in families were definitely more difficult to negotiate than friendship relationships according to these results.

4.6.3 Tolerance

Tolerance was another theme which was repeatedly brought up in the context of relationships. The themes of tolerance links to the theme of avoidance because participant are extremely tolerant of other people eating meat and try to minimise conflict from eating differently. Despite participants' having strong and passionate reasons for their vegetarian diets and being strict and persistent in keeping to these diets, they showed a great tolerance for others still consuming meat. This relates to Bisogni et al.'s (2002) concept that eating behaviour stabilises and becomes resistant to change. This is true for the participants eating vegetarian diets as well as their friends, family and partners who have established a different way of eating including meat into their diet (Bisogni et al., 2002).

Choosing to eat in a vegetarian way is a food decision which is a self-expression of personal and philosophical views which may not be shared by other individuals. This may cause tension in relationships as individuals may clash in their views (Lindeman & Sirelius, 2001). Making the choice to eat vegetarian means the individuals eating habits are more associated with to a person's values than that of their cultural preference to food, however this is not the case when vegetarianism and culture come together (Linderman & Sirelius, 2001).

Participants showed tolerance for meat-eating in many different ways, such as cooking and buying meat.

For example, Kai spoke of cooking meat for his girlfriend:

> *Like, when like, sometimes if she feels like eating meat, then she will eat meat and then if she feels like eating vegetarian. So whatever she wants, is chilled. So I don't really mind because it's what I am eating that is the thing. Ja its shup I just, I just can't really cook anything for her because I don't really know how to cook any chicken or stuff, like, the most I can cook is like, grilling fish or something.*

In line with this, Shelly stated, *"So I am fine with cooking meat but I won't eat it. But I never buy meat for me but if its other people…"*

Participants showed an understanding that their diet is against the norm which results in them compromising without the expectation of people close to them adopting the same ideals. This relates to the South African identity which is strongly associated with the idea of consuming meat, a braai being one of the few "cultural practices" shared by all cultural groups (Oplan, 2014). This was the case even when the diet was connected to religion, Dinah *"I would but um, if they want to eat meat that's totally up to them it's not a problem"*

Kaylee stated:

> *I just, I choose, to eat different and so I kind of have to deal with the choice I have made because I do consider it a choice, because I don't have a religious thing or a cultural thing. I think would be more of an issue and I think requires more sensitivity…so ja I think because I choose to do it, I choose to make as little deal around it as possible*

Tristian stated in regard to his family:

> *…I don't know, they don't really care. I don't think they would really care if I still ate meat we are quite a free thinking family. So like, no one's ideas are seen as like better. But I guess it was more convenient for the family just in terms of logistics and actual eating, but ja, I really don't think it was a big deal, they weren't overly happy or anything like that.*

Additionally Lizel expressed frustration however overall acceptance, she highlighted:

> *Well, he [her boyfriend] is very supportive. I think the one thing that does bum me is that I just feel that with the information I have presented he still needs to, it is a bit hard for me that he still doesn't want to make a change…*

This quote displays a frustration within the relationships and less tolerance then is shown by other participants and other situations.

Lauren stated, *"...Meat free Mondays ja, ja, so my boyfriend actually does it with me and he's not a huge meat eater because he knows it's important to me…"* Additionally Lauren started, *"I will cook vegetarian meals and he won't add meat to it like twice a week, we will have a vegetarian meal".* In terms of eating arrangements with partners any compromise towards a vegetarian diet was appreciated but not expected. The willingness to cater and prepare food for other people may be related to gender roles in that female participants are more tolerant to preparing meat for their partners, this may be connected to their micro-environment and macro-environment which has taught them of certain gender roles in a romantic relationships (Suls & Rothman, 2004).

Romantic partners often eat together, negotiating their food choices "symmetrically" or "asymmetrically" (Sobal et al., 2006). "Symmetrically" describes the individuals coming together in their food choice whereas "asymmetrically" describes one person adopting the food choice of the other (Sobal et al., 2006; Bove, Sobal & Rauschenbach, 2003). Participants in this research were not displaying "symmetrically" or "asymmetrically" food choices however a relationship with two meat-eaters would usually adopt a more "symmetrical" method of food choice (Sobel et al., 2006). Markey et al. (2008) stated results of the study showed that one or both partners in a romantic relationship do attempt to exert control over what their partner consumes (Markey et al., 2008).

In connection with her family Lauren stated:

> *…it is difficult for me, knowing that they think that I am making a huge mistake or whatever. Um, but ja, I can't change their opinion and I don't want to be like preachy. So I kind of just keep it too myself, I don't talk about it much.*

The majority of the participants displayed tolerance towards other people consuming meat despite their passion related to their reasons for excluding meat from their diets. However there was an underlying tension for some of the participants in both family and romantic relationships. These results link to Giddens's (1991) idea that self-identity is individualised and therefore participants may only be concerned with their identity and not with that of others, however this was not always the case. According to Giddens's (1991) this self-identity is integrated into the external world, for example into practices or compromises in meat consumption by partners and family members.

Participants show extreme tolerance for their friends, family and partners consuming meat despite their own personal beliefs, this highlights how the participant's relationships are largely more important then their beliefs in relation to their diet.

This connects to Erikson's (1968) idea that identity needs to be achieved before intimacy can be achieved, therefore participants are interacting with partners who have already established their individual identities and therefore are not willing to reconsider these identities. According to the Bio-psych-social model participants and their partners may come from different political and social environments as well as family environments and therefore consider different things important (Dziegielewski, 2013).

4.7 Intensification of the vegetarian identity

Many of the participants described adding to their knowledge on topics on or related to vegetarianism as well as additional actions associated to the identity.

Many of the participants described doing research into vegetarianism using different sources of media, for example Tsepho stated, *"The lady was a Buddhist, so she was launching a new book about the dangers of meat eating….So I went home I started reading and that's when I got intrigued by the culture".*

Brian highlighted:

> *I do a lot you know especially as an athlete you need to make sure you are getting the right type of nutrients and all that stuff. So I spend a lot of time going on the internet and, um, seeing what it is that I can eat…*

Samuel stated, *"…I did research on the environmental impact of meat…"* In confirmation Shelly highlighted, *"Um, I just researched on google and also spoke to other vegetarians and found out how they prepped meals…"*

This increasingly looking for knowledge on the vegetarian diet is connected to the world's surge in interest in food in popular culture which exists on a range of mediums including books, television, the internet and social media (Levine, 2013; Young, et al., 2013). According to Levine (2013) people construct the food they eat as more than simply for survival but as a matter of 'style' and personal choice, an element of personal identity and contemporary culture. In this way consumers have power and access to knowledge about food and nutrition and consequently become informed consumers (Levine, 2013).

Serpe (1987) and Stryker (2002) highlight the idea of identity salience which can be seen in an "identity salience hierarchy", which describes the different levels of identity salience

across different identities. Participants who sought to broaden their knowledge on a particular topic on or related to vegetarianism showed a more salient vegetarian identity (Serpe, 1978; Stryker, 2002). In addition to searching for additional knowledge participants also described additional actions related to their reasons for adopting a vegetarian lifestyle.

Additional research into the culture of vegetarianism often resulted in additional actions related to this culture. For example Brian stated, *"I am careful about not just animals I am careful about like making sure that my clothing comes from a source which isn't child labour".*

In addition, Brian stated*:*

> *I am trying to read everything you know just trying to make sure, okay this polyester and this is cotton. Trying to make sure which fibres um you know blankets. Um belts is a bit more difficult because everything is made out of leather you know, shoes as well um a lot of my formal shoes I acknowledge that when I bought it in my pre-vegan days*.

Finally, Lauren highlighted:

> *I think I started off with the animal thing you know PETA, 'p' 'e' 't' 'a', they give a list of the safe products and then through them I found a South Africa company leaping bunny, so they have a little logo on the products that are not tested on animals.*

These additional actions displayed moral value and were therefore strongly related to ethical reason for adopting the vegetarian diet. Participants who adopted vegetarianism for health or religious reason didn't describe additional related actions, however, participants who adopted the lifestyle for primarily ethical reasons did. This relates to Hall's (2000) concept of "identification" (p. 19), as participants who include additional related action into their lives

have further invested into their vegetarian identity (Hall, 2000). Participants are choosing to develop their vegetarian identity despite the fact that this identity is not the identity which society has endorsed (Hall, 2000).

Fox and Ward (2008) stated that over time additional reasons are added for a person following a vegetarian diet, this is connected to additional related actions associated with the lifestyle. Vegetarians tend to get more strict and intense over time with an increase in practices and beliefs this can also be shown through additional actions according to Jabs et al. (1998).

4.8 Conclusion

The theme of ethics highlighted why certain of the participants choose to eat in a vegetarian way which connected strongly to the idea of animal rights. The theme of health highlighted the tension between some participants viewing vegetarianism as a healthier way of life and others contesting this view. Socio-political issues section highlighted how participants saw their vegetarian values or reasons as being compared to other less traditional identities, exposed the contradiction of the South African identity in connection with meat and wildlife, highlighted views around race and class and vegetarianism as well as how the identity related to masculinity and views around gender roles which didn't translate into practice. The vegetarian community was important and actively looked for by many of the participants. Relationships were illustrated through experiences related to the vegetarian diet which connected to tension between participants and their parents, avoidance of conflictual situations and tolerance for the meat-eating diet of others. Finally vegetarians showed how they intensified their vegetarian ideology by adding additional actions and knowledge to their life.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to provide insight into young South African vegetarians' experience of their vegetarianism, and how this vegetarian identity is negotiated in the individuals' different relationships and how this identity and lifestyles is understood by participants in relation to both the South African and wider global context. In particular, the intersection of vegetarian identity and other aspects of identity such as gender, "race" and culture, was explored.

The study found that some participants offered ethical reasons for their vegetarianism including principled objections to consuming animals and not agreeing with the way animals are kept and bred to be eaten. Another finding was the disagreement within the participant group over whether vegetarianism was a healthier alternative to main-stream diets containing meat. The participants connected their experience and identity of vegetarianism to other alternative, marginal, or less traditional identities, for example, expressing progressive and inclusionary views on homosexuality. Participants also strongly asserted progressive views on gender roles but these were contradicted by description of daily life in which traditional gender roles were maintained, particularly in relation to household tasks in the preparation of food. The contradictions in traditional South African identity was highlighted in that the (highly masculinised) ritual of the braai is asserted as defining "South African' culture across the divisive lines of "race" but simultaneously, there is national pride in wildlife and the conservation of natural resources.

The vegetarian community both physical and virtual was an important factor in relation to maintaining the vegetarian identity.

The results revealed that participants generally avoid tension in their personal relationships. This avoidance was related to behaviour which worked to minimise conflict or potential

tension. Participants displayed an overwhelming tolerance for the meat-eaters diet despite their own strong views against eating meat.

5.2 Recommendations for future research

Considering the findings of this research study, it is recommended that further research be done on the potential difference in experience and behaviours between religious and non-religious vegetarians as well as between vegetarians who come from vegetarian families to those that don't as there maybe be significant differences between these identities. It is further recommended that a larger study be conducted containing more Indian and male participants, therefore yielding a more representative sample than the one depicted in this study. In addition it is recommended that more studies be done on exploring the feminist views of vegetarians and whether these translate into real life practices in relation to traditional gender roles following the results of this study. More exploration into the vegetarian community and how different people use it or seek it out would also be interesting in terms of future research. This study presented is associated with certain strengths and weaknesses.

5.3 Strengths and limitations

5.3.1 Strengths

A major strength of this study was the methodology employed in data collection which was used in conducting both the interviews and then a focus group with the same participants. The focus group being centred on the participants' vegetarian food tasters helped to create a stimulating environment where participants were engaged and felt part of a vegetarian community. A strength related to the use of a qualitative method was that the interview questions were flexible, therefore relevant topics which emerged could be focused on, as well as the general questions which were asked to every participant. The qualitative method was

useful for providing in-depth answers on vegetarian identity in order to saturate the topic. Finally, an additional strength of the research was the subject matter; scarce research has been done on vegetarianism in the South African context.

5.3.2 Limitations

One limitation of this study was that not all participants were able to attend the focus group, potentially richer results would have been achieved with this participation. Another limitation was the researcher's interview skills, potentially more relevant information could have been collected with a more skilled interviewer with more experience. Additionally, the researcher herself was a vegetarian, this may have resulted in a less critical view of the results obtained. Another limitation was obtaining a diverse research participants group, this may have been as a result of the vegetarian population in South Africa which contains less males and black people and has a large concentration on white females however this may have also been a result of the researcher's personal positionality. Additionally the study took a holistic approach in exploring this topic using a qualitative research method consequently the results cannot be generalised to the vegetarian population of South Africa.

The presence of the researcher in questioning may have caused participants to alter their answers and therefore answer questions differently to the way they normally would. This could have also been the case in the focus group, participants could have agreed with what the group thought rather than expressing a contending opinion. The results of this study are connected to certain theoretical and practical implications.

5.4 Theoretical and practical implications of results

The theoretical implications of this study are that it adds to literature on vegetarian youth identity in the South African context. The results also offer an account of young people and how their relationships are effected by their alternative identity. This study also offers

theoretical knowledge on how young people view traditional gender roles and how this translates into everyday practice in their lives. This study also shows how social media and the internet can used as a community in connecting people of similar interest who wouldn't otherwise have been connected.

Practically the methodology of using food in a focus group can be used in other contexts to gather data. Results shed light on alternative identities in the youth of South Africa and how these identities are negotiated and managed by young people in their relationships.

5.5 Conclusion

This study's results and discussion exposed several other research opportunities which would be very interesting to study in future research projects. The study's main weakness is the lack of diversity however, the researcher did the best to try to create a diverse participant group. One of the biggest strengths of the research was the use of food in phase 2 of data collection which is a practical implication which can be used in other research projects to create a specific environment around food. In terms of theoretical implications this study highlighted an alternative identity in the young South African context and how this specific identity of vegetarianism is negotiated in relation to relationships. Although this study did have certain difficulties and limitations, it offers interesting and new insight as well as meeting the desired aims of investigating how the vegetarian identity is negotiated in terms of relationships in South Africa.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Participant information sheet

Dear potential participant,

My name is Sarah Chapman. I am doing a master's degree in research psychology through the University of Witwatersrand. As part of my course, I am required to do a research project. I am going to study vegetarianism. I will be looking at identity and relationships of vegetarians. Therefore, if you have been a vegetarian for more than six months you can volunteer to participate. There are no benefits or risks to participating. I would hereby like to invite you to participate. Participation would involve an interview lasting about an hour and focus groups lasting about two hours. The interview would take place at a time and place of your convenience and the focus group would likely take place in a central location such as the University of Witwatersrand. I would like the focus groups to be centred on food therefore; you will need to bring a vegetarian taster to the focus group, which the group will share. The vegetarian taster should be a small vegetarian dish of your choice. Therefore, participation in this study requires you to participate in an interview and a focus group to which you are required to bring a vegetarian food taster. Your permission for the interview and focus group as well as your permission for the interview and focus group to be recorded will be requested.

If you choose to participate in this study, anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms therefore no one reading the report will be able to tell whom the participants were. Confidentiality will be guaranteed for the interview however cannot be guaranteed for the focus group. You have the right to stop participation in the interview or focus groups at any time and can request that your contribution be excluded from the project.

The data from the interviews and the focus groups will be collected and analysed and then written up in a formal research project which will be kept in the University of Witwatersrand

Library and on the internet and will therefore be widely accessible. You should be aware that the results of this study could possibly be published or presented at a conference.

Your permission for the interview and focus group to be recorded will be requested. The tapes will be kept on a password-protected computer and may only be viewed by my supervisor and myself.

If you would like to participate or have any questions here are my contact details as well as my supervisors:

Cell: 079 8938 604

Email: Sarahlemerchapman@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Jill Bradbury

Email: Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za

_____

Student signature

_____

Supervisor signature

APPENDIX B: Interview consent and recording consent form

Interview consent

I _____ agree to participate in this research project. I understand that:

- Participation in the interview will be confidential.
- I have the right to stop the interview at any time or request that my interview not be included in the final project.
- I have right to not answer certain questions for whatever reason.
- There are no anticipated risks or benefits to taking part in this study.
- Direct quotes from the interview could be included in the final research report.

Participant signature Date

Recoding consent

I _____ agree that the interview can be recorded. I understand that:

- My identity will not be disclosed and my name will be changed.
- The tapes will be kept safe and access to them will be restricted to the researcher and her supervisor.
- There are no anticipated risks or benefits to taking part in this study.

Participant signature Date

APPENDIX C: Interview schedule

Tell me a bit about yourself, what you are studying and your family.

Why did you become a vegetarian?

How did you become a vegetarian?

When did you become a vegetarian?

Who shops for the food you eat? How do they know what to buy?

Who cooks for you?

Who do you eat with when you are at home?

How is the food prepared and served?

Who do you eat with when you are on campus?

What do you think other people's perceptions of vegetarians are?

How did your family react to your decision?

How do you handle food choices if it is a special occasion?

How did your friends react? Partner?

How do you think it has affected them?

What compromises do you make in your diet? Do you ever eat meat? If so when and why, with whom?

What compromises have your family, friends and partner had to make for your dietary choice?

What compromises have they voluntarily made?

Has it been a source of conflict?

How do you deal with a braai situations?

Do you feel like being vegetarian connects to other areas of your life and personality?

How do you maintain being a vegetarian?

APPENDIX D: Focus group and recording consent form

Focus group consent

I _____ agree to participate in this research project. I understand that:

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- I have the right to leave the focus group at any time or request that my contribution to the focus group not be included.
- I have right to not answer certain questions for whatever reason.
- There are no anticipated risks or benefits to taking part in this study.
- Direct quotes from the focus groups could be included in the final research report.

Participant signature Date

Recoding consent

I _____ agree that the focus group can be recorded. I understand that:

- My identity will not be disclosed and my name will be changed.
- The tapes will be kept safe and access to them will be restricted to the researcher and her supervisor.
- There are no anticipated risks or benefits to taking part in this study.

Participant signature Date

APPENDIX E: Focus group schedule

Tell us about the dish of food that you have brought to share.

Where did you buy the ingredients?

How much did it cost?

Who prepared it? How long did it take?

Why do you like it?

When would you usually serve it?

What does being vegetarian mean to you?

Let's talk about your reasons for being vegetarian and how it affects your relationships at home and with friends, relationships on campus?

Do you talk about your reasons for being vegetarian? If so with who?

What word do you think describes how other people think of vegetarians?

What is the main way you feel you maintain your diet?

How does vegetarianism relate to culture in South Africa?

How does being a vegetarian relate to race in South Africa?

Do you think that being male or female is relevant to the choice and maintenance of a vegetarian diet?

Is being a vegetarian unique in South Africa?

In what ways do you think that vegetarianism relates to larger issues around food in South Africa? and the world?

APPENDIX F: Internal Ethical clearance