

University of the Western Cape



Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

A qualitative study exploring the experiences of Black South African vegetarians residing in the urban settings of Cape Town.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Arts in Child and Family Studies

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis: *A qualitative study exploring the experiences of Black South African vegetarians residing in the urban settings of Cape Town*, represents my own work.

All the resources used in this work have been acknowledged in text and a complete reference list has been attached. I understand what plagiarism is and the serious consequences of actions that constitute it.



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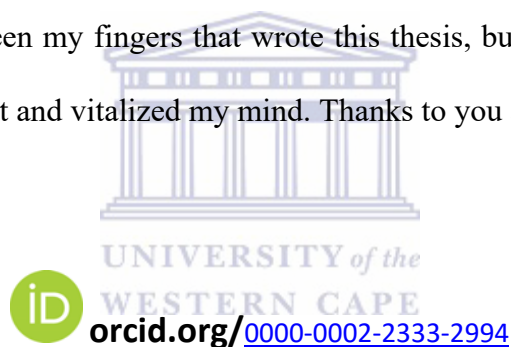
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ABSTRACT

Vegetarianism is a growing global trend. Movie stars and world class athletes proudly brand themselves vegetarian. Apart from its health implications vegetarianism has been extensively studied as a social and psychological phenomenon. However the understanding that has emerged from these studies has almost exclusively reflected Caucasian Western societies. Internationally there is a paucity of research regarding vegetarianism among people of African descent. The purpose of this study was to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the development of a vegetarian identity among Black urban South Africans living in Cape Town and the contextual factors involved in their adoption and practice of vegetarianism. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory which emphasizes the bidirectional influence between human behaviour and broader contextual factors was used as a theoretical framework for understanding vegetarianism among Black South Africans. This study used a qualitative exploratory approach to describe the perceptions and experiences of Black vegetarians. Snowball sampling was used to locate eight Black South African adult vegetarians who were interviewed in depth. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed through thematic analysis yielding three main themes. The first and central theme is that "vegetarianism is life." This theme encapsulates the fact participants view vegetarianism as an instrument through which the highest ideals of life are attained including physical vitality, spiritual vibrancy and intellectual superiority. In the second theme the process of developing a vegetarian identity was unfolded. Contextual religio-cultural influences of Rastafarianism and Seventh day Adventism were a major influence in the development of a vegetarian identity. The last theme unfolds the experience of Black vegetarians living in meat dominated society. The study reveals that becoming a vegetarian definitely affects one's social relations. However the gender of the vegetarians modulated the reaction of family members. Vegetarians also employed several strategies to manoeuvre difficult social situations. This study is among the first to contribute an African perspective to the global vegetarian discourse. It has highlighted the way Black Africans develop a vegetarian identity and the contextual factors acting as barriers and facilitators to this development. It has highlighted how this identity is informed by their Africanness though at times it conflicts with certain African ideals. Finally it has identified the social, cultural and psychological variables involved in the vegetarian phenomenon on the African continent.

Keywords

Vegetarianism

Vegan

Carnism

African

Black

Social

Township

South African

Diet

Meat



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARV	Antiretroviral Therapy used for HIV treatment
DASS	Depression Anxiety Stress Scale
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IARC	The International Agency for Research on Cancer
IVU	International Vegetarian Union
NCD	Non-communicable disease
POMS	Profile of Mood States
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time
TTM	Transtheoretical Model
UNISA	University of South Africa
WHO	World Health Organization
ZCC	Zion Christian Church



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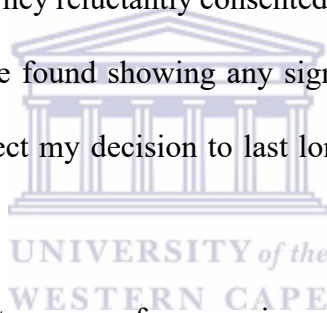


CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

My interest in vegetarianism began when I was about six years old. I listened to a lecture at church on the health and moral virtues of vegetarianism. My young impressionable mind was deeply convicted of the moral imperative of becoming a vegetarian. That evening I announced to my parents that I would no longer be eating meat. As a family we did not eat meat a lot. We had chicken for Sunday lunch and one red meat meal for supper during the week such as mince, sausages, beef or tripe. So it wasn't that big of a deal. Nonetheless my parents were not impressed with my decision. They reluctantly consented to my plan on condition that I kept true to my word. I was not to be found showing any signs of a desire for meat or secretly partaking of it. They didn't expect my decision to last long, but I was determined to prove them wrong.



A few months after our agreement a group of my cousins and I gathered at my aunt's house in a nearby village. After an afternoon of frolics she treated us to some biltong. I had never seen biltong before and had no clue that this dry, fatty, salty and unusually tasty article was in any way related to meat. We all enjoyed it. To my chagrin that evening, as I related the day's events to my mother including a mention of our afternoon snack, she announced to me that my experiment with vegetarianism was over because I had eaten meat. My plea of ignorance was not taken into account. I was really disappointed in myself. While I had to abandon the practice my interest and conviction about vegetarianism did not die.

Naturally, ten years later when I had more independence, without any consultation with my parents I once more embarked on a vegetarian lifestyle. I studied a lot about the subject. Looking back, I now realize that I uncritically accepted all the information that agreed with my

understanding. Nearly all the material I had ever read about vegetarianism was published or produced in the United States. As time progressed I wondered a lot about vegetarianism in other contexts. I heard that there were religions and traditions of Asian origin that practiced vegetarianism, but in the community I came from I had never encountered them or come across published material about or by them.

One of my chief questions was the relevance or appropriateness of vegetarianism in the African context. I was convinced that the vegetarian lifestyle could be of great benefit in alleviating the rise in lifestyle diseases, especially high blood pressure and diabetes, which seemed to be growing at alarming rates among Black¹ South Africans. On the other hand I was concerned about possibilities of nutritional deficiencies which can result from vegetarianism in an African context due to lack of proper substitution of essential nutrients.

Up until I began this research project I had always thought of vegetarianism in biologic or medical terms. While I was aware of the physical and mental effects of a vegetarian diet based on several epidemiological studies, I had never thought of vegetarianism as a social phenomenon. This was in spite of being vaguely aware that being vegetarian was tied to certain attitudes, beliefs, worldview, behaviours and relationships. I was oblivious to the fact that these nuanced observations of psychological and social connections could be validly studied. Since I considered myself to be well versed in the nutritional and medical aspects of vegetarianism, I became intrigued with the psychological and social aspects of it which I had never explored until given an opportunity to conduct this research. This was the catalyst, I would say, that prompted me to engage in this study and to be oriented toward the subjective experiences of vegetarians.

¹ Throughout this research paper a Black person refers to a person belonging to people groups that speak South African native languages such as Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, IsiNdebele, isiSwati, TshiVenda, and Tsonga.

In this chapter I outline the basis on which this research project was undertaken. I give a brief background on what is currently known about the phenomenon of vegetarianism. A problem statement which sums up the knowledge gap identified is presented as well as the main question that this research project seeks to answer. That is followed by the aim and objectives of the study which focus the study undertaken. The definitions and delineations that circumscribed the scope of the study are outlined. The anticipated significance of the study is also discussed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the rest of the chapters and a summary.

1.2. Background

Vegetarians don't eat meat! It is hard to think of the practice of vegetarianism without thinking about its antithesis which is meat consumption (Romo & Donovan-Kicken, 2012). Our discussion on vegetarianism must begin with meat-eating for at least two reasons. Firstly, most of the vegetarians including the participants in this study grew up on an omnivorous diet and had for the most part unquestioningly consumed parts of dead animals. Understanding meat eating culture tells us what the vegetarians were before they became vegetarians (Demitrievski, 2014). This is the starting point of their journeys. Secondly, once people become vegetarians they must still live as a minority in a society where meat-eating is the norm (Demitrievski, 2014). The nonconformity of vegetarians sets up interesting psychological and social tensions and accommodations which make the phenomenon a fruitful field of study in understanding human behaviour (Jabs, Sobal, & Devine, 2000).

Vegetarianism is more than a dietary choice. It is an identity, a way of being. A vegetarian meal is an intentional outward expression of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that make up one's worldview (Haverstock & Forgays, 2012). Similarly, eating meat is an expression of worldview. However, in the case of meat-eaters the underlying beliefs and perception have usually never been consciously thought of and intentionally adopted. They have normally been

assimilated as part of culture or as part of being human (Loughnan, Bastian, & Haslam, 2014). Many meat-eaters are unconscious of their choice to eat meat as a choice until confronted with vegetarianism.

1.2.1. Carnism

It seemed to me that to call people who eat meat non-vegetarians or omnivores is to fail to bring to the consciousness the ideological underpinnings of the meat-eating culture. These terms merely address the biological level and do not really expose the psychological mechanisms behind the behaviour. I believe Joy (2010) coined a term which accurately represents the assumptions, implicit beliefs, attitudes and perceptions that drive the meat-eating culture. She calls this all-pervasive worldview “carnism.” This is the ideological antithesis of vegetarianism (Braunsberger & Flamm, 2015).

Carnism has hegemonic dominance in almost all cultures and is hardly ever questioned by its participants. By coining carnism Joy (2010) sought to make explicit the implicit assumptions that undergird meat-eating. She argues that carnism as an ideology projects meat-eating as normal, necessary and natural. It includes the way society classifies animals in categories of edible and inedible. This classification system is based more on socioculturally informed beliefs rather than biology, since the human stomach can digest as well the animals classified as inedible. This is made apparent by how different cultures classify animals by their edibility. Asians generally have no qualms consuming canines (Podberscek, 2009). Other cultures find the thought repulsive if not entirely revolting. Wu (2002) said “I am appalled by the idea that anybody would eat dogs.” It is because in the rest of the world dogs are classified differently (Piazza, *et al.*, 2015). I would even say that they are among the most “humanized” animals in Western society. This is epitomised by sayings such as: “a dog is man’s best friend.”

Carnist culture creates a paradoxical mind-set where one can say “I love dogs and I also love beef.” The former is loved by petting and cuddling the latter by butchering and grilling. The dissonance in the statement is probably reduced by changing the name of cows to beef, thus erasing from the mind the fact that the article being consumed used to be an organ of a living creature. Joy (2010) brings to view the ironies and dissonant ideas of carnism by deliberately using proper names of animals in entitling her book: “*Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows: an introduction to carnism?*”

Carnism denies the intelligence and emotions of living animals and rationalizes their oppression (Loughnan, Haslam, & Bastian, 2010). However once the animal has been slaughtered and reduced or transformed into food, its status changes. Suddenly it is given an exalted status above all other foods. Once the cow becomes beef and the sheep becomes mutton they become the king of foods. Twigg (1984) argued that meat is given the highest place in the hierarchy of foods. She notes that in the foods hierarchy red meat is at the zenith, and just below it are the white meats, such as chicken and fish. These are generally followed by substances squeezed from animals such as milk, cheese and eggs. At the bottom of this ladder is plant based foods, usually vegetables.

After Douglas and Nicod (1974) conducted a structural analysis of British meals they noted that often meat was the centre of the meal. Sobal (2005) suggests that a “proper meal” in Western cultures centres on meat. Fiddes (1991) argues that meat has come to represent food itself. There is actual etymological evidence that this has happened already. From my reading of the King James Version Bible first published in 1612 I get the idea that the word “meat” at one time encompassed all foods. In Genesis 1:29 it is written: “And God said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for *meat*.” This shows that 17th

century English speakers used the word “meat” generically in reference to all foods, but now it has come to exclusively be thought of with reference to flesh foods only. The fact that what has happened to the word “meat” may be happening to the word “food” shows the value that continues to be attached to flesh foods.

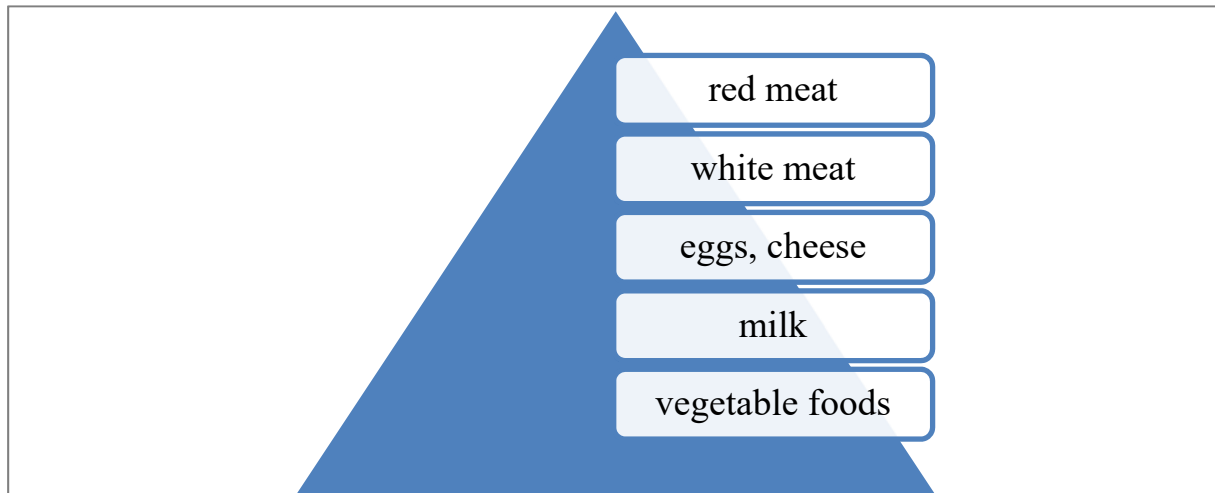


Figure 1. The carnist hierarchy of foods

The dominance of meat in meals is also revealed by the fact that dishes are often named by the meat part, even though meat may be just a small ingredient (Gvion-Rosenberg, 1990). For example, a salad that has chicken as an ingredient will be called a “chicken salad.” It has also been my observation that the meat portion has to be mentioned first. For example, it is not “spaghetti and meatballs” it is “meatballs and spaghetti.” Gvion-Rosenberg (1990) also noted that menus of vegetarian dishes also use meat derived names such as veggie burger.

Furthermore, the meals offered by the established well known international fast food restaurants are all themed around some meat article, most commonly beef or chicken (Leroy & Degreef, 2015). McDonalds, Wimpy, Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken are a case in point (Schröder & McEarchren, 2005). These fast food restaurants have also contributed to the increase in meat consumption as well as the industrialization of meat production (Schlosser, 2001).

Another evidence of the adoration of flesh foods is their centrality to many rituals, holidays and feasts. As a case in point Americans strongly associate Thanksgiving and Christmas with consuming turkey. Since 1996 the National Turkey Federation (2015) estimates that Americans eat 46 million turkeys at every Thanksgiving. Although turkey does not currently feature so prominently in their Christmas dinners, other flesh foods have taken its place (Kaufman, 2004). Because meat is associated with these occasions when families usually get together, it could also be seen as a food that binds people together, thus infusing meat with intimate emotions and associations.

The last point that I would like to make on the extent to which meat is cherished is the insistence on its consumption in spite of its apparent risks. Meat consumption has been linked to various diseases including, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome and inflammatory diseases (Alisson-Silva, Kawanishi & Varki, 2016). Most epidemiological studies show a correlation between mortality and meat consumption (Kouviri, Tyrovolas & Panagiotakos, 2016). After a meta-analysis of 42 studies Lippi, Mattiuzi and Cervellin (2016) found a strong link between red meat and cancer, especially of the digestive system. In the same study all meat items were linked to some form of cancer.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO) released a report associating meat with cancer on the 26th of August 2015 (Bouvard, *et al.*, 2015). The fact that in this report the IARC classified processed meat as a carcinogen in the same category as asbestos and cigarettes caused quite a bit of sensation in popular news media. News channels ran headlines such as: “*Processed meats do cause cancer – WHO*” and “*Meat is linked to higher cancer risk, WHO report finds.*” (British Broadcasting Cooperation, 2015; New York Times, 2015).

However, due to carnism such warnings generally fall on deaf ears. Meat-eating is increasing in spite of the awareness of its potential harm (Graça, Calheiros & Oliveira, 2015). In fact before the day was over, Euronews judging from the dismissive reaction from the public regarding IARC report ran a headline titled “*Little sign the public will heed the IARC’s meat warning.*” (Euronews, 2015). The Euronews website quoted an Italian deli owner who said: “I don’t think I will modify my food habit, also because I have eaten processed meat for a lifetime, as I think many other people have done it, and nothing happened.”

The prediction that the IARC report will be ignored was proven true by the article ran by Asia One News just six weeks later with an all pun intended title: “*Consumers have no beef with meat.*” (Asia One News, 2016). The marketers of meat in China who supply over 300 000 hogs a year to their population were concerned for their profits when the IARC report became public. The article states that in spite of temporary dip in sales there has been no significant change in meat consumption patterns. In fact, the Chinese meat industry is ramping up its operations in preparation for increased demand. It is evident that people will have their meat even though it may hasten their demise.

All these strands of evidence considered above show the kind of physical, political and social environment in which vegetarians grow up. This is the world that they must continue to live in after they become vegetarians. It is this backdrop of carnism that makes vegetarianism a salient practice, and thus sets up interesting psychosocial interactions as De Lessio-Parson (2013) aptly noted in her thesis entitled: “*Vegetarianism in a meat landscape.*”

1.2.2. Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is a growing global trend. Although vegetarians still compose a dietary minority in the Western world, their numbers are increasing (Leahy, Lyons & Tol, 2010). In America

the estimated percentage of adults practicing vegetarianism increased from 2.5% in the year 2000 to 4.0% in 2012 according to polls conducted by the Vegetarian Resource Group (2000 & 2012). The number of vegetarians in Australia rose from 9.7% in 2012 to 11.2% in 2016 (Roy Morgan Research, 2016). Though these numbers are based on polling data they do reflect that vegetarianism is a phenomenon of sufficient public interest. The fact that vegetarianism has even arrested the attention of political leaders shows it is making an impact. As recently as the 3rd of March 2017, the Portuguese parliament passed a law forcing all state linked canteens and cafeterias to have vegetarian meal options (Portugal Resident, 2017).

Although vegetarianism has been practiced for a long time by various people and cultures in different settings, modern vegetarianism especially as comprehended in Western societies is a movement that began around the middle of the 19th century in Europe and America (Schomaker, 1998). The first vegetarian society was organized in Manchester England on the 30th of September 1847 (Yeh, 2013). Incidentally this was the first time that the term “vegetarian” was used. The formation of the Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom was soon followed by the American and German vegetarian societies in 1850 and 1867 respectively (Leitzmann, 2014). These various vegetarian societies are affiliated to the International Vegetarian Union (IVU) founded in 1908 in Dresden, Germany (Leitzmann, 2014). The IVU describes itself as a “growing global network of independent organizations which are promoting veg*ism worldwide” (IVU, 2017, asterisk in the original). Since its inception it has held various congresses around the world.

Although there are currently no statistics about vegetarians on the African continent, the number of vegetarian groups, societies, websites and social networks seems to indicate that vegetarianism is also growing among Africans. The Nigerian Vegetarian Society was established in 1993 (Davis, 2012). The African page on the IVU websites lists the vegetarian

associations of Ghana, Togo, Cameroun and Ethiopia as well the South African Vegan Society (IVU, 2016) as its affiliates. The page also shows the various events that have been held on the continent since 2009, including the first IVU congress ever held on the continent in 2014 in Accra, Ghana. This demonstrates that Africa has also been impacted by vegetarianism, and thus is a worthwhile context to investigate the phenomenon in.

Closer home vegetarianism has established an online presence indicating that the phenomenon has a foothold in South Africa. Many of the websites target vegetarian consumers promoting a variety of products and services. For example, *www.vfoods.co.za* sells dairy free pizzas and plant based dog and cat food while *www.herbivore.co.za* markets crispy kale chips and cereal snacks (Herbivore, 2016; VFoods, 2016). The philosophy of these sellers is revealed in their explanations of how the products are sourced and produced. The *www.veggiebunch.co.za* website lists over 25 vegetarian restaurants located in South Africa's major cities. The site has 1768 likes and 608 Twitter followers (Veggiebunch, 2016). South African Vegan Society (2016) states that they are "a volunteer organisation focusing on online awareness, public outreach, development and distribution of resources, product and service endorsement as well as providing support and guidance for those who choose the vegan lifestyle." They see themselves as activists involved with welfare, liberation and social justice movements through the promotion of veganism as an ethical baseline.

In the academic arena investigations and publications on vegetarianism have spanned several domains of enquiry. Nutritional and medical studies have focused on the health effects of vegetarian diets, their adequacy or inadequacy as well as their influence on health, disease, ageing and longevity (Davey, *et al.*, 2003; Fraser, *et al.*, 2014; Key, *et al.*, 2009). Most of the early published literature dwelt on the nutritional deficiencies of vegetarian diets (Banerjee & Chatterjea, 1960). The latest studies tend to focus on the positive health effects of vegetarians

diet especially in the prevention and treatment non-communicable diseases (Marsh, Zeuschner & Saunders, 2012).

Philosophical and theological studies have concentrated on the morality and ethics of vegetarianism, especially in relation to animal welfare, the protection of the environment and spiritual development (Zamir, 2004; Deckers, 2009; Nath, 2010). Historical and sociological studies have sought to give explanation to the rise and progress of vegetarianism as a social movement, and the key events and contexts that contributed to its rise (Roe, 1986; Yeh, 2013). Psychosocial studies have looked at vegetarians' thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and attitudes in developing and maintaining a vegetarian identity in relation to their social contexts (Jabs, Sobal, & Devine, 2000; Pribis, Pencak, & Grajales, 2010) .

1.3. Problem statement

The problem is that the current vegetarian discourse is dominated by Western Caucasian influences with very little input from other cultures (Ruby, 2012). A striking feature to note is that even in studies conducted in Western countries Black people tended to be underrepresented. This trend was acknowledged and investigated by Herring, Montgomery, Yancey, Williams and Fraser (2004) who probed the non-participation of Black Adventists in the series of Adventist Health Studies which have been conducted in North America since 1947.

There are probably more vegetarians in Asia than in rest of the world. A recent report estimated 50 million vegetarians in China and close to 400 million in India (Indiatimes, 2014, 2016). In spite of these staggering numbers of Asian vegetarians, databases have very little to say about them compared to the West (Ruby, 2012).

The analysis done by Acosta-Navarro, *et al.*, (2015) shows how little Africa has contributed to vegetarian discourse. Acosta-Navarro and colleagues performed a MEDLINE search for the terms “vegetarian” and found just over 3000 studies. They found that 68.5% of the authors of these studies were based in Europe and North America and 16.1% in Asia. Since Africa had very little contribution it was clumped with other regions whose contribution was insignificant.

When considering the African continent there is an absolute dearth of published research on vegetarianism. To illustrate this paucity, an electronic search I conducted using the key words “vegetarianism” and “vegetarian” in Sciencedirect, Ebscohost, Springerlink, ISI Web of Knowledge and Sage databases yielded only six full text articles in English. Five of these studies were conducted in Burkina Faso, Chad, Nigeria and Tanzania focusing on the health implications of following a vegetarian diet (De Fillipo, *et al.*, 2010; Ingebleek, Kilmer & McCully, 2012; Awadia, Haugejorden, Djorvatn, & Birkeland, 1999; Famodu, Osilesi, Makinde, & Osonuga, 1998; Famodu, *et al.*, 1999)

The remaining study conducted in Swaziland was the only one that focused on beliefs about vegetarianism (Yasmin & Mavuso, 2009). The above mentioned databases contained no studies on vegetarianism conducted in South Africa. It is therefore evident that very little is known about the epidemiological significance of vegetarianism in Africa. On an even more lamentable note, far less is known about how Africans develop and maintain a vegetarian identity in light of their unique cultural, historical, social, economic and political contexts.

1.4. Research Question

The question that this research study considered was: How is vegetarianism perceived, experienced and practiced by Black urban South Africans residing in Cape Town? Answering this question will add an Afrocentric perspective to the international vegetarian discourse. An exploratory qualitative design was used to answer this question because very little is known

about Black vegetarians in South Africa. An exploratory qualitative design is preferred for previously unexplored phenomena or when very little is known about the subject in question (Mason, Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2010).

1.5. Aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions, experiences and practices of Black South African vegetarians living in the urban settings of Cape Town. The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the experiences of Black South Africans in developing a vegetarian identity.
2. To explore contextual factors perceived by Black South Africans to be implicated in their experience and practice of vegetarianism.
3. To describe how Black South African vegetarians practice vegetarianism.

1.6. Definition of terms and delineations

One of the difficulties encountered in studies involving vegetarians is the varied definitions that exist in the public and in scientific literature (Ruby, 2012). People with greatly varying dietary practices may identify themselves as vegetarians. The American Dietetic Association (2009) defines a vegetarian as a person who does not eat meat, fowl, seafood or products containing them. Vegetarians are further sub-classified by their omission and inclusion of non-flesh animal based products. Vegans subsist on plant foods only and exclude milk and eggs. Lacto-vegetarians and ovo-vegetarians supplement their plant-based diets with milk and eggs respectively, while ovo-lactovegetarians include both. The participants of this study were mostly vegan, with only one being ovo-lactovegetarian.

This study also exclusively focused on vegetarians who were Black. Being “Black” is contested designation especially in South Africa. The Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 defines “Black” as a generic term which encompasses Africans, Coloureds and Indians. In 2008 the South African high court passed a ruling to include the Chinese as Black (Nevin,

2008). However, in this study the term Black was restricted to refer only to indigenous South Africans to focus on a socio-cultural discourse instead of an economic one (Naidoo & Khosa, 2008).

1.7. Significance

The International Vegetarian Union (IVU) has been in existence since 1908. It has since held 41 international congresses in Asia, Europe, Middle East, and in North and South America. The exclusion of Africa in this global movement may indicate that Africans have not been seen as participants in the international vegetarian discourse. However Africa was represented for the first time at the 41st IVU congress held in Malaysia in October 2013 by five delegates from Nigeria and Togo. The presence of these delegates highlighted the existence of vibrant African vegetarian activists eager to contribute to the international vegetarian discourse. This led to IVU hosting its 42nd congress in Africa, making Accra, Ghana the host city. Africa is clearly a latecomer to the international vegetarian discourse. This study will hopefully add an African perspective to the international vegetarian discourse and pave the way for more research on vegetarianism in South Africa and the broader Africa.

1.8. Chapter Overview

Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter I outlined my early interest in vegetarianism and how that has developed into this research project. The sociocultural background of carnism as a context from which vegetarians arise and are situated was examined. That was followed by an overview of the current vegetarian discourse which reveals that the fact that the African voice has not contributed much to it. This further led to the question, aim and objectives which guided this research project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter the literature on vegetarianism from psychosocial perspective will be examined. The attitudes, motives, beliefs and perceptions of vegetarians will be discussed. Certain aspects of the carnist context that vegetarians find themselves in will be highlighted as well as the interactions of the two.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will explain the theoretical and procedural aspects of the research methods used. Firstly, the research design and its theoretical underpinnings will be discussed. This will be followed by the methodology where the research instruments and data collection procedure will be discussed, as well as the techniques of data analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

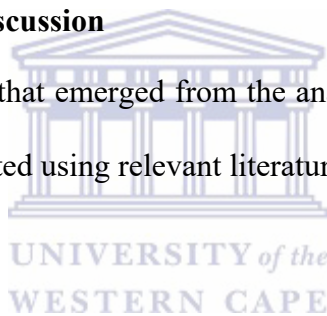
In this chapter the major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data will be outlined. The themes will also be interrogated using relevant literature.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this chapter the major findings of this study will be highlighted and put in context. Areas of possible future research will also be proposed.

1.9. Summary

This chapter introduces the study, presents the background of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives, significance and the lastly outlines of the chapters of this thesis. The next chapter presents in depth the literature review as it pertains to this study.

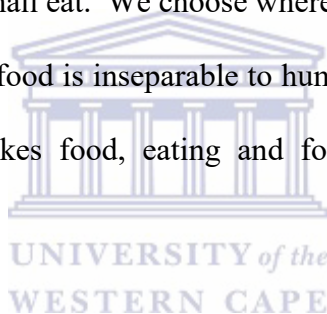


CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Whether one eats to live or lives to eat, it is pretty obvious that human nutrition is closely tied to human existence. Food like air is essential for life. However, there is a big difference between air and food. We have little choice about the air we breathe. Actually we have such little control over our breathing we hardly ever think about it, unless we have conditions that may affect it. On the other hand, there is such a great variety of foods, with different colours, tastes and textures. We generally choose the type and amount of food we will eat and with whom, and when and where we shall eat. We choose where we buy our food, how we prepare and present meals. The fact that food is inseparable to human existence and the fact that it is subject to so many choices makes food, eating and food ways a powerful medium of communication.



We learn to employ this medium as soon as we understand that our actions can influence our environment. Little children who have not yet learnt to express themselves with words often get their message across during feeding times. Similar tactics are employed by people who go on hunger strike. Refusing to eat everything or something thought to be essential in a given context is definitely attention grabbing. Devotees of certain religions believe that fasting even grabs the attention of God. It is not surprising then that vegetarians' refusal to consume meat in the midst of a carnist culture makes them so salient.

The salience of vegetarianism has raised many questions which have been explored by people from various angles. Those concerned with the biology of nutrition have asked questions with regards to the physical impact of a vegetarian diet. Others more concerned with the motivations that would prompt this unusual behaviour have sought to comprehend what drives the

vegetarian mind. Those concerned with social relations have investigated how the carnist culture reacts to vegetarianism and how vegetarians relate among themselves and to the carnist culture. In this chapter we will look at the relevant literature that these various strands of enquiry have produced in order to give a perspective on current understanding of the phenomenon of vegetarianism and the context in which this study arises and is situated.

I will firstly define the term vegetarian so as to identify who vegetarians are, as well as stipulate how the term will be employed in this study. Then the several paths of inquiry that have been followed in order to gain an understanding of this phenomenon will be explored beginning with the biomedical approaches of inquiry.

Because this study is concerned with the experiences of vegetarians within their social context, the greater and more detailed part of this literature review will focus on data addressing psychological and social aspects of vegetarianism. The philosophical approaches which encompass various political, ethical and religious arguments used to describe, explain, justify and challenge vegetarianism will be looked at within the psychosocial setting as they influence how vegetarianism is experienced.

The literature review will conclude with a look at the various theories that have been used to frame studies on vegetarianism in the psychosocial sciences. The theory chosen to frame this particular study will be explained and justifications for its fit to the study will be provided.

2.2. Defining vegetarianism

The term “vegetarian” and its connotations have been embroiled in controversy since the conception of the idea. Even defining what a vegetarian is has proven to be a challenge both for the general public and professionals. One of the causes of uncertainty is that the designation “vegetarian” is often self-imposed. It is a self-identification assumed by people with myriad

dietary practices, approaches and beliefs concerning vegetarianism. Scientists have also branded certain people vegetarian who have never adopted that identity simply because the mainstay of their diet is plant based (Ingebleek & McCully, 2012). Several African populations have been labelled vegetarian simply because they had limited access to flesh foods as a result of their socioeconomic status.

Scientists have also been confused by people who assume the vegetarian identity yet seem to consume meat quite frequently. Thus it is not surprising that the journal *Appetite* recently ran an article by Timko, Hormes and Chubski (2012) titled: “*Will the real vegetarian please stand up.*” This study showed that the rising popularity of vegetarianism and health faddism entices some people to identify as vegetarians for superficial reasons while not fully committing to values and practices that have been traditionally associated with vegetarianism. They adopt vegetarianism as just another weight loss diet, but not as part of their identity. It has also come to light that certain females identify as vegetarian in order to mask their struggle with eating disorders. This allows them to deviate from normal eating patterns without being overly scrutinised (Neumark-Sztainer, 2009).

Therefore it should be noted there is a difference between vegetarianism and vegetarian or plant based diets. Vegetarianism encompasses a larger worldview of belief system that is expressed partly or visibly through the diet. It involves deeply held convictions based on ethics, religion and philosophy. The following are definitions of different groups of people who have been designated by themselves or others as vegetarian based on their dietary practice.

Table 1

Types of Vegetarians

Type of Vegetarian	Description of Distinguishing Features
Vegan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously known as strict, pure or total vegetarians.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They subsist solely on plant derived foods such as grains, nuts, vegetables, legumes and fruits. • They completely dispense of any animal-derived products in their diet (Larson & Johannsen, 2005). • Some will not even use honey or gelatine based products in their food (Brooks, 2009). • Others refuse to wear leather goods, fur and woollen apparel (Nobis, 2002; Zamir, 2004). • A subset of vegans only eat raw foods (Link & Jacobson, 2008).
Lactovegetarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsist on plant derived foods supplemented with dairy products (Dwyer, 2013).
Ovovegetarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplements a plant based diet with eggs (Dwyer, 2013).
Lacto-ovovegetarian /ovo-lactovegetarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplements a plant based diet with both dairy products and eggs, but consumes no flesh products (Dwyer, 2013).
Fruitarians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsist mainly on fresh and dried fruits, seeds, nuts and selected vegetables. • They consume only that part of the plant that does not require the death of the plant, thus they don't consume root vegetables such as beetroot and carrot, but they will eat tomatoes.
Pollovegetarians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eats a plant based diet and no other flesh foods but poultry (Boyle, 2011).

Pescovegetarians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eats a plant based diet supplemented with fish (Boyle, 2011).
Pescopollovegetarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplements a plant based diet with fish and poultry, but eats no red meat (Boyle, 2011).
Semi-vegetarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collective term referring to pesco-vegetarians, pollo-vegetarians and pesco-pollo-vegetarians (Boyle, 2011). • Also used in reference to people who consume meat less than once a week.
Flexitarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lives on a plant based diet. • Will easily consume meat products if convenience so demands.
Macrobiotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsist on a diet that places foods in a ten tiered hierarchy with brown rice being at the top. • The goal of the individual is to progress through the ten steps until they subsist mainly on brown rice and water. • Other stages include whole grains, sea and root vegetables as well as legumes. • Fish is also permitted in the regime (Cudal & Biong, 2013)

One can see from these definitions where some of the confusion stems from. For the purposes of this study, the term vegetarian shall be restricted to vegans, lactovegetarians, ovovegetarians and lacto-ovovegetarians. Those who still eat any kind of flesh foods like pesco-vegetarians and flexitarians will at best be considered aspiring vegetarians. Fruitarians and macrobiotics need to be classified differently from vegetarians to avoid unnecessary confusion.

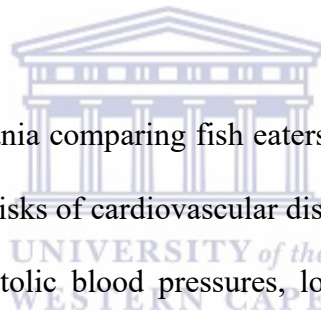
Vegetarians have also been classified according to their motives for adopting a vegetarian diet. People who adopt vegetarianism as a mechanism to improve personal health or to prevent and treat specific diseases have been called health vegetarians (Bisogni, Jastran, Seligson, & Thompson, 2012) Those labelled as ethical vegetarians adopted vegetarianism as a means to prevent and protest against animal suffering and to protect the environment (Radnitz, Beezhold & Di Matteo, 2015). Cultural or religious vegetarians are prompted by their doctrines and beliefs (Nath, 2010).

2.3. Vegetarianism in Africa

As previously mentioned not much is known about the prevalence and practice of vegetarianism in Africa. Not even polling data exists to generate rough estimates. When looking at the published scientific data, two studies have been published from Nigeria on the same participants. The studies compared the nutritional status of 36 vegetarians and 40 non-vegetarians as well as various parameters which indicate cardiovascular disease risk. The researchers concluded that the vegetarians' diet was as adequate as the non-vegetarians' diet and that vegetarians had lower risk of cardiovascular diseases (Famodu, Osilesi, Makinde, & Osunga, 1998; Fomadu, *et al.*, 1999). The subjects of the study were all members of the Adventist Seminary Institute of West Africa which has a population of approximately 1000 individuals from African West Coast countries. The cafeteria refrained from using any animal products in the meals they served. This study provided a cross-sectional analysis of health impact of the vegetarian diet. It however did not explore the reasons and motives of the subjects' dietary choice.

Another study which put vegetarianism in a favourable light was published from Tanzania involving 165 school age children in which vegetarianism was shown to protect against mottling of teeth (Awadia, Haugejorden, Djorvatn, & Birkeland, 1999). The major dietary

difference between the vegetarians and omnivores was fish consumption by the latter. The study concluded that although the vegetarians were exposed to high fluoride levels through their drinking water, those who ate fish were exposed to additional fluoride from the fish. This can be explained by a process known as biomagnification, which is the exponential increase of contaminants as one goes up a particular food chain (Poste, Muir, Guildford & Hecky, 2015). This means the higher in the food chain you consume food the higher your chances of assimilating toxins. The vegetarian school children in this study were Indians practicing Hinduism and Africans who adhered to Seventh-day Adventism (Awadia *et al.*, 1999). Though not specifically discussed, religion was assumed to be the major influence in determining vegetarianism. The participants were not questioned to reveal their understanding or experience of vegetarianism.



Other studies conducted in Tanzania comparing fish eaters with vegetarians seem to indicate that eating fish improves certain risks of cardiovascular diseases. The subjects that consumed fish had lower systolic and diastolic blood pressures, lower cholesterol and triglycerides. (Pauletto, *et al.*, 1996). The diet could explain the differences in the parameters. However, it should be noted that the two populations studied live in two different locations within the country. Therefore, other environmental influences could account for the difference. The study also considered cross-sectional data and does not give evidence of the long term effects of the diets chosen over a time course. So it is hard to say what the parameter differences translate into in real life.

The latest study compared 24 rural dwelling vegetarian males with 15 urban dwelling omnivore males between 18 and 30 years old in the Sahel region of Chad. The study discovered that vegetarians had subclinical malnutrition and as a result had increased risk of cardiovascular diseases (Ingenbleek & McCully, 2012). This study concluded that a vegetarian diet is not

suitable or adequate for people in developing countries. It should be noted that the vegetarians in this study did not become vegetarians by choice but were forced by available food choices. Leahy, Lyons and Tol (2011) observe that many people in developing countries have no other option but to be vegetarian. It is almost certain that if the subjects who subsisted on a plant based diet had a change of circumstances for the better they would include more meat options in their diet.

Lastly, one study explored and described the attitudes and beliefs of Swazis about meat-eating and vegetarianism. Of the 106 participants surveyed 15 were vegetarian. Health and religion were the leading reasons for adopting a vegetarian lifestyle. Non-vegetarians believed that their choice was strongly influenced by their family background. They also believed that humans are ontological omnivores, and that becoming vegetarian limits one's food choices and it is an inconvenience (Yasmin & Mavuso, 2009). This study was very cursory in approach and more attention was given to the perceptions of non-vegetarians. The study did not deeply investigate or explain the reasons given, thus it failed to provide depth of understanding regarding vegetarianism in the African context.

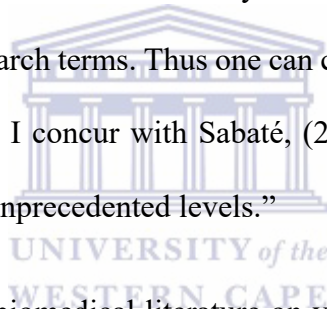
Unfortunately, there is no scholarly data on the prevalence of vegetarianism in South Africa. The only published material on vegetarianism in South Africa has been on popular media and the internet. This indicates that vegetarianism is an understudied phenomenon in South Africa and thus warrants investigation.

2.4. Biomedical views of vegetarianism

By far the biomedical approach to the study of vegetarianism has been the most prominent in the 20th century. In the mid-1990s Jabs, Sobal and Devine (2000) were able to locate 1383 citations on vegetarianism on MEDLINE, whereas the combined number of citations on

vegetarianism from computerized databases in the fields of psychology, history, anthropology, sociology, political sciences and economics were less than 100.

When I conducted a Pubmed search using the keywords “vegetarianism” or “vegetarian” or “vegan” or “veganism” it yielded 4405 results (Pubmed, 2016). Further analysis into these Pubmed results showed that the first study recorded was published in 1890, the only one of that century. Twenty six studies were published in the 50 years from 1907 to 1956, which gives one an average of one study every two years or so. The number of years when there were no publications range from 1 to 10 years in that period. It is not until 1957 where there is continuous yearly publications on vegetarianism. By 1972 double figures for the number of publications per year became the norm and from the year 2000 onwards over 100 publications per year were put out citing the search terms. Thus one can clearly see the exponential increase in the interest on vegetarianism. I concur with Sabaté, (2000) that “professional interest in vegetarian nutrition has reached unprecedented levels.”



In his historical overview of the biomedical literature on vegetarianism Sabaté observed that the scientific community has undergone significant paradigm shifts concerning vegetarianism in the second half of the 20th century (Sabaté, 2003). He suggests that three distinct phases can be observed in developing an understanding of vegetarianism.

2.4.1. The first phase: vegetarianism is dangerous

The first phase represented by publications from the 1960s to the 1980s shows scientists’ concern about the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets in comparison to meat based diets. The basic belief of that era was that vegetarians were at great risk of suffering nutrient related deficiency diseases when compared to meat-eating populations. Thus scientifically speaking vegetarianism was seen as an inferior, impoverished and less healthy diet than an omnivorous one. And it was perhaps even considered dangerous.

Sabaté (2003) concedes that compared to a meat based diet a vegetarian diet has the potential lead to an inadequate intake of certain nutrients. Vegetarians tend to have lower total energy intake as well as lower intake of protein and fat. Getting certain minerals such as iron and zinc and vitamin B12 is also a challenge for vegetarians (Elmadfa & Singer, 2009; Schüpbach, Wegmüller, Berguerand, Bui & Herter-Aeberli, 2015). Nutritional deficiencies and their consequences are most noticeable during periods of high metabolic demand such as pregnancy, infancy and childhood (Penney & Miller, 2008). As a result, several articles in that era were published detailing the adverse effects of vegetarianism on infants and children.

These articles ranged all the way from cautions and call for education to outright criminalization of “vegetarian” diets in paediatric populations. As an example of the former consider the *British Medical Journal* article by Ward, Drakeford, Milton and James (1982) entitled “*Nutritional rickets in Rastafarian children*” where they relate four case histories of rickets in these vegetarian children. All children had radiological sign of rickets manifest in various joints. The rickets was attributed to the vegetarian diet and the fact that these children had also not been given vitamin D and other supplements according to standard practice. No investigation was done into the actual content and composition of their diets. The authors identified immigrant Rastafarian families living in the United Kingdom as an at risk population for nutritional deficiencies and advised that they be monitored and enlightened.

Three years earlier the same journal published an article titled “*Malnutrition in infants receiving cult diets: a form of child abuse.*” by Roberts, West, Ogilvie and Dillin (1979). These authors also reported on four paediatric cases and were justifiably indignant and horrified at the dietary practices of these parents and the way in which their infants were adversely affected. These four infants had several obvious health problems that did not require a diagnostician to observe. Problems included general wasting, glossitis, pitting oedema, lethargy, emaciation,

and rickets. The children were largely given a macrobiotic diet. In the first case the infant was given breast milk and raw vegetable and fruit from birth to thirteen months and the second was breastfed for a month and then weaned on to rice, wheat, oats, beans and sesame flour. I concur with the conclusion of the authors: “The four cases described here exemplify the grave nutritional consequences of some cult diets when fed to children, which must be regarded as a form of child abuse.” (Roberts, *et al.*, 1979).

These extreme and fanatical dietary practices greatly tarnished the image of vegetarianism. The literature in this era was dominated by case studies showing the imbalance and inadequacy of vegetarian diets, e.g. “*Scurvey produced by a Zen Macrobiotic diet*” (Sherlock & Rothschild, 1967).

Often vegetarians were all clumped together regardless of their dietary practice. The unflattering views of vegetarianism may also have been fuelled by its association with anti-establishment movements such as the hippies of the 1960’s era (Belasco, 2007). This shows that prevailing socio-cultural factors influence what scientific evidence is sought for and how it is interpreted.

One should also note that at this stage in history the science of epidemiology was its infancy and longitudinal studies and clinical trials of vegetarians were rare. Clinical trials and longitudinal studies are taken to provide the strongest evidence of the impact of lifestyle choices on population’s well-being. Because clinicians are exposed to the sick, the cases they saw were thought to represent the general vegetarian population. Case studies were the mainstay of publications on vegetarianism. Thus the great potential of misunderstanding vegetarianism was realised.

In spite of the negative views about vegetarianism there were scientists who advised moderation in its condemnation and the need to differentiate between different modes of

vegetarianism. In the 1967 Nutrition Symposium of the United Kingdom Nutrition Society, Ellis and Munford (1967) argued from several cross sectional studies conducted in the previous decade that vegetarian diets were able to meet the recommended daily requirements if planned properly. They said that is especially the case in Western societies where the most informed vegetarians have abundant access to a wide variety of foods. Dywer, Deitz, Andrews and Suskind (1982) in their cross sectional dietary assessment of 39 pre-schoolers found that most of them were able to achieve the recommended daily allowances. The only sub-group that did not seem to hit most targets were those on a macrobiotic diet. They also noted that vegan Seventh-day Adventist parents gave their children vitamin B12 enriched soy milk.

2.4.2. The second phase: vegetarianism is healthy

It took at least three decades before the differentiation between rational and radical vegetarian diets began to be accepted by the scientific community. It was in the mid-1980s when there was a decline in studies concerned with the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets. Nutritional literature began to look at lacto-ovo vegetarians, vegans, lactovegetarians and ovo-vegetarians as the normative “vegetarians” and began to investigate the potential health benefits of these diets (Crockart, 1995). This change in the view of vegetarianism marked a paradigm shift which is reflected by publications from the mid-80s to the mid-90s.

Scientific progress at this time which was marked by an increase in scientific rigour and peer-review processes encouraged a fairer analysis of vegetarianism. Reliance on case reports decreased and their publication in general dwindled to a minimum. By the mid-90s the literature was dominated by clinical trials on vegetarianism. The growing science of epidemiology and the trickling in of longitudinal studies of vegetarians began to give it a much needed face lift. Vegetarian diets were seen to be associated with decreased risk of developing what was then commonly known as degenerative diseases (currently known as non-

communicable diseases) such as coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and certain cancers (Melby, Goldflies, Hyner & Lyle, 1989; Mills, Beeson, Phillips & Fraser, 1989). They were also at a lower risk of dying from them. Key *et al.*, (1998) using a collaborative analysis of 76172 subjects from five prospective studies demonstrated that vegetarians had significantly lower risk of dying from ischaemic heart diseases compared with meat-eaters. Vegetarians had lower rates of obesity, one the major risk factors of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

However it was not easy for certain scientists to adjust their prejudices against vegetarianism in spite of the mounting evidence. Thorogood, Mann, Appleby & McPherson (1994) followed a cohort of 6115 individuals over a period of 12 years found that vegetarians had lower cancer and heart disease relate mortality than omnivores. However they conclude their study by casting doubt on the positive effects of vegetarianism by stating the “data do not justify advice to exclude meat from the diet since there are several attributes of a vegetarian diet apart from not eating meat which might reduce the risk.”

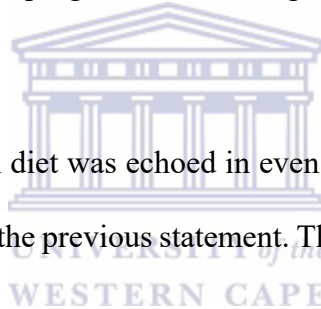
Nonetheless the growing understanding of the role of fibre in health, and the fact that meat had zero fibre changed the way vegetarian and meat based diets were compared. Meat descended a few rungs in the ladder as the premier of nutritional adequacy. The growing association of meat with cholesterol and the growing epidemic of heart disease did not help. Meat-eaters were seen to be equally at risk of both nutritional excess as well as deficiency and the vegetarian diet was seen to be at par with omnivore diets, if not slightly better.

2.4.3. The third phase: vegetarianism is the new millennium diet

The exponential increase of robust evidence for the benefits of vegetarianism based on clinical, epidemiological and basic science research increased the favour with which it was viewed from a nutrition standpoint (Hanf & Gonder, 2005). The discovery of non-nutritive disease

preventive components of plants such as antioxidants and phytochemicals further raised the profile of plant based diets. Plants foods were now seen to be at the forefront of disease prevention and absolutely vital for optimum nutrition (Stacewicz-Saputzakis & Bowen, 2005).

The third phase of the paradigm shift on vegetarianism which characterized the beginning of the 21st century could probably not be captured better than by a joint position statement by the two North American dietetic associations published in 2003: “It is the position of the American Dietetic Association and Dieticians of Canada that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.” (American Dietetic Association, 2003). Thus vegetarianism began the new millennium not just exonerated and purged from its maligned past, but also praised and lauded as the diet for the future.



This affirmation of the vegetarian diet was echoed in even stronger terms when the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics revised the previous statement. The current position statement states:

“It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.

“These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes. Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and are associated with much less environmental damage.” (Melina, Craig, & Levin, 2016)

The new statements emphasizes that vegan diets, which exclude all animal products are also to be accounted adequate and healthy. The statement also asserts that vegetarian diets are appropriate for all life stages from womb to the tomb, removing any doubts which may have

been there about their appropriateness for infants, children and athletes. Lastly the statement addresses the dimension of environmental stewardship and sustainable nutrition showing the advantage of vegetarianism on these points.

2.5. Motives for being vegetarian

The first question that a vegetarian will usually get asked when they disclose their dietary practice is “why are you a vegetarian?” or “why don’t you eat meat?” This is an obvious question to ask, seeing that meat is viewed by the carnist society as being so desirable to the good life and indispensable to optimum human nutrition. Thus investigators have been intrigued by the motives of vegetarians and many studies have been conducted to answer this question.

In the Western world personal health and animal welfare have been identified as the two main motivations for adopting vegetarianism (Fox & Ward, 2008a). Vegetarians espousing animal welfare have come to be known as ethical or moral vegetarians and tend to include other arguments for vegetarianism, such as the protection of the environment and sustainable living (Larsson, Rönnlund, Johansson, Dahlgren, 2003). They are more likely to adopt other behaviours which can be termed “eco-friendly.” For example, one ethical vegetarian says:

“I telecommute, so I’m not burning gas sitting in rush hour traffic every day. I bought a less luxurious car than my previous one because it gets 50% better mileage. I keep my thermostat at 65 during the cold season and don’t heat rooms that aren’t used much, including my guest bedroom. I don’t heat my master bath[room] since I only use it about 15 minutes a day.” (Fox & Ward, 2008b)

This is an illustration of how the choice to become a vegetarian goes beyond a dietary practice which meets biological needs. It forms an integral part of a person’s identity and thus infuses every area of their life, affecting other choices that they make and determining how they

express themselves. After a 20 year career of vegetarianism one vegetarian said: “You know it (vegetarianism) becomes part of your identity because it is so pervasive in your life, but it is also second nature too.” (Jabs, Devine & Sobal, 2000).

A similar observation has been made about health vegetarians. Along with subsisting on a plant based diet they also adopt other practices which are considered “healthy”, such as eliminating smoking and alcohol and increasing physical activity (Dyett, Sabaté, Haddad, Rajaram, & Shavlik, 2013)

The difference in the additional practices that ethical and health vegetarians adopt may suggest other differences between these groups. It has been found that health vegetarians tend to adopt vegetarianism gradually, whereas ethical vegetarians tend to adopt it abruptly, usually after awakening to the moral implications of eating animals (Jabs, Devine, Sobal, 2000). Ethical vegetarians tend to be stricter in their avoidance of meat, gravitating more toward veganism and have greater intensity of conviction (Hoffman, Stallings, Bessinger & Brooks, 2013). Thus health vegetarians, have a higher risk of lapsing especially those who adopt vegetarianism merely to lose weight (Barr & Chapman, 2002). It is my opinion that people who adopt a vegetarian diet just to lose weight or to address a specific health problem, have not really adopted vegetarianism per se, they are merely experimenting with another diet. The abruptness of adopting vegetarianism and their stronger aversion to animal based products may explain why ethical vegetarians were found by Dyett, Sabate, Haddad, Rajaram & Shavlik (2013) to be following a less balanced diet than health vegetarians. It is also possible that due to the health vegetarian’s concern about well-being they may have been more careful in their substitution of animal-derived nutrients.

However, ethical vegetarians sometimes feel more self-righteous than health vegetarians (Fox & Ward, 2008a). They see the health motivation as narrow and selfish. One ethical vegetarian expressed how unimpressed he was about health vegetarians in these terms:

“Now, about health vegans. I certainly don’t jump for joy just because ‘one less animal is killed’. If people only care about themselves and their health, that shows they are selfish and egotistical. I find their motivations for being vegan boring and selfish. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to stay healthy... But there are lots and lots of healthy people who eat meat and/or fish every day of their lives and they live till they’re 100.” (Fox & Ward, 2008a).

In exploring vegetarian motivations it has also become apparent that though people may have been launched into vegetarianism by one motive, as time progresses they tend to incorporate other motives. For example, someone who begins as a health vegetarian may later also use animal right and environmental reasons for being vegetarian. This may be brought about by a desire to bolster their arguments in defence of their non-normative dietary practice. They may feel that the more justifications they put forth the tighter their case will be. The progressive adoption of different motivations may also be influenced by association. Since vegetarians tend to seek each other out and support each other differently motivated individuals in time may come to share similar motivations (Shapiro, 2014).

Besides the two main motive groups identified, other vegetarians cite religious convictions and cultural practices as a motive for their vegetarianism. Apart from Seventh-day Adventists these vegetarians usually originate outside Western societies. They include Hindus from India, certain Buddhists from China and Rastafarians from Africa and the Caribbean (Davidson, 2003; Nath, 2010). A small proportion of contemporary vegetarians cite gustatory reasons for

avoiding meat. These individuals just hate the taste, texture or smell of meat (Janda & Trocchia, 2001).

2.6. The process of becoming a vegetarian

A few qualitative studies have investigated the process of becoming a vegetarian. Using a phenomenological design McDonald (2000) interviewed 12 vegetarians. From the collective analysis of the interview transcripts she conceptualized becoming a vegetarian as a learning process. This learning process takes place through at least six steps that are usually sequential. However some steps can also be concurrent or looping. Hirschler (2011) used McDonald's learning process in his analysis of 32 participant's experiences in becoming vegans. He found that the approach is very useful in mapping the path to becoming a vegan. The two studies will be looked at together to explicate this learning process.

The first step is simply titled "Who I was" which refers to a period when the participants were not exposed to vegetarianism. They mostly ate and enjoyed meat with little compunction of conscience. The participants view this era of their lives as a time of ignorance and naivety:

"When I saw hamburgers or steaks, I never put two and two together. I used to eat tongue, which is a Jewish delicacy. I never even knew what it was. It's that disguised. Even though they say the word tongue, I never knew it was that."

(McDonald, 2000).

Carol Adams a feminist vegetarian activist contends that this ignorance or naivety is maintained by carnist hegemonic structures. She highlighted that meat is prepared in a manner that dissociates it from its source, the dead animal. This dissociation is deepened by the names that are used to call flesh food items. For example, people would rather say they are eating bacon and beef than use the words pig and cow. She referred to this transformation of living animals into food as the creation of absent referent (Adams, 2000).

Another participants describing this stage said: “Growing up I was a big meat-eater. I loved it! I couldn’t imagine living without it! In fact, there were rare occasions when my parents would fix a meal without meat, and I would cry and sulk.” (Hirschler, 2011). Apart from loving meat participants also regarded themselves as animal lovers, and some owned several pets. However, they never made the connection between what they were eating and what they loved, nor did they see any dissonance in this.

A participant said:

“... (I) had lots of pets, dogs, cats. I also had an uncle that had a farm where he raised cows. I used to go up to my uncle’s farm and play with cows and never made the connection where the meat came from until later in life and I was like, whoa! It’s crazy. I loved the cows. I played with the cows.” (McDonald, 2000)

The next crucial step that set the participants into a vegetarian course is what McDonald (2000) calls the “learning event” or the “catalytic experience.” This is when the participants got exposed to the realities of cruelty to animals that is involved in the meat industry. This realization was most commonly brought about by reading material or watching a visual that highlighted the suffering of animals. One participant said:

“I watched the video. It was almost like, it was like they say, the curtain was pulled back. The truth was made known. I felt like I had been born again. It was like there is no turning back now. Now I know the cruelty that exists.” (McDonald, 2000)

Catalytic experiences were characterized by strong emotions such as guilt, anger or sadness. Sometimes the catalytic experience came on more subtly through internal reflection or a sudden dawning of reason. One participant said he gave up eating meat after exchanging a long

thoughtful glance with a buck (McDonald, 2000). It dawned on him that he could not eat this creature nor its relatives.

The catalytic experiences usually lead the participants to be oriented to learning more about animal cruelty and/or how to become a vegetarian, eventually or immediately leading to an adoption of a vegetarian lifestyle. The more the participants learned the deeper their convictions became, and the more empowered they became to live the vegetarian life. The participants became self-directed learners with a moral imperative. Reading was the primary mode of information acquisition which produced the conviction to adopt vegetarianism. “That’s when I fully made the step. When I read the literature, seeing how the dairy industry was just a destructive machine, so I made that step.” (McDonald, 2000).

Sometimes the catalytic experience lead to repression, where although they were deeply impressed about the subject of animal cruelty and the imperative to become vegetarian, the participants continued eating meat. One of the participants even became an animal activist and joined an animal rights group, whilst continuing to eat meat because meat was his staple. At times additional catalytic experiences were necessary for the participants to move on. At times the repressed experience would press itself back to consciousness and force action. Sometimes external circumstances changed which favoured the adoption of vegetarianism, such as moving to college or finding a supportive partner.

The final step is settling into a vegetarian identity and adopting a vegetarian worldview. This worldview involves a greater sense of connectedness to what vegetarians call non-human animals. Vegetarians have greater awareness of the suffering in the world and the part they can play in reducing that suffering through the choices they make. They also see themselves as having a new place in society, as guardians and promoters of ethical and compassionate living. They see themselves as truly autonomous and self-directed rather than being mere

products or reflectors of their society. They also express a greater satisfaction in living a life that is in harmony with their inner moral compass (McDonald, 2000; Hirschler, 2011). Hirschler (2011) concludes that his study reaffirms McDonald's description of how one becomes a vegan and is helpful in understanding this phenomenon.

2.7. Vegetarians and their social contexts

Eating is a social activity, which connects individuals and is a mediator of building relationships (Beardsworth & Kiel, 2002). As a result vegetarians tend to face adjustment challenges in their social contexts as a result of their choice. Their social contexts can act as barriers, enablers or modifiers of the vegetarian experience. Roth (2005) summarised common reactions that omnivorous family members have toward the member that chooses to become vegetarian based on interviews from participants situated in the American Midwest.

Firstly, family members may react with indifference and treat the vegetarianism as just a passing phase. This notion may be due to an awareness of the inherent difficulties of lifestyle change. This reaction may also be a form of denial which helps family members to avoid dealing with the ramifications of the change.

The second way that family members react to the vegetarian is by attempting to persuade or pressure them to eat meat (Roth, 2005). Dependents and minors who choose to become vegetarians are usually denied the choice by their omnivore parents (Largen, 2009). Older children may be consistently nagged by concerned parents. One participant stated that his mother badgered him incessantly for ten years to eat some meat (Roth, 2005). Parents are often worried about the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets. Nutrients causing the greatest anxiety are protein, iron and vitamin B12 (Marsh, Zeuschner & Sanders, 2012).

Thirdly, some family members resort to temptation or trickery to get the vegetarian to eat meat (Roth, 2005). One participant described how her brother ground meat into small pieces, mixed

it with other foods and then tricked her to eat it. Merriman (2010) observed that this kind of hostile treatment was more likely to be experienced by female vegetarians from their male significant others. Male vegetarians seem not to be bothered as much as female vegetarians. However male vegetarians are perceived to be less masculine, because meat is closely associated with masculinity (Rothgerber, 2012; Ruby & Heine, 2011)

Challenging the logical or philosophical basis for vegetarianism is a fourth way that family members may react to the vegetarian (Roth, 2005). Arguments raised include ideas such as:

- “Fish is not meat” (Roth, 2005).
- “If killing animals is bad, what makes killing vegetables right?” (Roth, 2005).
- “Eat only fruits! No. Because fruits have life as well, eat just air!” (Yoo & Yoon, 2015)
- “Raising vegetables involves the killing of many innocent bugs.” (Roth, 2005).

Moreover, vegetarians that use any kind of animal products such as leather or gelatine based products may be accused of inconsistency. The vegetarians are also ridiculed for wasting compassion on dumb animals when there are more serious issues to invest one’s passion on (Yoo & Yoon, 2015) The resulting conflicts between vegetarians and their significant others can be so heated that they cause actual alienation.

Lastly, Roth (2005) observed that vegetarians may be accused of breaking family traditions and disregarding family values. One participant stated that her daughter refuses to celebrate thanksgiving with her because she will not prepare the traditional turkey for the occasion.

The reasons for the negative reactions that others have toward the vegetarian are influenced by what people believe about meat and the vegetarian diet. In South Korea for example, a high meat diet is associated with wealth, success and modernization while vegetarianism is associated with poverty and low social class (Yoo, 2011). New Zealanders generally believe

that wool, meat and dairy are the backbone of their economic success. Thus the small minority of vegetarians are viewed by fellow countrymen as being unpatriotic by rejecting that which has made New Zealand what it is (Potts & White, 2008). This judgement leads vegetarians to feel like outsiders or outcasts in their own society. Often the media encourages the isolation of vegetarians by promoting negative stereotypes about vegetarians. Cole and Morgan (2011) observed that UK newspapers maintained a derogatory discourse about vegetarianism.

Furthermore it has been observed that omnivores do share some of the values that lead some people to become vegetarians. Lea and Worsley (2004) found that 15% of omnivores in a 600 Australian sample had similar beliefs about meat and vegetarianism that vegetarians had. The question is why do these individuals then continue to eat meat? Indeed, many omnivores find themselves in a moral dilemma. It appears that many choose to rationalise their meat consumption in order to minimise feeling guilty. Piazza, *et al.*, (2015) found that there were four main rationalizations that omnivores used. These are that meat-eating is natural, necessary, normal and nice.

The social experiences of vegetarians show that adopting a non-normative lifestyle or identity can be quite challenging, especially if one still wants to interact normally with the rest of society.

2.8. Theoretical frameworks for psychosocial studies of vegetarianism

The study of vegetarianism has been framed using several theories. A theory provides a framework within which connections and relationships about a phenomena may be described, explained or even predicted. Their importance in empirical research lies in the fact that they give a common way of viewing and describing certain phenomena so that different studies can be compared using the same standard.

2.8.1. Transtheoretical Model

Mendes (2013) discussed and proposed the use of the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) to describe the process of becoming a vegan. TTM was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) and it is used to study how people change from unhealthy behaviour patterns to healthy behaviour patterns. The model seeks to integrate principles and processes from a number of theories of behaviour change then in existence. The model adds a temporal dimension which none of these behaviour change theories had.

The most notable construct of TTM is the stages of change. This is the construct that added a temporal dimension to the behaviour change theory landscape. At the time when TTM was introduced behaviour change was often assumed to be an event that occurs instantaneously. TTM suggests that change takes place in six stages, namely (i) *precontemplation*, (ii) *contemplation*, (iii) *preparation*, (iv) *action*, and (v) *maintenance* and (vi) *termination*.

TTM was developed and matured through studying behaviours which are universally acknowledged to be unhealthy such as smoking. Prochaska and Velicer, (1997) assert that for a behaviour change to fit the model it has to be acknowledged by scientist and professionals as to be healthy. Mendes (2013) points out that one of the challenges in applying TTM to the migration from carnism to veganism is that many people are not yet convinced that such a move is healthy. The other challenge that I perceive with using TTM in veganism is accommodating people who adopt veganism for ethical and not health reasons. In spite of these challenges one can still use the model's constructs to study the subjective experience of change that individual's adopting vegetarian diet undergo.

In the *precontemplation* stage the individual has no intention of changing his or her behaviour in the next six months. This could be due to lack of awareness of the consequences of the behaviour. Other people in the *precontemplation* stage have attempted to change but have

failed and are now discouraged. Individuals in the *precontemplation* stage generally avoid hearing, seeing and thinking about anything that would bring them to a realization of their need to change (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). In reference to vegetarianism this stage is characteristic of mainstream carnist culture, where people are oblivious to the deleterious effects of animal flesh consumption and are often unprepared to hear or see the evidence that it is deleterious. Meat-eaters generally avoid having to confront the real cost of meat-eating (Rothgerber, 2014).

In the *contemplation* stage the individual intends to change their behaviour in the next six months. At this stage another construct of TTM known as decisional balance becomes important. It involves the weighing of pros and cons of the change as well as the level of confidence the person has in their ability to change and stick with the change under a variety of tempting situations. The pros and cons that are weighed at this stage most commonly include personal health, the environment and the welfare of animals. Pros would include improvement in health, financial incentive of decreased medical bills and the consciousness of doing the right things. The cons could include fear of social isolation or ridicule, the inconvenience of a new and unfamiliar diet and the increased cost of finding substitutes. Self-efficacy and the perceived seriousness of the health problem were found to be factors predictive of one's ability to choose and to stick with a raw vegan diet (Link & Jacobson, 2008).

The next stage is the *preparation* stage where the individual has set their mind to change their behaviour within a month. This usually involves making a specific plan, setting dates and getting information on how to succeed. This is followed by the *action* stage where one has made the overt behavioural change within the past six months. The behaviour change must be of sufficient magnitude to have a significant effect on one's health according to expert

consensus. Reducing one's smoking from 30 to 25 cigarettes a day would not be deemed of significance. Total abstinence is the only acceptable behaviour change.

Individuals in the *maintenance* stage have made the behaviour change more than six months ago and are employing strategies to avoid relapse. They do not generally exert as much effort as in the *action* stage, which suggests that the habit is building. The last stage is the *termination* stage where the person no longer feels any temptation to relapse and they have attained full self-efficacy toward the new behaviour.

Another important construct of TTM is the processes of change. The ten processes of change can be divided into two categories. Half of the processes are characterized as behavioural and the other half as experiential.

2.8.2. Theory of Deviance

Another theory that has been proposed and actually used to conceptualize becoming a vegetarian is David Matza's theory of deviance. In this theory the deviant who chooses a counter normative path undergoes three stages in relation to the phenomenon which expresses deviance (Matza, 1969). The first stage is *affinity*, where one become attracted, interested or charmed by the deviant behaviour. The second stage known as *affiliating* is when the person acquires the skills and the knowledge needed to become a deviant. The final stage is *signification*, where the person practices the deviant behaviour and epitomises what that deviance suggests.

Boyle (2007) in her dissertation argued that vegetarianism is a form of deviance since it goes against accepted societal food norms. She interviewed 45 vegetarians and showed how their vegetarian lifestyle fits Matza's deviant theory. However, she also noted vegetarianism is not a typical deviance because on some level it is an admired behaviour because of its association to health and the self-discipline required to do it well.

2.9. Theoretical Framework

The bioecological systems theory is a theory of human development which was developed and posited by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Up to that time theories of human development were actually focused solely on child development. It was popularly thought that once a person reached adulthood development ceased because they had arrived at the point of maturity. Another drawback of the theories at that time is that they focused largely on the developing individual and his or her characteristics to the near exclusion of the contexts they developed in.

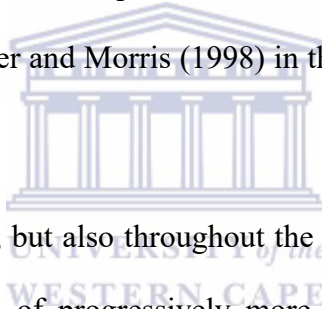
Thus it was Bronfenbrenner's intent to project the critical nature of an individual's context to his or her development. In his initial thrust to highlight the importance of context he conceptualised the contexts as nested or concentric systems with the developing individual at the core. These systems were the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Thus his theory was aptly named the ecological systems theory.

The microsystem is any context in which the developing person spends significant amount of time, such as home, school, peer group, workplace, etc. The mesosystem is composed of the interactions between the microsystems in which the individual is located. For example, the activities and interactions in the school can affect the activities and interactions in the home. The exosystem is set up when a context which does not directly contain the developing individual impacts on one of the microsystems. A good example is how a parent's activities and interactions in the work place may affect the home environment. The macrosystem refers to larger sociocultural, economic and political contexts that materially and ideologically influence and interact with other systems (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009).

Throughout his career Bronfenbrenner reviewed, revised and refined his theory until his death in September 2005. He had stated "I have been pursuing a hidden agenda: that of re-assessing,

revising, and extending—as well as regretting and even renouncing—some of the conceptions set forth in my 1979 monograph” (Bronfenbrenner,1989). At the time of his passing the theory had developed into what is known as the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. These are the four fundamental factors that mediate development. This represent the mature version of his theory which will be used to conceptualize this study.

Process refers to that which can explain the relationship between a contextual factor such as social class, community amenities or subculture to a developmental outcome of interest. These relationships may also be observed between the outcome of interest and person characteristics such as race or gender. These processes, he later named proximal processes, and proposed them to be the primary engines of development. The importance of proximal processes is brought to view by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) in the first proposition upon which the PPCT model rests:



“Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the lifecourse, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes.”

The examples of proximal processes he identified include “feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, problem solving, caring for others in distress, making plans, performing complex tasks, and acquiring new knowledge and know-how.” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)

In the second proposition he explains how and why proximal processes drive development in relation to other factors of PPCT model, namely the person, context and time. The second proposition states:

The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, the environment – both immediate and more remote – in which the processes are taking place, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)

Bronfenbrenner divided the person characteristics that affect development into demand, resource and force characteristics. Demand characteristics are mainly physical, fixed and genetically determined. An individual cannot change them. They include age, gender, skin colour and physical appearance. These characteristics often determine initial interactions because of inherent expectations they elicit in given contexts. A typical example is how pretty babies get more attention than their less attractive counterparts (Berry & McArthur 1986). This is likely to differentiate the proximal processes initiated. Another example is how people with more Afrocentric features get comparatively harsher treatment and sentences from the American justice system (Blair, Judd & Chapleau, 2004).

Resource characteristics on the other hand have to do with the ability to learn or adapt. This will determine the extent to which the person can engage in proximal processes. This ability includes cognitive and social skills as well as access to things that stimulate their development, such as a good education. Lastly, force characteristics have to do with the degree of an individual's motivation, their temperamental nature, drive, etc (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009).

The temporal aspect of PPCT model has been divided into microtime, mesotime and macrotime. Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998) defined them as follows:

“*Microtime* refers to continuity versus discontinuity in ongoing episodes of proximal process. *Mesotime* is the periodicity of these episodes across broader time intervals, such as days and weeks. Finally, *Macrotime* focuses on the changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations as they affect and are affected by, processes and outcomes of human development over the lifecourse.”

Time is important so that proximal processes once formed can become increasingly complex. Thus microtime and mesotime can be used to objectively measure the contribution of time to a particular developmental outcome. An element called “timing in lives” is also important. The ability of events to have a developmental impact is determined by when it occurs in the individuals life course. For example it is now known that nutrition in a child’s life has the greatest impact on their physical development in the first one thousand days of life than later on (Wrottersley, Lamper & Pisa, 2015).

Another important principle with regard to time is that the time or era in history as well as the defining events of that era shape the life course and development of individuals. This is one feature of macrotime, which often differentiate cohorts of people born at different times.

Thus far there is no study that has investigated vegetarianism using the Bioecological Theory of Human Development. This study is framed using this theory. Firstly, the theory allows one to define a developmental outcome of interest, which in this case is a vegetarian identity. Secondly it will help in identifying those person characteristics and the contextual factors that are involved in the development of a vegetarian identity.

2.10. Summary

People make a conscious decision to become vegetarians prompted by different motives, from health to animal welfare and even religion. Beyond it being a dietary practice vegetarianism forms part of one's identity and worldview. Since this worldview is not shared by the larger society, vegetarians face a lot of opposition from significant others and society at large in developing and maintain their identity. However, vegetarians arm themselves with knowledge in order to grow in their identity as well as to be able to defend it. Much of what we understand about the experiences of vegetarians is derived from Western Caucasian vegetarians. Very little has been written about the experience of vegetarianism from other cultures. To date there is no study detailing the experiences of Africans in adopting and maintaining a vegetarian identity. The PPCT model was used as a conceptual framework for this study.

The next chapter deals with the research methodology employed in this study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The main research question this particular study sought to answer was:

How is vegetarianism perceived, experienced and practiced by Black urban South Africans residing in Cape Town?

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions, experiences and practices of Black South African vegetarians living in the urban settings of Cape Town. The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the experiences of Black South Africans in developing a vegetarian identity.
2. To explore the contextual factors perceived by Black South Africans to be implicated in their experience and practice of vegetarianism.
3. To describe how Black South African vegetarians practice vegetarianism in their contexts.



Therefore, in this chapter the research design, the exact steps and techniques used to practically carry out the research project will be outlined. The principles behind them as well as justification for their use will be outlined. These steps include the selection of the participants, where and how the data was collected, as well as the procedures followed in data analysis. The chapter will end by describing how the data will be stored and disseminated.

3.2. Research design

The objectives of this study called for both exploration and description. Thus this study used a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual design. An exploratory qualitative design is preferred for previously unexplored phenomena or when very little is known about the subject in question (Mason, Augustyn, Seakhoa-King, 2010). As already noted, there is

currently no scientific data of any kind about Black South African vegetarians therefore this design was used. This design provides a first sketch or map of the terrain of a phenomenon, revealing its elements, their features and relationships. This design is used to uncover broadly the features that characterise a phenomenon in a given context. These characteristics can then be studied further using other methods and approaches to broaden and deepen understanding of the phenomenon (Mason, Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2010).

A qualitative approach was adopted for this study because it allows for the phenomenon to be described from the perspective of the participants. It gave prominence to the meanings they attach to their experiences of the phenomenon. It also sought to explain how and why they formed such opinions (Pope & Mays, 1995).

3.3. Research setting

The metropolitan city of Cape Town is the second most populous in South Africa. According to the 2011 census Black people account for 38.6% of its 3 740 026 population (StatsSA, 2014). The participants in this study were accessed from various parts of the city including townships, suburbs, and university campuses. Most of the Black people residing in Cape Town came from rural areas for greater economic opportunities in the city. Many have ended up settling in the townships. Cape Town has four very large townships namely Gugulethu, Nyanga, Langa and Khayelitsha. The residences are predominantly 1 or 2 bedroom houses and informal corrugated iron structures. There is a high degree of unemployment and the majority of those employment is classified as unskilled labour. The 2011 census revealed an average unemployment rate of 40% in these townships (City of Cape Town, 2014). However, there is also a sizeable middle class composed of different professionals and business people. One will also find Blacks

scattered across the various suburbs of Cape Town. Most of them are professionals and belong to the socioeconomic upper middle class¹.

3.4. Participants

The participants were selected from the urban population of Black South African vegetarians residing in Cape Town. The participants selected had been practicing vegetarianism for more than one year. Considering that one has to make food choices on a daily basis, a year was assumed to be sufficient to have accumulated experience in vegetarianism under different circumstances. The participants were all older than 18 years at the time of the interview. It was assumed that as adults they were self-directed and thus were in a position to choose their desired lifestyle. The first language of the participants was isiXhosa and Sepedi, however they were quite proficient in English and were comfortable in expressing themselves in English. So the interviews could be conducted in English, which eliminated the need to use translation. The final important criteria was that they had to be vegan or vegetarians supplementing with milk or eggs or both. Flexitarians and semi-vegetarians were excluded from the study.

3.5. Sampling strategy

To gain access to a variety of respondents the snowballing sampling strategy was used. Snowball sampling also known as network sampling has been defined as a technique for finding research participants, where one participant provides the name of another, who then provides the name of the third, and so on (Vogt, 2005). The process continues until the researcher can locate no new contacts or the new contacts fail to add anything substantial to the data. This process is based on the knowledge that people with similar experiences are often aware of and seek each other out. Thus one participant will be able to lead to others (Knoke &

¹ Upper middle class by South African standards is a household of four that has a total income between R30 000 and R60 000 per month after direct income tax.

Yang, 2008). It is suited for people who share an uncommon experience such as subculture groupings.

The initial research participant was located serendipitously. As I was relating to an old acquaintance my current activities including my research, he mentioned that a colleague of his was a vegetarian. This participant was used to pilot the study. He could not offer me any more contacts, so I contacted the Seventh-day Adventists Student Movement and Rastafarian Cultural Society at the University of the Western Cape because these two organizations advocate vegetarianism and their membership is composed of appreciable numbers of Black South Africans.

A possible challenge with snowballing is that people who know each other may also likely have shared perspectives. This may limit the breadth of data collected. Eight participants in total were interviewed for this study. The participants resided in various places in Cape Town including Bellville, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Mitchel's Plain, Montana, Strand and Wesbank.

3.6. Data collection, instrument and procedure

Data was collected by means of individual in-depth, face to face interviews (Appendix 3). Interviews permit investigators to gain an intimate knowledge of the participants so as to understand how they think and feel (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006). Indeed, their utility in qualitative research lies in their ability “to find out what is in or on a person’s mind..., to access the perspectives of the person being interviewed..., to find out things we cannot directly observe.” (Patton, 1990)

Wengraaf (2001) explains what is “in-depth” about this kind of interviewing when he states that: “To go into something in depth is to get a sense of how the apparently straightforward is actually more complicated, of how the ‘surface appearances’ may be quite misleading about ‘depth realities.’ These realities may be hidden even to the participant. As they are led by the

interview to make explicit what may have been implicit to them they are lead to appreciate what may have been hidden from their consciousness in how and why they think and feel in a particular way about a phenomenon.

Interviews are an accessible tool to use because they share elements with the conversations that people are used to. However, the interview is different because although the researcher tries to minimise differences in power and attempts to engage as an equal, he or she must keep in mind the goals of the interview and direct it towards those goals (Corbetta, 2003).

Kvale (2007) mentions the following as some of the features of qualitative interviews:

Interpersonal situation: Kvale argues that the interview is a unique knowledge creation exercise and is a product of researcher and participant as well as the situation in which the interview took place. It is possible that the same people in a different setting would come up with somewhat different results. It is even more the case that if a different researcher was conducting the interview the results will definitely be different. I informed the participants that I am a practicing vegetarian. I believe that this helped to create a connection which made them freer to express their opinions. *Focus:* In describing these aspects of the interview he asserts that the researcher focuses the interview on particular themes. Thus the researcher leads the participant toward the discussion of certain themes, “but not to specific opinions about these themes.” (Kvale, 2007). I allowed the participants to relate their life stories and to explain how various life processes were related to the theme of vegetarianism.

Descriptive: The researcher probes the participant to describe as precisely and comprehensively as possible, their thoughts, feelings and actions surrounding the phenomenon. I asked the participants to elaborate and describe in as much detail a possible their experiences relative to vegetarianism.

After the research was approved by the university research and ethics committee the initial contact was emailed to set up an appointment. The email included an explanation of the purpose of the study. An information sheet (Appendix 1) on the study and informed consent sheet (Appendix 2) were attached to the email. The interview was set to take place at the participant's work place which was in the University of the Western Cape library. Since his office was busy he booked a boardroom in which we met.

It is usually advisable for interviews to take place in the natural setting where the participants are most comfortable to express themselves and where the phenomenon in consideration is likely to manifest. Most qualitative research guides state that the most appropriate place for this will likely be the participant's home, when the phenomenon being investigated is linked with their personal lives. However, in this case such an arrangement could not be made due to time and resource constraints. However, I am of the opinion that this did not compromise the data gathering. The participant spends significant amount of time at work and has opportunity to experience vegetarianism in this setting.

The second place that I turned to look for participants was in the Rastafarian Cultural Society based at the University of the Western Cape. I went in person to their offices to explain the purpose of the study and I left my contacts with them and a poster on their notice board. One participant called back and after obtaining his email address I sent him the research information pack as previous. Since the participants is a resident student the interview took place in a boardroom on campus. He thought there would be too many disturbances at the residence. I could not get any more participants from the Rastafarian Society because those interested did not meet inclusion criteria of ethnicity or dietary practice. The participant and the Rastafarian Society could not give me contacts of other Rastafarians who met the inclusion criteria off campus. The reason I wanted participants from off campus is to diversify persons and contexts and thus enrich the understanding of the phenomenon.

The next group that I approached were Seventh-day Adventists. They have a student movement on the University of the Western Cape campus but since they do not have an office I could not meet with them. I contacted a friend in the Gugulethu township who attends a Seventh-day Adventist church to secure me contacts of suitable participants. He supplied me with eleven telephone numbers to contact. I was able to make an appointment and interview six of these contacts. The rest of the contacts we could not find a common time and place to meet. The participants had nowhere to get the email so I explained in detail over the phone what the study was about in order to set up the appointment. The remaining six interviews were conducted in different settings. Two participants travelled to the University of the Western Cape for their interviews. Two were conducted in their homes in Wesbank, one in Gugulethu. One participant was interviewed in his work place at Saltriver. The average length of the interviews was 40 minutes. The interviews were all tape recorded and transcribed.

During each interview the participants were asked to read the information sheet (Appendix 1) as well as the consent form (Appendix 2) and to ask any questions. Additional explanation was given where necessary before the participant signed the consent form. The audio recorder was then turned on and the interview ensued. Notes were taken during the interview. The notes included observations of facial expressions, body language, and intonation. They also included possible leads which could be useful in my analysis and interpretation of the data later on.

3.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis of qualitative interviews in a sense begins during the interview. Preliminary notes and observation were jotted down during each interview. I asked the participants to clarify the meaning of certain statements and to elaborate certain details. Thus the simultaneous process of data collection and analysis continued (Kvale, 2007). Through this exchange the participants realised certain connections in their own understanding of the

phenomenon leading to a rephrasing of their thoughts. In this way they took part in the data analysis and co-construction of knowledge. I listened to the recorded interviews several times in order to become familiar with the whole and to immerse myself in the world of my participants, which assisted me in gaining a general sense of their experiences. The interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were analysed for themes following steps outlined by Van Kaam as modified by Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994). Billups (2014) has summed up this process as follows: Immersion: the researcher involves him/herself in the world of the experience

1. *Incubation*: awareness is opened, and the researcher gains intuitive and tacit insights, and understanding
2. *Illumination*: the researcher engages in an active knowing process to expand his/her understanding of the experience
3. *Explication*: reflective actions
4. *Creative Synthesis*: understanding is brought together to reveal patterns and relationships within the phenomenon

Firstly, I read each transcript giving every statement equal value and importance. After removing statement that overlapped with others the statements were grouped according to the most commonly occurring themes. These themes were rechecked against the original transcript and refined to reflect the participant's experience as closely as possible. A description of each participant's experience was written using some verbatim quotations under each emerging theme. The participants were given this description to see if the themes brought fourth and the researchers interpretation of reflected what they had in mind. The themes from various transcripts were merged to produce the major themes from the collective. In the end there were three major themes, with several subthemes.

3.8. Trustworthiness

The quality of qualitative research can be easily brought into question if one attempts to use criteria that are normally used for quantitative studies. In order to differentiate the methods of establishing and assessing quality in qualitative studies, the term trustworthiness has been chosen (Vogt, 2005). Trustworthiness is used in the place of rigour which is common in quantitative studies. The elements involved in trustworthiness are transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Given, 2007).

Transferability refers to the ease with which one can discern the applicability of a study to different contexts. Credibility asks if the researcher has adequately and satisfactorily described the phenomenon being investigated. In a qualitative study we look for confirmability, which requires the researcher to ascertain that all the claims are supported by the data they have. It requires one to guard from imposing their ideas on the phenomenon and be true to the data. Lastly dependability means that the researcher has given such a description of the context and the instruments that if other people undertook a research and collected data under similar conditions they would produce a similar explanation of the phenomenon (Given, 2008).

I have taken several measures to ensure trustworthiness of this study. Some of the measures that I have taken includes rich description of contexts. In this study participants were requested to check through a description of their experiences and see if their ideas have been captured and interpreted correctly (Shenton, 2004). All the participants agreed that their views were well represented. Two of the participants wanted me to strengthen some of their ideas in my summary and one had additional comments to make which she had not made in the initial interview. The changes requested were added to the experiences of the participants. Only one such opportunity was offered to the participants.

Moreover, a research assistant was given the transcripts to see what themes she would come up with. After three meetings, through a process of discussion and consensus, the final list of themes was arrived at. The final measure I took was to keep an audit trail outlining the research decisions I made. This was done so that I could reflect on the process, and see if there were any implicit assumptions that I was operating under (Leitz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

3.9. Limitations

The sampling method of snowballing could produce a sample which has too similar experiences and fail to represent the broader experiences of vegetarians of other persuasions and backgrounds. In this study six of the eight participants belong to the Seventh-day Adventist church and are known to each other. They nonetheless live in different communities and have got certain varying personal circumstances. However, this research was not aiming for breadth but for depth in understating of the phenomenon. The use of English may have limited the ability of certain participants to fully express themselves, because English is their second language. Nonetheless, the participants were largely informed by English media and the medical and spiritual jargon they used showed them to be quite comfortable in relating this phenomenon using the English language.

3.10. Ethics Considerations

The entire process of inquiry involves moral imperatives which the researcher needs to be aware of and satisfy. The Senate Research and Ethics committee of the University of the Western Cape ensures that all the research conducted through this institution conforms to high ethical standards. Thus it has published ethical guidelines to aid researchers. One purpose of the research proposal is to demonstrate that what the researcher proposes to do will be done ethically. The fact that this committee approved this research to continue shows that it was satisfied that it would be conducted ethically.

Besides the ethics that guide scientific inquiry in general, interview studies additional moral issues precisely because one is investigating the private thoughts and feelings of individuals. Kvale (2007) proposes that ethical considerations appear at various points in an interview study:

Ethical issues that was considered or built into the design included obtaining the participants' informed consent (Appendix 2) to participate in the study and maintaining confidentiality. The participants in this study were given the opportunity to read the information sheet (Appendix 1) about the research, which informed of their role and their full autonomy in choosing to participate and in terminating their participation at any point.

How the interview can affect the participant psychologically needs to be considered. These effects can either be positive or negative. Negative effects include psychological stress, self-loathing, etc. The participants in this study were informed that if they experience any adverse consequent to the interview they should contact the research supervisor and were furnished with full contact details. Arrangements were made for counselling services to be provided to participants if such a need arose at any stage of the research.

Participants have the right to privacy so confidentiality has to be observed throughout the research process. The interviews happened in a private setting that ensured freedom from distractions, which could limit the participants' ability to express themselves. The participants were assured that only the researcher would have access to their identities and able to link them to particular transcripts. The audio recording was kept in password protected storage device and only the researcher had access to them. The transcripts were anonymised to delink them to the identity participants. Pseudonyms are employed in this study to safeguard the identity of the participants.

3.11. Dissemination

At least two articles will be developed from this thesis to be submitted to peer reviewed journals with an interest in food sociology or culture. An electronic copy of the dissertation will be made available to the broader public through the University of the Western Cape's Library Research Repository. The findings of this study will also be shared in presentation and/or poster at various conferences and to various pertinent fora. Finally, as an act of gratitude, each of the participants will receive a copy of the thesis.

3.12. Summary

In this chapter I outlined the research methodology followed in executing the research project. An explanation of the research design was given. I gave a description of the participants as well as the sampling techniques used. The data collection instrument and procedure using in depth interviews was presented along with the ethics that were considered at every stage during the research process was presented. Finally, the proposed methods of dissemination of this study were put forth. The next chapter will consider the findings of this study and give a detailed discussion of them.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of this study. The Bioecological Systems Theory of Human Development as proposed by Bronfenbrenner was used as a conceptual framework for illuminating the findings. The theory has lately also been called the Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model. The participants interviewed represent a sample of vegetarians who have thus far not been studied namely, the Black South African vegetarians. The study sought to answer the central question: How is vegetarianism perceived, experienced and practiced by Black urban South Africans residing in Cape Town?

After the data was subjected to thematic analysis three broad themes which answer the various parts of the question became apparent. The first theme that emerged is that “vegetarianism is life.” It mainly answers how the Black urban South African vegetarians perceive vegetarianism. This theme captures the importance of vegetarianism to the participants. The PPCT model is usually used to study how individuals and populations develop certain desirable traits, skills or assets, such as literacy, sociability and financial independence. In this study the desirable developmental outcome is a vegetarian identity.

The second theme is “embracing the vegetarian lifestyle.” This entails how the participants were introduced to vegetarianism and the processes they underwent in incorporating it into their lives and how it became their identity. This theme answers the second part of the question which deals with experiences that lead to the development of vegetarian identity. The last theme is “being vegetarian in a carnist world.” This theme unfolds the relations of the participants and their contexts, especially those changes brought about by adopting a vegetarian

identity. The detailed presentation and discussion of these themes will be prefaced by an introduction of the participants.

4.2. Biographical data of participants

The data was collected by interviewing five male and three female Black vegetarians residing in Cape Town. The biographical data gives a brief description of the life stories of the participants. I believe that this will further illuminate on their context and thus give a clearer understanding of the reasons behind their perceptions. To protect the privacy of the participants pseudonyms have been used.

4.2.1. Thabo

Thabo is a 54 year old male. He is an archivist by profession. His work in the university library where he is employed is to preserve certain important historical documents. Thabo was born in the town of Burgersfort in Limpopo. He is the second of four children and the only son of his parents. His parents did not want him to be too influenced by township life so when he was 7 years old they decided to take him to his grandmother who stayed in a village. Thabo was happy to go live with his grandmother in the Gamampane village where he did his primary and secondary schooling. His mother would come to check on him occasionally to see how he was doing. His family speaks Sepedi also known as Northern Sotho. His father is a devout member of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) however Thabo does not identify with this faith.

When he was in high school he came across the writings of Mahatma Ghandi. This was the first time that he found out about vegetarianism. As a village boy his diet was largely composed of traditional Sepedi food. This was composed of home ground maize, *morogo* which is a variety dark green leafy vegetables used as relish and *dinawa* (legumes). They only ate meat on special occasions, such as weddings. So his diet was largely plant-based. Occasionally a chicken would be slaughtered for very special guests. His grandmother had chicken and it was

his duty to chase them down and slaughter them when one was required to be dressed for a meal. He grew to detest this exercise. He decided to become vegetarian at the age of 17, a year before completing his high school.

After matriculating Thabo pursued a degree in library science followed by an advanced certificate in archive and records management at the University of South Africa. He afterward moved to Cape Town to work as an archivist and currently resides in Strand with his wife, son and daughter aged 15 and 18 respectively.

4.2.2. Ludo

Ludo is a 22 years old male student at the University of the Western Cape. He is in his second year of his law studies. He stays in the university residence. Ludo speaks isiXhosa as his first language. His mother had him when she was just 20 years old. She was still a university student at the time. So she had to pause her studies to give birth to him and to spend the first few months with him. She afterward returned to complete her studies and left Ludo in the care of his maternal grandmother. He is his mother's only child. He believes that in spite of the circumstances of his birth he received a lot of love from his family. He grew up with some of his cousins in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. Their standard of living compared to many people in their community was quite good. They could afford to have what was considered to be very good food and they were able to go to better equipped schools.

As an affluent family they ate a lot of meat. However, Ludo did not enjoy seeing animals being slaughtered. In fact, he found it so disturbing that he could not eat the meat of an animal if he had witnessed its slaughter. This childhood discomfort with eating animals found a resonating chord when he encountered the Rastafarian Student Society on campus. In the first few weeks of being on campus he associated himself with this student society and imbibed their vegetarian stance. He is in his second year of being a vegetarian.

Ludo is usually quiet and reserved. He spends a good amount of time alone. He enjoys knowledge. When he is not busy with his academic work, you will find him sitting at a computer in the Rastafarian Student Society offices, or engaged in some deep discussions on subjects that are dear to the Rastafarian Student Society's heart.

4.2.3. Yanga

Yanga is a 31 year old isiXhosa speaking male. He was born in the Eastern Cape to a single mother. He grew up in the village of kuGatyane with his grandparents and elder sister. His mother left them there when she came to Cape Town to seek employment and better life prospects in the big city. They lived a relatively simple life. The mainstay of their sustenance was maize and vegetables which they planted in their own garden. They also had an apple tree and guava tree and enjoyed these fruits when the season would come around. They ate chicken once a month or to celebrate special achievements like passing a grade at school. They never ate red meat, and they had rice only on Christmas. He moved to Cape Town in 1999 when he was 10 years old. His main reason for departure was fear of a corporal punishment. He was about to begin Grade 6 and there was a Grade 6 teacher notorious for inflicting pain on learners. He also came at the urging of his aunt who offered to give him accommodation in Mitchel's Plain, Cape Town. His mother was already residing in Cape Town by then and married to a man that was not his father. Staying with his mother was not an option for him because she was staying in shack in Khayelitsha. Besides the living space not being adequate and conducive, the area was considered not safe.

Yanga found high school literally boring and meaningless. He did not have a clear goal in life and he did not see how schooling fit in his life. He just went because people went. He is still surprised that he was able to pass his matric in 2006. To him finishing school at the time wasn't an invitation to do more schooling, but to work. In 2007 he began working as a salesperson for vacuum cleaning company and thoroughly enjoyed it. His work involved promotion of

house cleaning appliances such as vacuum cleaners. He discovered that he was a very persuasive salesman. Before the end of that year he was among the top five salespeople in the company.

The following year Yanga got a job as a law enforcement officer working for the City of Cape Town. He thoroughly enjoyed himself in this position as well. He fell in love with legal issues and is actually planning to study law as a result of his experiences in this work. Even though he enjoyed his work very much by the end of the fourth years he found himself being bored with the monotony of the things he had to do. He felt unchallenged by what he was doing. So he quit to begin pursuing his own business. At this time his interest was in health issues. He did a six-month training in colon therapy. He and Nkosi opened a colon therapy wellness centre in March 2014, where they do colon treatments and sell various health products and books. They are currently operating from Nyanga Crossroads.

Yanga was introduced to vegetarianism through his friends who were Seventh-day Adventists. In 2008 he became a member of the church. Yanga got married in 2013 and had a child that same year. He lives with his wife and daughter in a two bed roomed house in Mitchell's Plain. He met his father for the first time in 2013. They have had a few conversations but he feels that they have not yet connected.

Yanga has an average built with well-trimmed beard. He carries himself really professionally. He believes that he is making an important contribution to society through his health business. He is very driven and passionate.

4.2.4. Nkosi

Nkosi is a small built stocky man with a shiny balding head and a very broad charming smile. He appears to be very well built and fit although he has never spent a day in gym. His fine form may be due to genetic heritage or the active life he led as a boy in the Eastern Cape village

of Lorchwaiso which is just six kilometres away from the sea. Its landscape is very beautiful, carved through by several rivers. His daily routine included arising early in the morning to take the cows and sheep to pastures, then returning home to prepare for school. After school he would have to bring the flocks back home. Although he grew up a village boy he was actually born in Johannesburg 34 years ago.

When he was entering into his teens he came for a visit to Cape Town. He was introduced to dagga and cigarettes and he was unfortunately hooked on these substances. This lifestyle took a predictable toll on his academic performance. He ended up having to come to Cape Town in 2002 to repeat his matric. It was during this year that someone invited him to visit the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Contact with the Adventist message lead him to turn his back on his drug habits.

When Nkosi completed his matric he moved up to Johannesburg to look for work. He could not find a job that would allow him to have Saturdays off. He needed to be off on Saturday so that he can engage in worship exercises. Seventh-day Adventist believe that Saturday is a sacred day and no secular work for gain should be engaged in. So he decided to start selling perfumes which he would get from factories making a meagre R75 a week. Thus in 2004 he came back to Cape Town. It was at this time that he met a Seventh-day Adventist man that really explained to him about vegetarianism and he made a choice to embrace it.

As soon as he had learned about vegetarianism he was invited to Limpopo to train some people on plant-based cooking. So he spent two years teaching bible and health to certain communities in Limpopo. In 2007 he returned to Cape Town once more and worked for an aluminium company until 2014 when he joined Yanga in their wellness business.

Currently Nkosi lives with his wife and two children in Wesbank. They have been married for 10 years and his son and daughter are 8 and 5 years old respectively. Wesbank is a small

settlement adjacent to Kuilsriver. It has narrow streets and small two or three roomed houses in equally small yards. It has a reputation for being one of the rough spots in Cape Town as far as crime is concerned, however because of its size its normally not front page news. He administers colon therapy treatments to male patients. The other half of his time he spends visiting clinics to do presentations on healthful living. He is a passionate health instructor. He often fears his credulity and enthusiasm, thus he is very careful what kind of information he exposes himself to.

4.2.5. Mandla

Mandla was born in Lady Frere, a village located 51km north-east of Queenstown. When he was 10 years old he moved to Cape Town and settled in the Kraaifontein area. The grandfather who owned the property in Lady Frere had passed away. He describes life in Cape Town as teenager being very challenging due to the economic situation in his home. The breadwinner was his mother who did domestic work. She had to support him as well as his two sisters.

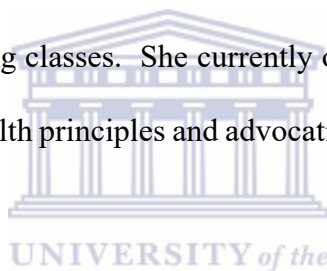
He managed to complete his high school but could not further his education immediately due to financial constraints. He joined Home Health Education Service, a company that publishes books on marriage, parenting and health. He has been working as an agent for this company ever since he left high school 13 years ago. He has recently decided to study theology as a distance learner through UNISA. Mandla lives with his wife and their six-year old daughter in Wesbank adjacent to Kuilsriver.

Mandla was introduced to vegetarianism through friends during his high school years. He experimented with it and when he experienced positive changes in his physical health as a result, he made a commitment to it. He has been a vegetarian for nearly 15 years.

4.3.6. Khazimla

Khazimla is a 32 year old unemployed female, living with her mother and sister in a Cape Town township of Gugulethu in which she grew up. She has spent all her life in this township although she has lived with her grandmother in Khayelitsha at some point. She completed both her primary and high school education in Gugulethu. Due to her matric results being poor she did not have motivation to pursue further formal education.

She was befriended by Rastafarians around 2002. This was her first time being exposed to vegetarianism. She appreciated what she learned from them, but it was only seven year later when she encountered Seventh-day Adventists that she became a vegetarian. She has since done several short courses based on diet and health principles of Seventh-day Adventists. These included vegetarian cooking classes. She currently occupies her time by going around her community teaching these health principles and advocating the benefit of plant-based diets.



4.2.7. Sipiwe

Sipiwe is a 29 year old single female professional residing in a suburb with her brother and cousin. She grew up in Gugulethu where she did her primary school education. She went to live with her aunt in Port Elizabeth to complete her high school education. She moved back to Cape Town to pursue her commerce degree at the University of Cape Town. On completion of her degree she joined the Standard Bank graduate program and was subsequently employed as one of the financial analysts.

Her earliest encounter with vegetarianism was from her aunt during her high school years. Her aunt was a Seventh-day Adventist and she used to prepare interesting vegetarian dishes. However, she did not have immediate interest. She continued to enjoy both her meat and her aunt's cooking. Later on during her years at university she became a Seventh-day Adventist but did not immediately become vegetarian. She only became vegetarian after spending ten

days at a wellness reconditioning centre where the menu was completely plant-based. The benefits she saw after those ten days were sufficient motivation to spur her to adopt vegetarianism.

4.2.8. Sonke

Sonke is a 24 year isiXhosa speaking female born in the small town of Tsolo which lies 42km north-west of Umtata. When she was 9 years old she moved with her parents to Umtata where she completed her high school education. She moved to Cape Town after matric to pursue a BSc. She is currently doing BSc Honours in Biotechnology. When she arrived in Cape Town she resided with relatives in Khayelitsha. On her arrival at campus she was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Student Movement and she began to attend church regularly both on and off campus. Through the influence of the friend she made at a church in Khayelitsha she became a vegetarian. She has been a vegetarian for 3 years. She loves food and she enjoys cooking and finds that vegetarianism has increased her culinary creativity.

4.2.9. Biographical Summary



Table 2

Biographical summary of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Language	Affiliation	Occupation
Khazimla	Female	32	isiXhosa	Adventist	Unemployed
Ludo	Male	22	isiXhosa	Rastafarian	Undergraduate Student
Mandla	Male	35	isiXhosa	Adventist	Publishing Sales agent
Nkosi	Male	34	isiXhosa	Adventist	Health entrepreneur
Siphiwe	Female	29	isiXhosa	Adventist	Bank financial analyst
Sonke	Female	24	isiXhosa	Adventist	Postgraduate Student
Thabo	Male	45	Sepedi	None	University Archivist
Yanga	Male	31	isiXhosa	Adventist	Health entrepreneur

4.3. Vegetarian is Life

“Vegetarianism means life, such that if ever I would do otherwise I would be killing myself.” Yanga

This statement sums up Yanga’s evaluation of vegetarianism. Just as suicide is the most extreme and surest way of sabotaging one’s own life, he sees vegetarianism as the surest way promoting and progressing his life. I will demonstrate that this view is shared by most of the participants. What Aristotle once said about education, that “educated men are as much superior to uneducated men as the living are to the dead” they believe to be true of vegetarianism. That vegetarians are as much superior to meat-eaters as the living are to the dead.

The participants believe that vegetarianism enhances physical, mental and spiritual life. They also hold that it embodies such higher ethical and moral principles of life as to make it the highest and the most ideal kind of life. In other words the vegetarian is of all persons the most

alive, lively, life preserving, life valuing, life oriented and life promoting because he/she avoids anything that has to do with death. As Ludo says: *“we do not consume anything that is dead, or engage in anything that has got to do with dead things, so things like meat, things like cheese.”*

The influence of Rastafarianism is apparent in Ludo’s evaluation of meat. As a form of protest against the hegemonic dominance of the English language Rastafarians have developed their own dialect of the language which is saturated in covert metaphors. In this language the word for meat is “deadahs” which is derived from the word “dead.” (Worth, 1995). Meat is therefore a metaphor of death. So to eat meat is to eat to eat death. Because humans should be eating to live, it is incomprehensible to the Rastafarian to eat the dead. Rastafarians also believe that you are what you eat, and you become death by eating death. Your mouth becomes and open sepulchre and your belly a cemetery (Dickerson, 2004; Worth, 1995). This illustrates how Rastafarian as a macrosystem has imbued the material object of animal flesh with symbolic meaning. It is the symbolism operating in the microsystem that influences perceptions.

To the degree that participants associate vegetarianism with life, to a similar degree is meat associated with death. This was also observed in British vegetarian teenagers who were interviewed by Kenyon and Barker (1998). When comparing their views of meat to those of meat-eating counterparts they found that the themes of life/death were unique to the vegetarian group. One of their vegetarian respondents stated: “I’m vegetarian, so I like anything that is NOT dead animal.” (Kenyon & Barker, 1998; emphasis in the original text)

So it is apparent that to these vegetarians meat is a symbol of death. In my opinion the association of meat to death can be explained in at least three ways. Firstly, an animal has to be killed to provide the meat, thus the meat itself is indeed dead meat. Compared to meat-eaters vegetarians are more conscious of the connection between the meat and the living animal

that was killed to produce it (Povey, Wellens, & Conner, 2001). Secondly, meat and death are synonymous because when consumed it weakens the body, predisposing it to disease, dysfunction and premature death. Several epidemiological studies indicate that this could be a significant causal factor to morbidity and mortality (Larson & Orsini, 2014; Battaglia, Baumer, Conrad, Darioli, Schmid & Keller, 2015). I will demonstrate that the participants share the view that eating meat is the surest way of shortening one's life.

Lastly, those who have the most frequent and intimate contact with meat due to their occupations are at higher risk of cancer related deaths as a direct result of handling meat. Johnson (2011) and colleagues did a prospective cohort study of 8738 people working in slaughterhouses and meat processing plants from 1950 to 2006. They found that these employees had significantly higher mortality rates due to cancers of the lung, bones, skin, oesophagus and bladder. In similar studies involving people employed in the deli sections of supermarkets Johnson and colleagues found that they have higher mortality risk from cancerous and non-cancerous causes (Johnson *et al.*, 2015, Jadhav *et al.*, 2015). These three reasons provide a justification for associating meat with death.

However, to the Rastafarian the concept of meat as death goes beyond its tendency to militate against personal physical life, but its violence to all life. Animal life is sacrificed in the process of meat production. Industrial meat production spells death to the environment. These industries support the Babylonian capitalist corporations and their nations' economies which are built on the oppression of others, especially Black people (Dickerson, 2004). So to eat meat is to eat that which destroys Black people physically, economically, psychologically and culturally.

Conversely vegetarianism is part of what Rastafarians call "Ital" food. The word "Ital" is derived from the word "vital" and it describes that which is natural and full of life (Dickerson,

2004; Zuke, 2009). “Most of the Rasta diet is vegetarian. Rasta food which is believed to foster life, and not death, is referred to as "Ital.””(Worth, 1995). “Ital” foods ideally are not processed and are self-produced through subsistence farming. Thus their production will not harm the environment, they will be cost effective thus improve economic status of the people, and by encouraging independence from industrial food production systems help individuals develop a sense of independence leading to psychological well-being and development of their culture.

Both Rastafarian and Seventh-day Adventist have a biblically inspired worldview, though their interpretations are radically divergent. Yanga’s view of vegetarianism as life appears to have been influenced by Bible imagery as well as the writing of one of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism, Ellen White. He says: *“I learned the principles of good blood, this is why I keep talking about it (vegetarianism) is my life because going against those principles I would be destroying my blood, and by destroying my good blood I would be destroying my life.”*

The Bible equates blood to life in several passages (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:11, Deuteronomy 12:23). Ellen White (1905) comments that:

“In order to have good health, we must have good blood; for the blood is the current of life. It repairs waste and nourishes the body. When supplied with the proper food elements..., it carries life and vigour to every part of the system.”

White (1905) further asserts that a vegetarian diet is the most suitable for producing good blood:

“The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood. These elements are not so well or so fully supplied by a flesh diet. Had the use of flesh been essential to health and strength, animal food would have been included in the diet appointed man in the beginning.”

Both Rastafarians and Adventists believe that the original diet that God assigned to human beings was vegetarian according to Genesis 1:29. It is evident that the macrocosm contexts of Rastafarianism and Adventism as carriers of ideas, attitudes and values have shaped the participant's perception of vegetarianism.

The idea of 'vegetarianism as life' communicates the fact that in the lives of the participants it is a worthy developmental outcome. Thus vegetarianism as understood by the participants lends itself amenable to being studied using the PPCT model as developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. This theory has been used to explain and predict how certain desired developmental outcomes are achieved (Härkönen, 2007). Usually these developmental outcomes are desirable objectives that are associated with successful living within a given context such as education, autonomy, financial independence and stable social relationships.

In seeking to delve deeper into the theme of "vegetarianism is life" we will look at three areas in which the participants perceive vegetarianism as infusing life into them. We will look at how vegetarianism infuses physical life, intellectual vibrancy and spiritual vitality.

4.3.1. Vegetarianism infuses physical life

Participants agree that vegetarianism infuses physical life because it imparts unusual strength and stamina. Mandla who was a soccer player attests that he was able to continue his sporting activities after becoming vegetarian and rather than becoming weaker he became stronger.

"Then with my physical, it (vegetarianism) helped me in the sense that, as much as I was losing weight, but I had a very strong energy. Some people didn't really believe me (that I had stopped eating meat), because I had a very strong stamina. We would play for 90 minutes and finish, and still go for extra time but I would manage, I had a lot of energy." Mandla.

Likewise, Nkosi says people have been amazed by his endurance. He says people often ask: *“How can you be so happy and healthy, and stand and talk from 10 o’clock till about 3 in the afternoon and still not get low sugar and energy levels?”* He is convinced that these are the physical rewards of being a vegetarian.

Currently there is no conclusive evidence that vegetarianism increases physical endurance. Comparative studies which have been done show that changing from a plant-based to a vegetarian neither harms or improves physical fitness in athletes (Nieman, 1999, Longo, Spiezia, Maffulli, & Denaro, 2008). The website www.greatveganathletes.com features 92 world class athletes practicing vegetarianism including Olympic gold medallist Carl Lewis (Great Vegan Athletes, 2016). The site aims to show that one can still be athletically competitive on a plant-based diet. In fact, most of these athletes credit their improved level of performance to their plant-based diet. Carl Lewis himself says *“I’ve found that a person does not need protein from meat to be a successful athlete. In fact, my best year of track competition was the first year I ate a vegan diet.”* (Great Vegan Athletes, 2016).

Leischik and Spelsberg (2014) reported that a 48 year old ultra-triathlete who had been a raw vegan for 6 years was able to complete an ironman challenge of 11.4 km swim, 540 km cycling and 126 km running in 41 hours and 18 minutes. They found that his performance was similar to peers, and he had no noticeable deficiency. This finding suggests that a plant-based can sustain rigorous demands on the human body, as stated by the participants.

Furthermore, for some of the participants vegetarianism has been the antidote for various unresolved physical problems that had plagued them. Siphwe suffered from recalcitrant psoriasis which had failed to improve after several visits to the dermatologist. At a wellness reconditioning centre she was put on a vegetarian diet for 10 days and she says: *“Then with me, because I had psoriasis, by the end of 10 days it was gone because I had gone on a plant-*

based diet,... So, I was really wowed, I thought almost all sickness is... linked to diet, so I started having an interest.”

This was an unexpected positive side effect, because she had just gone to the centre for a few days to recover from the routine and fatigue of work. There are studies that show that vegetarian diets are beneficial for psoriasis (Wolters, 2005, Araujo, Burgos & Moura, 2009). It is proposed that plant-based diets work for psoriasis because they reduce inflammation. Rastmanesh (2009) hypothesized that because vegetarian diets increase potassium intake, they help to increase endogenous glucocorticoids which reduce inflammation the same way that synthetic glucocorticoids like prednisone would.

When Sipiwe left the centre she continued with a largely plant-based diet which aided her to lose weight as well. She says: *“...because I was overweight before I started this plant-based diet, I think I weighed 85, so now I weigh 62, therefore I have lost a lot of weight.”* Sipiwe did not set out to become a vegetarian to reduce her weight. It was a natural consequence of eating a healthier diet. She says: *“(vegetarianism) is not about losing weight, the minute I decided to change my lifestyle, then the weight came off, that is how I have managed to sustain it. It’s also about being healthy, not just losing weight.”* Vegetarianism and weight loss diets have been shown to reduce weight (Smith, Burke, & Wing, 2000), however vegetarians are able to adhere to their diet far longer than people who adopt weight loss diets (Burke, Warziski, Styn, Music, Hudson & Sereika, 2008). This may be due to deeper motivations that undergird the adoption of vegetarianism.

Other participants credited vegetarianism with healing their several maladies and improving their physique in general:

“...but ever since I stopped eating meat, that was the end of my problem of experiencing a bloated tummy and terrible pimples.” Mandla.

“I grew up with asthma, and ever since I became a vegetarian I no longer have a problem with asthma, so it is a good thing that has happened, and my skin. I always had a problem with my skin, it has improved a lot, and my teeth also.” Khazimla

The participants base their appraisal of the physical effects of vegetarianism on their personal experience. These subjective experiences are held as evidence more important than any empirical data. The degree of this conviction is further illustrated by the belief that as a means of recovering from illness or preventing diseases vegetarianism is superior even to the conventional medical paradigm. Khazimla asserts: *“Most people here (Gugulethu are sick. There’s a lot of disease in this city (Cape Town), in the city alone thus far the doctors have failed to help, they have failed to cure these diseases... if they can only give us chance as vegetarians to step in and do things the other way, a lot of things can improve.”* Khazimla

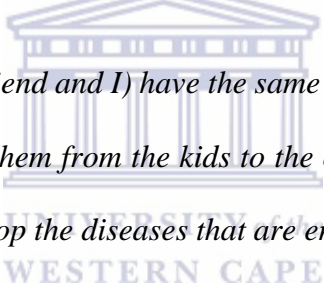
Khazimla believes that the main failure of the health system is reliance on drugs to the neglect of nutritional education, more specifically plant-based nutrition. As a case in point she relates her experience when she had accompanied a friend to see a doctor at the clinic: *“So I sat there, but what I found the doctor did not even advise her on eating habits, she never gave her advice on what to eat, the only thing she kept telling the lady was “Hey, take your ARVs” It was ARVs, ARVs, ARVs, ARVs. So the only solution they have on HIV is only ARVs, nothing else.”* Khazimla

Nkosi is of the opinion that even when nutritional advice is given by health professionals it is still inferior because of the lack of emphasis on the dangers of meat. *“You even see them (health professionals) sympathising with people when it comes to these foods, whereas these foods are poison to human body. Look at the advises they would give to diabetic cases or hypertension patients that they should just remove the skin of the chicken and eat the other part, instead of telling people to shun saturated fat.”* Nkosi

The fact that Nkosi regards animal-derived food items as poison shows that he thinks of them as being inimical to physical life. The only way to be healthy is to completely discard these items.

The perceived superiority of vegetarianism to conventional nutritional recommendations may not be unfounded. Kahleova, Hill and Pikanova (2014) recently found that a vegetarian diet was superior to the conventionally recommended diabetic diet in improving insulin sensitivity, decreasing cholesterol as well visceral fat.

Khazimla is so convinced about the health effects of vegetarianism that she counts it to be the greatest public health strategy that can be implemented. In very absolute terms she posits vegetarianism as the panacea for the illnesses that plague her society:



“I believe we (vegetarian friend and I) have the same desire to see each and every house in (my street), all of them from the kids to the oldest person to be a vegan, that’s the only solution to stop the diseases that are embarking on people. So that is my dream, it is to see everyone stop eating meat, stop drinking dairy products, stop eating cheese. So if I had a miraculous powers I would just snap my finger and everyone, in fact the whole country would be vegans (laughs).” Khazimla

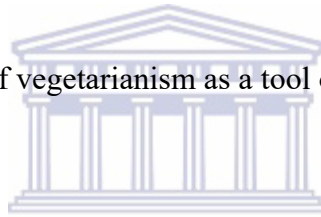
It is very apparent that the participants strongly believe that vegetarianism has a profound effect on the physical life. By removing meat and other animal-derived foods from the diet, they believe that one has gotten rid of elements most deleterious to the physical system. They have personal testimonies to back up what they say about the physical benefits of vegetarianism. The participants’ emphasis is not on what vegetarianism adds, but on what it takes away. It is beneficial because it removes the offending agent, which is meat. They do not mention much about the benefits of the plant-based diet itself, without reference to meat.

4.3.2. Vegetarianism sharpens the mind

The benefits of vegetarianism are not restricted to the body. The life giving properties of vegetarianism extend to the intellect. I will demonstrate that the participants believe that being on a vegetarian diet, the intellect is infused with new power and its capacity for attention, comprehension, memory and reasoning is expanded. When Nkosi compares how his intellect used to be as a meat-eater and how it now is as a vegetarian he sees a remarkable difference:

“I remember before I became vegetarian, I would not study a whole chapter of (the book) The Great Controversy and finish it, but now I would study it, finish it within an hour, and not forgetting what I have studied there, I can tell you the book; the page and paragraph, so, before, the memory was not as good as it is now.”

Mandla concurs with the notion of vegetarianism as a tool of cognitive enhancement based on his personal experience as well.



“You know, when I stopped eating meat, I remember at school, I became so bright, in so much that I started to recall in terms of the notes that I had written, and my mind was clear to grasp, especially when it came to mathematics and geometry, so I became sharp. I remember that it helped me to be sharp as well because I was a chess player at school, so I went to represent the school. I remember I used to be very dull, and used to be very confused with geometry, I didn’t know and couldn’t even identify angles, but ever since, my mind was so sharp, you know, it really helped me mentally.” Mandla

Besides his personal experience, Mandla has also observed similar effects on his wife and daughter. He says: *“...she (wife) used to be a very dull person before she stopped eating meat, she used to have a very bad comprehension mentality, so I can say it has influenced her in a very positive way. With my daughter, ever since she was born,... she has never tasted meat,*

she's enjoying it (being a vegetarian), she's even bright at school... doing Grade R, and she is doing it in a very powerful way in terms of improving her grades.” Yanga on the other hand believes that vegetarians display superior reasoning ability: “You will find that most vegetarian people can really reason.”

Unlike the physical benefits of vegetarianism studies exploring the cognitive effects of vegetarianism are very few. Dywer, *et al.* (1980) found that on assessing the mental developmental age of vegetarian children they performed one year ahead of their chronological age exhibiting above average IQ of around 116. This shows that there is some link between enhanced cognition and vegetarianism, although causality cannot be assumed. Another interesting link between IQ and vegetarianism is that children with higher IQ are more likely to choose to be vegetarian when they become adults. Children from a 1970 cohort who had a higher IQ at ten years old, were more likely to be vegetarian at 30 years old with an odds ratio of 1.38 (Gale, Deary, Schoon & Batty, 2007).

Participants also believe that the vegetarian mind becomes more tranquil and less prone to being perturbed. The tendency to experience strong negative emotions such as anger is greatly attenuated. Khazimla affirms: *“Yah, and mentally you don't get angry. I was very short tempered. So I believe diet played a huge role. Because of the food that we eat, some people have a problem with temper... (being a vegetarian) has played a big role.”* Mandla concurs: *“I was so aggressive, it was so easy to fight... I had a very terrible temper and anger. I used to swear a lot but ever since I became vegetarian that actually changed. Of course I'm very talkative but I became very calm. In fact, I take too long to respond to anger. In fact, in terms of anger I'm able to control, even the mood swings I am able to control them... I can even see my child is a very calm child.”*

Besides being a mood regulator as suggested by the participants, it is also noted that it actively increases positive emotions. Nkosi notes: *“What I have noticed is that, you become more happier in spirit.”* Mandla, Nkosi and Khazimla are all practising Seventh-day Adventists and it has been found that Adventist vegetarians have better mental health than Adventists who eat meat. A cross-sectional study of Seventh-day Adventist adults comparing the mood of 78 meat-eaters with 60 vegetarians, using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), and Profile of Mood States (POMS), questionnaires reported less negative emotions in vegetarians than meat-eaters (Beezhold, Johnston & Daigle, 2010). One could argue that the greater sense of mental health comes from a feeling of living in harmony with the teachings of the church and thus not suffering from the distress that may come from dissonance between convictions and life practice. However, Beezhold and Johnston (2012) used the DASS and POMS to compare the effect on mood in non-Adventist omnivores switching to a higher fish diet or vegetarian diet for two weeks. They found that the vegetarian diet improved the mood, whereas the higher consumption of fish had no effect on mood. This shows that the mood effects of vegetarianism are independent of religious conviction.

The Mediterranean diet, like a vegetarian diet is mainly consists of the high consumption of grains, legumes, fruit, nuts and plant oils. Switching to a Mediterranean diet for just ten days has been found to significantly improve cognition and mood, especially clarity, alertness and contentment (Ford, Jaceldo-siegl, Lee, Youngberg, & Tonstad, 2013).

The subjective personal experiences of the participants have confirmed in them the view that ‘vegetarianism is life’ because it has enhanced their mental well-being, in at least two ways. Firstly, it has improved their cognitive faculties¹ such concentration, information processing,

¹ Faculties refer to components of mental function and may include memory, concentration, executive function, willpower, learning, etc

reasoning and memory. Secondly, it has improved their affective components, regulating their mood by reducing negative emotions such as anger while promoting positive emotions.

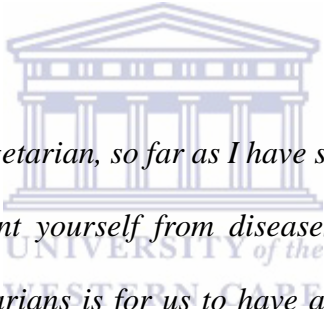
4.3.3. Vegetarianism enhances spiritual vitality

Although vegetarianism is perceived to aid the body and the mind, physical and mental well-being are seen only as a means to a higher end, which is spirituality. Spirituality is often a challenging term to define and conceptualise, it is however an inescapable aspect of human existence. Tanyi (2002) concludes that “spirituality is an inherent component of being human, and is subjective, intangible, and multidimensional.” Dyson, Cobb and Forman (1997), in their literature review on the meaning of spirituality noted, that three key elements of the concept are self, others and a higher power or God. The higher power could also simply be the most important value one holds. Other important themes that emerged from this analysis is the meaning of life, hope, connectedness and beliefs. Similarly, Weathers, McCarthy and Coffey (2015), from their reviews of conceptual and empirical literature, identified connectedness and meaning in life as important attributes of spirituality as well as transcendence. It will become very evident through the explicit statements and implied meanings that vegetarianism is one of the most important elements in the spirituality of the participants.

Participants view subsisting on plant foods as a means of purifying the body and elevating the mind so that these faculties can engage in their ultimate purpose, which is spirituality. Eliminating meat and other animal-derived foods removes the barrier that impedes spiritual progress. Thabo says: “*strangely oddly (becoming vegetarian) was something I felt I needed to do for my own psychological development as a person, (for) my own growth.*” This underlies how important vegetarianism is to the participants. It is a key factor to their self-actualization. Thus vegetarianism has to do with the core of human existence.

Consequently the most important reason or motive for being a vegetarian is spiritual development. Spiritual vitality or clarity is the ultimate goal or benefit of being vegetarian. Siphwiwe says: *“I think more than anything (my motive for becoming a vegetarian) is for me to have the vitality to do what God has sent me here to do, on earth, to do it to the best of my ability. Because if I’m sick then I won’t be able to fulfil my purpose and my mission, so, that is my motivation.”* Vegetarianism is important because it strengthens the body and prevents those infirmities that would make the attainment of life’s purpose impossible.

In order to fulfil life’s great purpose one needs direction from God, and a vegetarian diet clears the mind and the conscience making the voice of God more distinct. It is one of the mechanisms perceived to render the vegetarian more spiritual. It increases spiritual connectedness.



“My motives for being a vegetarian, so far as I have studied is not only to live this healthful life and to prevent yourself from diseases, but I believe that God’s purpose for us being vegetarians is for us to have a clear mind, so that we can communicate with God. So the problem is in the mind. The food we eat affects how we communicate with God, so that is my purpose (motive).” Khazimla

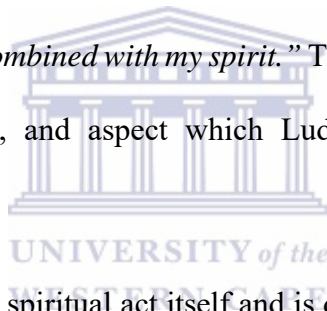
Siphwiwe concurs with Khazimla on this point: *“...not being healthy makes it harder, because you are not well in your body it’s not easy for you to hear God. For instance if you just ate chips, obviously your mind would be clogged. No matter how much a person can talk and talk about spiritual things, you can’t comprehend because your mind is clogged. So (being vegetarian) makes it easier for you to grow spiritually and to hear from God as well.”*

Ludo conceptualises this path of progress as a journey he is on: *“Basically becoming a vegetarian, it was a decision I took based on my spiritual journey, and realising who I am, and what I am made out of, because what I am eating affects me inside, if it goes to my bloodstream,*

it goes to my life-force, if it's dealing with my life-force its dealing with my spirit, my soul."

Ludo perceives a connectedness or relatedness of the physical and metaphysical aspects of his being. As what he eats enters his blood which is synonymous with life, he believes it has a direct impact on his spirit. So eating a vegetarian diet itself becomes a spiritual practice.

Being a vegetarian has benefitted Ludo because he now feels like he has better a better understanding, knowledge and appreciation of himself as a whole being. He says: *"you know as I was walking in this journey I realised that (being vegetarian) is making me grow, it is making me feel light in certain ways... Basically it has helped me become a stronger person spiritually, it has grounded me, it has helped me realise there are deeper things in my life of which I did not know about, but through the power of the Most High I have realized who I am, what my human body is made of combined with my spirit."* Tanyi (2002) says that inner strength is another aspect of spirituality, and aspect which Ludo attests has been benefitted by vegetarianism.



Since eating is transformed into a spiritual act itself and is done to the body, the body itself is seen as a temple in which spirituality is experienced. Thus eating animal products is not merely a physically unhealthy practice, but an act of desecration. Ludo compares eating meat to a sacrilegious casting of dirt on the temple: *"I became vegetarian, because I realise that my body is my temple, my one and only temple, I can't renovate or renew it. I can only reveal it, I can only manifest by eating, when I eating the wrong things it's like I am covering it up with dirt."*

Thabo also views meat as something defiling. He says: *"most people they find it strange that I don't want food contaminated with meat products."* Ruby, Heine, Kamble, Cheng and Waddar (2013), in their cross-cultural study of vegetarians found that Indian vegetarians were significantly more religious than meat-eating Indians. They also were more likely to endorse the ethic of purity and to designate meat as a spirituality and personality contaminant. These

correlations were absent in Western populations assessed. This shows that the participants share this common trait with other non-Western vegetarians.

Whether vegetarianism increases spirituality or not cannot be ascertained because spirituality is a subjective experience, and often poorly defined. However as noted above, a higher sense of spirituality or religiosity is associated with vegetarianism in non-Western cultures. Among Malaysian Seventh-day Adventists those with higher levels of religiosity were more likely to become vegetarians with an odds ratio of 1.62. Attending religious services more than once a week and participating in personal spiritual exercises both predicted likelihood of vegetarianism with odds ratios of 3.62 and 2.46 respectively (Tan, Chan & Reidpath, 2016).

One of the ways that spiritual growth is also manifested or experienced through the aid of vegetarianism is a sense of increased self-discipline. Ludo says becoming a vegetarian *“is a step of consciousness in life that you take, it’s part of discipline, you understand now that I’m disciplining myself, I am cutting myself off from this, though I was enjoying it. I realise that it is bad for me, it not good for me, cut yourself off from it.”* Thus vegetarianism becomes a tool in inner self transformation. One cannot be a vegetarian without exercising some degree of self-control and impulse management. The skills gained through this exercise spill over into other domains of one’s life, helping one to have greater sense of control over their lives. Carol J. Adams (2000) the feminist vegetarian activist in her book entitled *The Inner Art of Vegetarianism* alludes to this when she states: “I learned to make a commitment through vegetarianism, and then I learned how to keep a commitment. Anyone who wants to change the world or themselves can learn this too. Vegetarianism offers this to everyone.”

Khazimla has found that to be true in her case. She states: *“It(vegetarianism) taught me to be temperate in all things, like now I know that I do not have to eat in between meals,... so it taught me to be temperate, now I just don’t open the cupboard when I feel and make bread and eat,*

you see, now I know that my stomach has to rest... after 6 hours I can have my second meal, which is my last meal of the day, so vegetarianism also teaches you to be temperate, not only on food but to be temperate in all aspects of your life. It teaches you patience, you have to wait a certain time before you eat, so that takes a lot of effort, because you grew up eating whenever you want to eat, you just go and open a packet of chips you eat, you see, you are eating the whole day, so now I learned how to be temperate, and be patient, so not only in food, but in every aspect of my life, that is what I learnt.”

According to Nkosi vegetarianism strengthens the frontal lobe of the brain making it easier for it to control the other physical urges. Thus it is a means of gaining self-mastery. He says: “... *the main motive of being vegetarian is being healthy especially mentally so that you can really hear God properly and be in harmony with His Law, to be able to subdue the passion and appetites and allow the frontal lobe to take control of these things because it really helps especially when it comes to lower passions. The way you think and the way your body responds to evil things that stimulate the mind, you respond differently when you use animal products. The way your mind connects when there is improper nourishment of your brain cell is completely different. You don't make proper decisions because of the damage in your frontal lobe, but if you practise the eight laws of health and take proper sugars and proper waters you become more healthy and being able to make proper decisions and to shun evil.”*

The participants view vegetarianism as an instrument that produces a healthy body and clear mind, which then facilitate spiritual development. Spiritual growth is the ultimate goal and underlying motive for adopting vegetarianism. There is a possibility that the idea of mind, body and soul development is a result of Biblical influences. In 1st Thessalonians 5:23 Paul states: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For the Seventh-day Adventist participants a connection between this whole person development and

vegetarianism may also be derived from one of the church pioneers, Ellen White. She wrote: “By meat-eating, the physical, mental, and moral powers are weakened... (those) who are still eating the flesh of animals, thus endangering the physical, mental, and spiritual health.” (White, 1938).

Under the theme of “vegetarianism is life” we have seen how important vegetarianism is to the participants. They have used very strong language to express their disapproval of meat-eating. In fact, eating any food item that is derived from animals is looked on with disdain. They have set themselves forth as exhibits of the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of vegetarianism. It is not difficult to see that they are deeply convicted of the value of vegetarianism. The next logical question is how did the participants come to hold these strong opinions about vegetarianism, and how did they switch from a carnist lifestyle to a vegetarian one. This question finds an answer in the second theme.

4.4. Developing a vegetarian identity

“we grew up eating meat, in most (cases), we grew up eating meat.” Khazimla

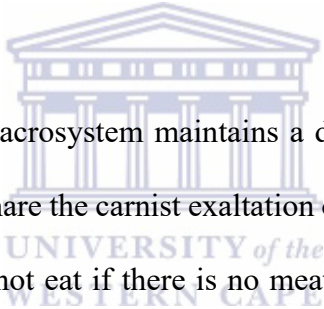
To a greater or less extent participants grew up in omnivorous contexts. Both their nuclear families and the communities from which they originate are omnivorous. They grew up surrounded by carnism. Black people residing in Cape Town tend to shift toward a Western lifestyle which includes eating a lot of meat (Chopra & Puoane, 2003). Beyond the biological need that these foods meet, we are more interested in the social and psychological meaning that these foods have in these communities. The prevalent attitudes and beliefs concerning meat and food were brought to light by Puoane and her colleagues in a qualitative study based in Khayelitsha, Cape Town (Puoaane, Matwa, Bradley & Hughes, 2006). Following are some of the statements from their participants:

“I can’t eat without meat. The throat just longs for meat. We are used to meat. We learned that as children.

“Lean meat and black tea is only used during mourning period. When we celebrate we need fatty meat and white tea.”

“I do not decide what to eat, I am just invited to the table and find food ready. I am a man, I have to eat meat everyday. Eating fish or chicken is like having a starter to a man.”

“If I want to please my husband I prepare his favourite meal (food), which usually includes meat. My husband will never eat food if there is no meat in the plate.”



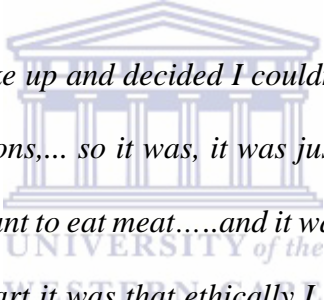
It is clear that the Black urban macrosystem maintains a discourse that promotes the use of meat. Cape Town urban Blacks share the carnist exaltation of meat as the premier food article. The fact that some state they cannot eat if there is no meat attests to this. In such a context vegetarianism is a foreign concept. Meat is not just one of the articles that are consumed, it the food. The carnist norms, values and ideas of this macrosystem influenced and found expression in the micro-, meso- and exosystems that the participants found themselves in. Siphwe who grew up in Gugulethu says:

“For us Black people when there’s celebrations, meat is a big part of it. It is a staple diet for Black people, yah meat and pap mostly. So, if you gonna tell a Black person not to eat meat, they really don’t know what to eat... to stop eating meat, which is a challenge with most Black people because that is something that is in our culture.”

Given this reality it is rather surprising that the participants chose to become vegetarians. In this section we will answer the question of how the participants developed a vegetarian identity in spite of the prevailing culture.

4.4.1. Eating meat is instinctively reprehensible, unethical and unnatural

In Thabo's case the influence to become vegetarian was from within himself. There was no external influence of sufficient power to initiate this change. So the adoption of the vegetarian identity was based on his innate biopsychological make-up. This shows that an individual from within himself or herself can make decisions that are out of the norm, without any apparent external influence. The developing individual as a microsystem has an influence over their own development. Thabo remarks about his transition in this manner:



“I mean, I honestly just woke up and decided I couldn't eat meat anymore, and it was in part for ethical reasons,... so it was, it was just a coincidence thing, I just woke up and knew I don't want to eat meat.....and it was, I found it difficult initially to explain why, I mean in part it was that ethically I just couldn't bring myself to eating meat... and usually so people ask me then, and I would usually use the ethics reason, that I just can't bring myself to eating meat.”

Thabo's decision to become vegetarian was not based on being persuaded, but rather on an inborn sense of ethics that made eating dead animals repugnant. It is something he believes to be so intrinsic to his nature that it is instinctive. At the tender age of 10 a few years before becoming vegetarian he already displayed signs of discomfort with meat. While living with his grandmother it was his duty to chase and kill the chicken whenever his grandmother wanted to cook some. He recalls saying to her even at that age: *“you know I don't want to slaughter chickens any more, I feel like I have spilt too much blood.”*

The duty of slaughtering chickens was seldom required because they subsisted largely on pap, morogo² and legumes. But the few times it was required were enough to swell this protest, showing how deeply uncomfortable he felt about it. Thankfully his grandmother acceded to his appeal and released him from this disagreeable task. Of this incident he says: “...so that was purely an instinctive thing. So maybe there was still even then, at the back of my mind just the ethics around animal eating.”

Hussar and Harris (2010) assessed the reasons behind meat related food attitudes of 6 to 10 year old children. All the children in this age group who had chosen to become vegetarian in spite of living in omnivorous families stated animal welfare as their reason for choosing to be vegetarian. Vegetarian children raised by vegetarian parents had a spread of reasons including health, religion, family practice and animal welfare. Pallota (2008) argues that nearly all children have heightened and innate sympathy for animals. She says that it is through socialization that children lose their sensitivity to the suffering of animals. However, there are children who resist this socialization and these are the ones who eventually choose the vegetarian path. When Pallota (2008) explored the childhood feelings of adult animal right activist vegetarians she found that 60% of them had a desire to avoid eating meat when children. A similar proportion felt sad or guilty when an animal was harmed.

Ludo was such a child who could not bear to witness animals being hurt. He did not comprehend his uneasiness with scenes of animal slaughter, but he now views them as early omens of who he was destined to be. For him becoming a vegetarian is the actualization of what those feelings were indicating. He says:

² Morogo refers to various domesticated and wild greens that are used as relish by Bapedi, Basotho and Batswana.

“I come from a family where we slaughtered so many things, but I was never part of it. I was never a child who condoned or ate meat that was slaughtered in front of me, whether it was Christmas or what, they knew. I was one of those children, once I saw blood, it’s like yah! I just switch off. I still have vivid memories, but now I overstand (understand) why I went through those stages, I realise that it is because of the person that I am. It’s only through embracing it.” Ludo

Like Thabo, Ludo believes his aversion to animal slaughter was an expression of his intrinsic being. Although Ludo had these disturbing experiences he still enjoyed the taste of meat, and continued to partake of it as long as he had not witnessed the slaughter of the donor.

Just like Thabo and Ludo the participants in Pallota’s (2008) study speak of a sudden aversion to the thought of eating animals. The experience is often related as an epiphany, an ‘aha’ moment, when all that was involved in meat-eating came together. It is my opinion that although this experience may appear to happen suddenly, it is actually a result of the gradual process of moral development.

Recently Thabo engaged in an experiment. Since he has always struggled to give a logical explanation for choosing vegetarianism, he decided to buy and cook himself some meat to see if this will jolt his cognitions to have a reasoned answer to his cause. On the results of his auto-experimentation he states: *“I found I can’t even stand the smell of meat,..the notion of ever eating meat completely turns me off.”* He concludes: *“...just for me it’s a natural thing, I just can’t eat meat.”*

Thus both Ludo and Thabo believe that vegetarianism is intrinsic to their biopsychological make up. Although they currently give apparently rational explanations for being vegetarian, the impetus that launched them on this path is beyond explanation. Thabo was exposed to Mahatma Gandhi’s writing which mentioned his vegetarian lifestyle as well as his association

with the English Vegetarian Society, nonetheless he does not think that this in anyway influenced him to adopt vegetarianism. However, the fact that Thabo was attracted to such literature may reflect his sympathy with the oppressed. It is just that in his case the circle of the oppressed was expanded to included animals.

While Thabo's discomfort with animal slaughter and eating provided sufficient internal motivation to result in a dietary change, this was not the case with Ludo. It was not until Ludo encountered the Rastafarian society that he was able to express his aversion for animal killing, by adopting vegetarianism. According to the bioecological theory of development proximal processes drive the development of developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes are bidirectional interactions between the developing person and people, symbols and objects. The ability of the proximal process to develop the desired outcome is determined by its form, power, content and direction as a function of both the characteristics of the person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

To illustrate this point, Ludo already had an aversion for animal death, blood and dead meat, but this was not sufficient to make him a total vegetarian unlike Thabo. So the question is, what caused him to change?

Interviewer

“So at what point did this change come, what was the influence?”

Ludo

“Rastafarai you see, Rastafarai influenced this change in my life”

Interviewer

“Did you read about it, did you meet somebody?”

Ludo

“Yah, I met somebody and they gave me something to read, and I encountered it, and went to meditate on it afterwards.”

Thus we see that in Ludo’s case vegetarianism was adopted due to macrosystem influences of a sub-culture that generally challenges the prevailing or popular macrosystem discourses. The sub-culture in this case was Rastafarianism which is known for its pro-African and anti-Western worldview (O Brien & Carter, 2003). Furthermore, the proximal process had power to produce the desired outcome because of Ludo’s biologically determined predisposition to loathe animal death. *“So being a Rastafarai we do not consume anything that is dead.”* says Ludo. By the use of “we” Ludo identifies himself with a group, and thus adopts its values and perceptions, which not only gave birth to his vegetarian identity but to great extent defined it. Ludo’s expressions and explanations reflects an internalization of Rastafarian vegetarian rhetoric as illustrated in the table below:

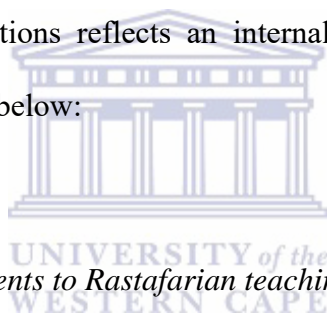


Table 3

The congruence of Ludo’s statements to Rastafarian teachings

Ludo’s comments	Rastafarian vegetarian rhetoric
<i>“So being a Rastafarai we do not consume anything that is dead, or engage in anything that has got to do with dead things”</i>	“As a whole, Rastas are vegetarians and avoid eating the death of animals—including beef and chicken.” (Zuke, 2009)
<i>“I realise that my body is my temple, my one and only temple, I can’t renovate or renew it. I can only reveal it, I can only manifest by eating, when I eating the wrong things it’s like I am covering it up with dirt”</i>	“If ya eat flesh ya becomes a walkin' cemetery, a walkin' tomb, storing all dat dead flesh inside of ya. Dat supposed ta be buried in de ground, nah in de body. Ya take yah temple and ya make it a burying ground” “because the body is a temple, you should not eat impure food. Also, you must take care of your body, cause it is Jah creation. Body is the Chapel.” (Zuke, 2009)

<p><i>“yah I have a deep, deep, deep passion, yah if I can say it is compassion for the universe, every creature, even the plants, though we consume them, by divine law.”</i></p>	<p>“The Rasta believes in “One Love” among all living things.” (Zuke, 2009)</p>
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4.4.2. Rastafarianism vs. Seventh-day Adventism

Unlike Thabo and Ludo the rest of the participants had accepted *carnist* socialization, hook, line and sinker. They had no problems eating animal-derived foods. They make no mention of animal suffering being a bother to them at any time. In order for them to adopt vegetarianism they needed to be convinced and persuaded. In some way they are proselytes of the vegetarian doctrine. Their adoption of vegetarianism can truly be likened to a conversion experience more so because it came as result of interaction with a particular religion – Seventh-day Adventism.

We have already seen that there are similarities in the evaluation of vegetarianism between Rastafarians and Seventh-day Adventist vegetarians. However, the experience of Khazimla may shed light on the ability of these two macrosystems to convert carnists into vegetarians. Although Khazimla credits Adventists for her adoption of vegetarianism her introduction to vegetarianism was through association with Rastafarians. She says: *“I met these guys who were Rastafarians, so we became friends. The reason for that I had a skin problem, so they introduced me to herbs, they educated me on different kinds of herbs, like lavender, African potato, then I started using herbs... So from there on they taught us how to cook vegetarian using only your veges and brown rice, so that is where I started to know about this thing called vegetarianism.”*

However, this association did not result in the desired outcome. It took more than seven years for Khazimla to become a vegetarian. She says: *“seven years later I became Adventist, then I saw the whole side of vegetarianism. That is when I began to study, digging deep now, learning*

about the dangers of sugar, the dangers of milk, and all that.” Khazimla experienced a paradigm shift and gained sufficient motivation to change her lifestyle and she explains how it happened.

“I first heard a sermon from Ps Khumalo in 2006, so when I heard the sermon, truly speaking I did not like it. Because I think it is the way he was presenting it, the health and temperance. I don’t think he was fair more so on the people who were still eating meat. So the second time he came, I think after six months, he started doing a study on sugar, so that is when I saw that hey! really we are in danger, like the food we put into our bodies is really harmful. Yah so I started to pray and ask God to help me to become a vegetarian. So a week later that is when I started. I can say I became a vegetarian, so I stopped eating meat, polony, dairy products and all that.” Khazimla

The question that beckons is why is it that the desired outcome was not realized in a relatively long period that Khazimla spent in the context of Rastafarianism and yet it was realised in a matter of months under Seventh-day Adventism? I believe the difference could be in the proximal processes based on the differing characteristics of the two contexts. Rastafarianism and Seventh-day Adventist represent two macrosystems. When she was with her Rastafarian friends the interactions were not formal, and there were no power structures at play. They engaged as equals under less serious circumstances and the proximal process was strong in both directions.

On the other hand, when placed in the Adventist context vegetarianism was presented by an authority figure in a formal setting. One could even add solemn. During the sermon Khazimla was a mere listener, a recipient of ideas with no liberty to express her own. So the proximal process was working in her direction and it had great power. To show the disproportion of

power in this interaction, Khazimla was not happy with the first presentation by the pastor but she could not express those feelings to him or the other congregants. Black pastors wield a great deal of influence over their parishioners and they have been shown to be powerful agents in changing their lifestyle habits (Levin, 1986). Furthermore church based health promotion programs have been shown to be more effective than self-help groups in changing behaviour and disease risk profile (Yanek, Becker, Moy, Gittelsohn & Koffman, 2001). Academic institutions such as the National Institute of Health recognizing the power of Black churches has entered into partnerships with them for improved health research and intervention in the inner city African American communities (Demark-Wahnefried, *et al.*, 2000)

Compared to Rastafarianism which is a cultural informal association of likeminded brothers and sisters in small disconnected groups scattered across Africa and its Diasporas, Seventh-day Adventists are a global church with a hierarchical structure similar to most governments. They have their own schools, colleges, universities, research centres, publishing houses, global television networks, hospitals and many other institutions (Adventist Yearbook, 2016). These are the resources and the opportunity structures of this macrosystem that enable it to muster imposing authority and thus exert power within proximal processes.

Moreover, when it comes to presenting vegetarianism, Seventh-day Adventists have a systematic and even sophisticated methods that invokes biblical, prophetic and scientific authority with strong appeals to reason, emotion and conscience. The Adventist Book Center (2016) website currently lists nearly 100 authors in the health book section. Most of the listed authors are health professionals and academics, and the publications are tailored for different audiences all promoting the Adventist health message which includes vegetarianism. On the other hand, my attempts to locate Rastafarian food related publications lead me to only three cookbooks on Amazon.com.

Another difference between the Adventists and Rastafarians is how their dietary practices have been portrayed by the scientific community. Most of the medical publications that reported nutritional concerns and imbalances in vegetarians were focused on Rastafarians (Campbell, Lofters, & Gibbs 1982). This was especially true of the Rastafarian population living in England in the 1980s (James, Clark & Ward, 1985). The British Medical Journal (2016) website lists more than 20 references around this era highlighting the diet related health problems of Rastafarians. I believe the outbreak of tuberculosis among Rastafarians at this time as well as their unwillingness to take vitamin B12 and Vitamin D supplements further alienated them from the scientific community (Packe, Patchett, & Innes, 1985). I could not find a single study giving a positive appraisal of Rastafarian dietary practices.

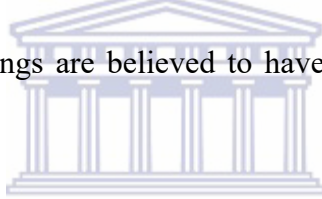
On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists have received quite positive appraisal from the scientific community concerning their diet. At the same time that Rastafarians were receiving negative commentary in the United Kingdom, the advantages of Adventist vegetarianism were being publicised (Berkel & de Waard, 1983; Fraser & Swanell, 1981). For nearly 60 years there have been close to 500 publications most of which have vindicated the Adventist approach to vegetarianism in the eyes of the scientific world (Loma Linda University, 2016). It is a popularly known fact especially in the United States of America that Adventists live eight to ten years longer than the rest of the population. National Geographic identified Loma Linda, a Californian city composed nearly entirely of Adventists as one of the world's blue zones (Beuttner, 2015). Blue zones are places where people with the highest longevity are found in great numbers.

It was probably these macrosystem differences that caused her to switch from being a passive observer of the vegetarian phenomenon to being an activist. In Adventism the phenomenon of vegetarianism was infused with new meaning and value that resulted in development of the desired outcome.

Other participants also directly or indirectly credit their adoption of vegetarianism to Seventh-day Adventism. None of them were reared in Adventist contexts. When Nkosi was asked how he became a vegetarian, he stated:

“it was by accepting the writings of Ellen White as a gift of prophecies manifested through her, taking serious whatever was proceeding from her writings that it is straight from God; is a counsel for us and that is for our good, now when I accepted that, it was around 2002, I came to Cape Town... in 2002... and that was when I was introduced to Adventism, ... Right now I’m a vegetarian, I like the health message, which I got in this church as well.” Nkosi

Ellen White (1827-1915) is a prolific author and one of the founding members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Her writings are believed to have prophetic authority having being received by inspiration from God.



The wellness reconditioning centre where Siphwe was initiated into vegetarianism is owned and operated by Seventh-day Adventists. The church beyond supplying the ideological impetus for adopting vegetarianism also provides opportunities and resources to maintain the practice. One of the means used is cooking classes and health courses. Mandla credits cooking classes at church with him being able to enjoy a variety of vegetarian foods:

“So, as time went on I learned a lot also from the cooking lesson how to use what you have and be able to make a nutritious meal because at first I was so narrow minded. I remember in the beginning I would even have one menu, and you would find out that even that menu was not worthy for me because at the end of the day I would notice that I pick up weight.” Mandla,

Khazimla also found that attending cooking classes increased her confidence to practice vegetarianism:

“... in 2010, at Riverside (Seventh-day Adventist) church after we did a one month health course, we had a one week cooking course. We were taught how to cook your pastas, lasagnes, how to bake healthy bread, so for me yah! I benefitted a lot. How to make your potato soup, and split peas without adding beef stock and these spices which are harmful to the body. After that we did a six month course which was in Lindley, Free State, we also did cooking classes there, but mostly baking. How to bake bread, muffins, how to make muesli.” Khazimla

Better cooking skills have been shown to influence people’s tendency to eat fruit and vegetables, as well as other food combinations believed to be healthy (Hartmann, Dohle, & Siegrist, 2013). Cooking classes have also been demonstrated to change various food related habits of individuals. Individuals who undergo cooking classes tend to eat out less, spend less money on food and try healthier alternatives (Herbert, *et al.*, 2014). The Seventh-day Adventist context made it easier for the participants to change their dietary habits and to maintain a vegetarian identity by providing practical resources such as cooking classes beyond vegetarian didactics.

4.4.3. Peer influences

According to the Bioecological Systems Theory of Human Development, the peer group is one microsystem that the developing individual interacts with which impacts on his or her development. Adolescents have a higher tendency of being influenced by peers due to the identity formation stage they find themselves in and a reduced tendency to identify with their parents. The peer microsystem exists within larger macrosystems, and it can reinforce the

values, messages and symbols of these macrosystems and thus lead to their adoption or it can oppose them causing the developing individual to reject them.

The triangular interaction between the peer microsystem, the developing individual and the Adventist macrosystem can be observed in certain participants. In general the peer microsystem tended to reinforce vegetarianism value and thus facilitated its adoption and development. Sonke relates her experience thus:

“At the end of 2010 I was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 2011 I started attending... I went to a church in Khayelitsha and I made some friends. And then we would get together for Sabbath lunch. I would always ask why they were not eating meat, what was the story behind that. Then one day we had a Bible study, and that is when I got my understanding from that Bible study. Thereafter I listened to audio sermons, also Randy Skeete preached about how our diets are related to our spiritual lives and so on. So I didn’t have a problem with (adopting vegetarianism).” Sonke

Yanga also found himself surrounded by Adventist vegetarian friends, while he himself was not. On a trip to the Eastern Cape people in the taxi noticed that they were not eating meat, and they explained their stand to their fellow travellers. He was included in the explanation as a meat abstainer. Their hosts were not aware of their vegetarian status, so on arrival Yanga states: *“one of the guys who were meeting us by the road told us that they’ve prepared us a nice big sheep for... So, my friend told him that we wouldn’t be eating the sheep because we were vegetarians. So, he kept including everybody in his statements of “we”, and that bothered me a lot, it looked like I was the only one who was not vegetarian.”* Yanga

So Yanga began to feel the peer pressure: *“In the house we were staying in they would sometimes cook meat and to me it was a torture because I hadn’t made any decision of stopping*

to eat meat. It really smelled nice and I would feel like eating it, but the other brothers were not, so I thought to myself that I couldn't disappoint them. I needed to keep to the standard that we all didn't eat meat. I then realised at that point that I cannot go again with those brothers while I was still eating meat because it means that I would always be tortured. So, I thought I needed to make a serious decision. Without even being informed about the importance (of vegetarianism) and how it affects my spiritual life, but based on those grounds with the other brothers that I just took the decision that fine, I am a vegetarian. Then when we got back to Cape Town I went to KFC and ate it (chicken) until I was full for the last time, then I thought, yah! I was done (with meat).” Yanga

Yanga says his decision to become vegetarian was based solely on his desire to maintain connection and harmony with his peers. Adolescents eating patterns are influenced by what they perceive to be the norm among their peers. Youth in Gaborone, Botswana cited a desire to conform to peers as a major influence in their food choices (Brown, Shaibu, Maruapula, Malete & Compher, 2015). The ability of the peer group to modify eating behaviour is dependent on the individual's characteristic and the physical and social context of the peer microsystem. For example, it has been shown that peers influence the tendency for adolescents to snack and that this influence was modulated by the availability of the snacks in the school environment and individual factors such as gender, weight and level of education (Wouters, Larsen, Kremers, Dagnelie & Geenen, 2010).

For Mandla the decision to adopt vegetarianism resulted from hearing his friend do a presentation in church touching on some of the health issues he was struggling with. His interest was kindled and he approached him for further information. He followed the advice he was offered and benefitted greatly: *“Once I started doing that (following his advice), within 21 days I started noticing drastic change and I became fond of it and took a decision.” Mandla*

So we see in these examples that the peer microsystem nested within and being influenced by the Adventist macrosystem facilitated the adoption of vegetarianism. The proximal process between Adventism and peers was also found to be important in maintaining the vegetarian identity. Because not everyone within Adventism is a vegetarian, those who chose to be vegetarian tend to seek each other out and associate together, for social support and well practical support in sharing recipes, actual food items as well as health and product information as illustrated by Sonke's experience:

"...except if you would get to know people who are also vegetarians, then it becomes better because you get to understand what to eat and what not and people get to share different recipes otherwise you would find yourself eating the same thing everyday and that would be boring... I have a friend who doesn't stay too far from me, we share recipes, she likes baking and cooking. When she invites me over I like to ask what has she's put in her meals,... We share ingredients and get to know what other people's special dishes are." Sonke

After becoming vegetarian Nkosi's relatives with whom he was staying could not afford perhaps more emotionally than financially to make special food for him. He was the only Adventist in the household, so he decided to vacate the house. Certain church members came to his rescue. He says: *"As a result... I went to live with the Swarts, who were Seventh-day Adventists, they were providing proper food for me. I was staying with them because I was not working even then."* Nkosi

The participants maintain an ongoing system of peer education, which strengthens their identity. Nkosi comments of it in this manner: *"Now as we interact with each other, when you see that my brother here is still partaking on margarine, you know that, this is saturated fat that would cause some problems in a long run. Yes it is written on it that it doesn't contain*

animal product, but you know that it is saturated fat which becomes solid in room temperature, that means that even in your body it will saturate like that. You then do as much as possible to gently approach your brother that, hey this one will result in this and that problem, but you look at every angle, maybe not to correct that at that particular time, but maybe at a later stage you do mention that these are the consequences of that, and that we may better do away with it and replace it with this one.” Nkosi

This is how Yanga described his relationship to other vegetarians: *“it is very good and very strong, because we are sharing the same common goal, almost all the time we have things to talk about. If you have discovered something new, you have people to go and share with. Sometimes we find that our source has closed, then someone else maybe come to say hey, look I’ve discovered another place to buy honey for example, and at some stage I discovered a place to buy our grains, so the relationship is quite good and interesting.” Yanga*

It is evident the peer relationships of participants provide the typical types of social support as described by House (1987). Firstly the participants receive *emotional support* from their peers by receiving empathy and acceptance. Secondly they receive *instrumental support* through provision of food items and other necessities such as accommodation. Thirdly they get *appraisal support* through the feedback they receive which helps them to self-evaluate. Lastly they receive *informational support* through the constant exchange of health information.

However, this sharing of new information and ideas about what to do in maintaining vegetarianism can sometimes cause conflict. This comes from varying interpretations of biblical, spiritual and scientific information. While there is consensus on animal product avoidance among vegetarians, the safety and health utility of other items can cause disputes.

Khazimla explains:

“it’s complicated because we find that we have different ideas, or we have different knowledge about veganism, which sometimes brings a lot of confusion. Somehow we don’t see things the same, I don’t know why. But I believe people have their principles, some have their standards to reach, but me I just stick with what I read and follow what I read. So we speak different languages, we are vegans, we say we only eat plant-based foods, but on the knowledge we find that we say a lot of things. This is the knowledge you have about brown bread, the other one says brown bread does this and that, the other one (disagrees and) says no brown bread, so it’s complicated.” Khazimla

The topics that have caused controversy range from toothpaste and fluoride, sweeteners like saccharin, food combinations to charcoal and herbs.

4.4.4. Ever learning and developing

The vegetarian life is one of constant progress fuelled by increasing knowledge and understanding of health issues. The most crucial step which most of the participants began with was to cut meat out of their diets. This was then followed by the removal of other animal-derived food such as eggs, milk and cheese, as well as other items which may be considered unhealthy, such as sugary food, junk food snack, chips, refined foods, etc. Nkosi recounts his progressive journey thus: *“because the way I was taught, it was (to avoid) meat; meat; meat every time...so I started by not eating the meat, but eating the food with that (meat) gravy. The truth advanced, and I was made to understand that even that, that I was eating was not good for our bodies.”*Nkosi

The dangers and evils of meat were emphasised to him and he initially thought that that was all that was involved in being a vegetarian or in being healthy. As he learned more he began to drop other items from his menu.

“Sugar, white rice and others I was eating, not knowing the dangers of such foods to our bodies. The emphasis is on meat even with the health teachings...because we are only aware of meat, but we would freely take sugar, freely take milk and eat some eggs, but as we progress we would stop eating meat and eat gravy, from eating eggs we would move away, from taking milk alone, stop all that together, and stop taking sugar, so in other words there is progression in terms of knowledge especially on areas where we put the doing part on them we see the difference.”

Nkosi

When Nkosi speaks of the “*doing part*” of vegetarianism he is referring to the positive practical aspects of what to eat to maintain health rather than what to avoid. He believes that the absence of this positive aspect makes new vegetarians sick. *“I have noticed that with the history I have with most of them, ... most of them get sick when they start to change from their diet to vegetarian diet, and the problem is little knowledge, the more of ‘don’t eat that’ than ‘eat that’”*Nkosi

Nkosi still feels a need for more knowledge as he recalls some of the blunders he has done: *“even I on my side, I still feel like there are things I’m not doing right because of little knowledge I have, because everything I know now, I still know it at the layman’s perspective.”*

He cites the use of margarine as one of the mistakes he has done, because he had read that it was made from plant oils, but later found out that because of the processing it was unhealthy.

The respondents agree on the importance of being informed. *“The more knowledge you have about vegetarianism the better, and I think people need to be taught nutrition (such as) why you eat your cabbage, why you eat your beetroot, why you eat you carrots. I think that’s a start, and the practicality, people need to be taught how to cook vegetarian.”* Khazimla

The participants are correct in assuming that nutrition knowledge will enhance plant food intake. Greater nutrition knowledge is associated with higher intake of fruit and vegetables as well as other items considered part of a healthy diet (Wardle, Parmenter & Waller, 2000). Vegetarians who are concerned about health have been shown to have greater nutrition knowledge and a healthier dietary practices than those concerned with animal welfare.

The emphasis on nutrition knowledge by the participants is particularly important for them as most of them come from lower socioeconomic status. Whereas fruit and vegetable intake has been associated with people with higher socioeconomic status (Zenk, *et al.*, 2005) it has been found that nutrition knowledge is a modifier of the effect of socioeconomic status. People in lower socioeconomic status with nutrition knowledge have been found to eat as healthily as people with higher socioeconomic status (Beydoun & Wang, 2007)

Khazimla mentioned that theoretical nutrition instruction must be combined with practical skills development such as cooking classes. Mandla attests to how this practical aspect has assisted him in having a balanced nutritious meat free diet: *“Bear in mind I had no idea what it was all about; what was vegetarianism, the only thing I was avoiding was meat and I was still consuming some other stuff, but as time went on I learned the importance of combining certain foods; where to get proteins and some other nutrients; the importance of a body needing certain proteins and where to get carbohydrates. ...So, as time went on I learned a lot also from the cooking lesson how to use what you have and be able to make a nutritious meal because at first I was so narrow minded.”* Mandla

4.4.5. Vegetarianism in practice: making it work

The participants do not just eschew the use of meat, but they have certain food habits they practice to help them maintain their identity. They tend to purchase their food in bulk from

wholesalers to cut costs. They get their grains and legumes from an agricultural cooperation named Agricol.

“Most of the time I buy my grains at Agricol, here in Brackenfell, there are different wholesome grains there. I buy... legumes and starchy grains.” Nkosi

“I buy most of my food from places where they sell organic stuff. I bypass the Shoprites and Pick ‘n Pays because sometimes you find that the shops are a bit expensive, so one can just go where they also buy from. We have made it easier now, because what we do we buy milk at the factory and we come up as a group and put money together and go and buy the box of milk and then we split it, we then also buy oats which is 20kg and split it with another person. This has helped us and made it easy and costless to buy these things.” Yanga

Through this collective purchasing and bulk buying the participants are taking practical steps to become economic consumers. One could say that becoming vegetarians has increased their consumer intelligence. This is another way that vegetarianism has transformed the participants.

Another change that the participants have experienced is not only in regard to the content of their food but their manner of food preparation. For example Yanga no longer fries his food: *“When I cook, I mostly steam my food, I have a steamer at home. I don’t fry, I bake.” Yanga*

It is a commonly held notion that steaming is better food preparation method than frying. Srichamnong, Thiyajai and Charoenkiatkul (2016) found that nutrients in rice are better preserved thorough steaming than frying. This shows that participants incorporated food preparation techniques known to be healthier or to yield more nutritious meals. Nkosi tries to cook his grains thoroughly which is known to decrease anti-nutritive factors in grains. He also mixes grains and legumes which is known to balance the amino acid profile of a meal:

“Most of the time I like to do the combinations, there is what our Xhosa people call ‘qhumatala’ where they put sorghums and lentils together, and it’s very good, that is something I enjoy, or sometimes I put lentils together with my vegetables or even with my fruit. What I don’t do is mixing fruit and vegetables. Grains I cook them as thoroughly as I can.” Nkosi

Another common practice among the participants is having a hearty breakfast. Mandla said: *“My most important meal is the breakfast, because I eat lot of food that has got fibre in the morning, during the day I don’t eat that much because I know I already have that energy from my breakfast. If I miss my breakfast, my day becomes so miserable. So to me the most important meal is the breakfast, I have learned that.”*

Studies have shown that having breakfast enhances cognition and may prevent psychological stress and aggression (Adolphus, Lawton, Champ & Dye 2016) prevents obesity (Brikou, Zannidi, Karfopoulou, Anastasiou, & Yannakoulia, 2016) and non-communicable diseases (Yokoyama, *et al.*, 2016).

The participants’ breakfast is usually composed of some whole grain porridge or bread. They prefer to bake their own bread. They usually have fruit with their breakfast as well, as well as nuts or seeds. They avoid eating fruit and vegetables at the same meal. So usually the vegetables are reserved for the lunch meal. Another important thing is eating at regular times and not snacking between meals.

Mandla gives us an example of his typical breakfast: *“Currently for breakfast I make sure I have my oats, mixed with seeds; linseeds combined with sunflower seeds; then I would probably have a handful of peanuts and I put soya milk in my porridge, then in terms of sweetening I use honey, sometimes fructose or xylitol. I would then have 2 bananas or an orange or an apple. Or sometimes I would make a fruit salad for morning.”*

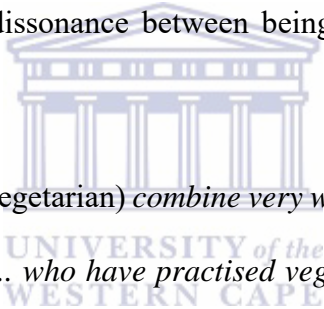
Khazimla follows a similar pattern: *“Breakfast like today, I had brown bread. I baked brown bread on Friday and made rolls, I had my brown bread with my linseeds, I had my fruit. I only eat two or three fruit... usually I have pear, apple or nectarine. I use syrup, if it’s not syrup then I use peanut butter instead, so some other times I will have my oats or muesli with fruit... So for lunch we are going to cook pasta and vegetables.”*

The participants also look for ways to still have nice and interesting food. Sonke still enjoys curry. Her varieties include lentil, chickpea and veggie curry. She also enjoys macaroni and cheese. She has found a way to replace the cheese with blended tofu. *“I do blend it (tofu) so that it’s nice and soft; I add salt and seasoning and put it in the oven and cover it, it looks like cheese. So that is what I’ve learned, how to get creative about my food. I like cooking and baking as well. I like to explore – like try out new things.”* Sonke

Sonke also visits non-vegetarian restaurants to view their popular dishes and see if she cannot make them without using animal products. Thabo has found that visiting vegetarian restaurants has helped in inspiring creative ideas for his dishes. The tendency to experiment with new recipes and novel food items in the participants mirrors the experience of other vegetarians. Dutch vegetarians have been found to have higher inclination for novel food experiences than meat-eating counterparts (Hoek, Luning, Stafleu & Graaf, 2004). In my opinion this tendency can be explained by the fact meat is a food rated to have the highest satiety, whereas plant-based foods are rated the least. The greater variety in the vegetarian menu may be a way to make up for the lower satiety, thus keeping the palate ever interested. I also think that vegetarians eat foods such as vegan cheese, vegan burger to show that they can still enjoy nice food while keeping true to their convictions.

4.4.6. African vegetarian dissonance

In this section of the chapter we have been looking at how the participants adopted vegetarianism and incorporated it into their identities. Seeing that this was the first study exploring Black South African vegetarians it was deemed important for them to respond to their view of the relationship between being African and being vegetarian. The females did not see any particular relationship between being African and being vegetarian, however the males affirmed in most certain terms that vegetarianism is African. The argument that they use is that Africans primarily subsisted on a plant-based diet, with meat only being used on special occasions, such as funerals, weddings and ritual celebrations. They admit that the concept of vegetarianism as it is now held may not have existed, but the practice was definitely there. Therefore, they do not see any dissonance between being authentically African and being vegetarian. Nyanga said:



“(Being African and being vegetarian) combine very well, because you know Black people are the most people... who have practised vegetarianism even before they be informed. So to be vegetarian, I can say is for Blacks – it comes from Blacks, if I may put it that way, let alone the understanding that it is for white people or a western lifestyle. If you go back to our forefathers and look at their lifestyle, you will find that they were not so aware or knowledgeable about (its) health benefits, but it was what was available to them, and if you look at it, it was good food which is what today we refer people back to, which is vegetarianism. The only thing is that they would still eat meat, even though they were eating it at certain times or events and celebrations, not the way we people of today.” Nyanga

Participants find that many people in their contexts consider vegetarianism Eurocentric and carnism Afrocentric. Mandla says: *“They thought I was so mad. How could I as a Black*

person become a vegetarian, these things are done by the European people, a Black person can't become a vegetarian..." Mandla

Thabo has had to contend with the same argument:

"The usual comment is, "you know, it's surprising an African man being a vegetarian," that's a sort of typical comment, that it's unique (unusual). But I often point out that, actually it's meat-eaters who are unique (odd) for me. Because I grew up with my grandmother in the rural area and we ate meat on special occasions. Once in a while when there was a wedding or funeral or, so meat was... mostly we ate morogo. So it is, high meat consumption which is assumed to be African, which for me is a strange thing." Thabo

Ludo is even stronger in his assertions, claiming that it is a deception to believe that animal eating was part of the African way of life:

"It (vegetarianism) is an ancient way our people were living, they were cultivators, we were farmers, animals were used as livestock, you do not kill you livestock, your livestock is part of your money, you either sell them for breeding, that's what used to happen, I do not know of anybody who killed it, though there are depictions today of killing." Ludo

The participants view the rural and ancient lifestyle of African people to be the authentically African way, and the modern and urban lifestyle to be Western. The participants fail to take into account that macrosystems are not static. It has been shown that even in rural areas in South Africa high meat consumption has become a norm (Bourne, Lambert & Steyn, 2002) Westernization and urbanization of African populations has changed what they consider to be the standard African food. The vegetarians are resisting or refusing to acknowledge this

change, and they hold themselves to be the preservers of what authentic African dietary is. Ludo states that the idea that meat-eating is African is *“intellectually built weapons to destroy you from the inside, just eat anything, it’s your culture to eat an animal’s head and an animal’s insides, I mean no man, we had dynasties, we were royal people.”* Ludo

However, there are times when the participants experience lack of alignment between being truly African and being a vegetarian. Among indigenous Black South Africans it is very important to be a hospitable host and a gracious guest. One of the rules of hospitality is that guests cannot enter and exit your dwelling without eating something. In Setswana they say *“moeng goroga re je”* meaning *“when the visitor arrives, we eat.”* As a guest you are supposed to graciously accept whatever is offered you as the embodiment of the host’s hospitality and well wishes upon your life. To refuse this offer is one of the highest insults a guest can give to a host. This puts the vegetarian in conflict with this African norm.

Nkosi has found it challenging balancing the two values. He says: *“The only problem with community is that when you visit them they don’t know what to give you. That troubles them because by nature African people are most generous people in the sense that when you visit them they don’t expect you to bring your own food, instead they are the ones who provide for you, so when you say no, thank you that doesn’t really go down well with them.”* Nkosi

Choosing to be a vegetarian appears to place the participants in conflict with an even deeper concept which defines the African worldview. The concept of Botho/Ubuntu governs how the self, others, relationships and the world are viewed and experienced in the African context. One of the idioms which expresses this philosophy in Sesotho and Setswana is *“Motho ke motho ka batho”* which means *“a person is a person through other people”*. This spirit encourages communal inclusiveness and values it higher than personal interests. Or the best way to have personal interests met is through meeting the interests of others, primarily your

family and community. In practice it means a person with *Botho* believes that “I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share.” So when a vegetarian refuses to participate in the meal it casts doubt on his or her *Ubuntu*.

To avoid having to deal with this dissonance and the resulting discomfort Thabo avoids as much as possible situations where he will be offered food by others especially when he is back home in Limpopo. He says:

“In December I go up to see my parents and the extended family... and (attend) family events. (So) I’ve I sometimes wondered if I simply avoid food because it’s a big family event and it’s mostly meat, and lots of meat, but I hardly place myself in a position that I need to eat something... So it is in that way I don’t place myself in situations where I would then feel awkward that my dietary requirements are not the same as everyone else.” Thabo

So we find that the vegetarians who assert that vegetarianism is African are in a dilemma. They are struggling with how can a phenomenon so African in practice be at the same time anti-African in principle. I believe that the dilemma may be resolved if the philosophy of *Botho/Ubuntu* is broadened or taken to its logical conclusions. Because *Botho/Ubuntu* dictates that we care about others more than ourselves, the current way that meat is being consumed, which results in the escalation morbidity and mortality does not only have personal but communal consequences. The rapid physical and mental attrition of African adults removes them prematurely from being influencers in their communities. They instead become a burden to their children. So this indeed makes meat-eating as it is practiced today truly anti-African, because it contributes to the demise of the Black African social structure. Furthermore, by supporting the current meat industry Black Africans are disadvantaging future generations, because this industry is destructive to the environment.

Becoming a vegetarian is a journey fraught with many conflicts, and developing the vegetarian identity requires successful resolution of these conflicts. For some participants the initial conflict was the encounter of vegetarianism with the established habits of carnism. The inner desire to live consistent lives lead the vegetarians to choose vegetarianism in spite of their previous habits. The participants took advantage of the various resources that their varied contexts offered them in order to build and maintain their vegetarian identity.

4.5. Being vegetarian in a carnist world

I have demonstrated that the physical and social context of the participants is largely under the influence of carnism. The final important theme that emerged from this study was the interaction of the participants with their contexts as they strove to develop and maintain a vegetarian identity. The participants found the immediate and larger social contexts as both barriers and facilitators to the development of vegetarian identity. What is most interesting is that the interactions seem to be modulated by their gender.

4.5.1. Supportive family environment

Families of origin have been recognized as major influences of diet practices and food preferences of developing individuals (Tabbakh & Freeland-Graves, 2016). The family social environment has been implicated in the degree of success and failure in individuals attempting to change to a healthier diet (Ryden & Sydner, 2011). Supportive family environment facilitate diet change adherence whereas unsupportive environments increase failure in diet change.

In this study the female participants found the family environment supportive while the males found it hostile. The males only found a supportive family environment in the current families which they have set up. The relationship between the females and their mothers is the one most supportive. Sonke and her mother share a common interest in health, so when she became vegetarian it did not ruffle her feathers.

Interviewer: *“Did you have any challenges when you changed your diet?”*

Sonke: *“not really, the thing is – with me and my mom we like exploring healthier, eating options. So, she stopped eating red meat, and...she found this book titled “Eat for your blood type”, so she started cutting down on certain foods that weren’t right for her blood type. When I told her about my diet, for her it wasn’t such a big thing, she understood because we always had that quest (for health)... Actually it was much easier with my mom being on this thing already, so if you would just tell her that you are following a certain diet she would just support you. That was one of the ups for me.”*

Siphiwe had a similar experience with her mother. She says:

“my mom embraces health, although she’s not a vegetarian, nor Adventist, but they embrace health... because I was overweight before I started this plant-based diet, I think I weighed 85, so now I weigh 62, therefore I have lost a lot of weight. So, in my case it is something that they saw me going through, so it became easier for them to follow the diet because they saw the results. Even in some family gatherings – because I come from a family of big people, so they would always want to know how have I lost weight. So, because I’m a testimony, it has become easier for my family, and with mom as well she had always struggled with weight, so she appreciates vegetarianism. Even when I’m at home they appreciate my vegetarian cooking,... So, people are open to it.” Siphiwe

When Khazimla was asked how is it living with her mother and sister who are both non-vegetarian, her response was:

“Aaaah things are going well, I thank God, because I am unemployed, but I thank God because my mother does not get tired of buying me the things that I eat, like my oats, like my muesli, so she never gets tired, even sometimes she will ask me to cook the veges for them, because she is diabetic,... They are quite positive in the household, they even sometimes say “I also want to stop eating meat.” “I also want to stop using lots of salt, and all that” because they can see that I am living a healthy lifestyle.” Khazimla

Since the men in this study experience opposition to vegetarianism in their families of origin when they established their own families they ensured that they were vegetarian friendly. Mandla explains the deliberate effort he exerted to this end: *“We use one pot at home. All of us are vegetarians. I sat down with my wife (and discussed the diet question), because before we got married she used to eat meat. I narrated the whole thing,”* Mandla

*“Yah, actually all of us in my family, the three of us, myself; wife and child we are vegetarians. I even teach my child that the reason I don’t let you eat meat is because it is not healthy because of what it does in the body. I explain it in a way that would be easy for her to understand, so we are all excited, even going to the restaurants, everyone knows which restaurant is the favourite of the family, even a stranger that comes to our home, they get surprised because they notice that everybody here enjoys vegetarianism.”*Mandla

Thabo’s wife has been a vegetarian much longer than him, and he really values her culinary skills in preparation of a variety of appetizing vegetarian dishes. It has added colour to his previously drab and bland meatless diet that he had as a bachelor. Thabo says: *“I mean my wife is vegetarian as well so that helps, so at home it’s basically a vegetarian home.”*

Thabo has also ensured that his home is free from meat, even though his children have not joined them in vegetarianism. They are free to consume meat, but not in his house. He explains: *“Our children... my son was a vegetarian for 4 years and then recently decided to start eating meat. My daughter has not really been a vegetarian, but it’s a no meat home, so they normally eat meat as they visit friends or when we go out, they can order meat or chicken or whatever they want, so for me that’s the home environment, its vegetarian, completely vegetarian environment.”*

We see how the males in this study have used their influence to ensure that the proximal processes in the home microsystem favour the development of vegetarianism, not just for themselves but for their family members. It has been found that among Black South Africans females usually cook according to the whims of their husbands (Puoane, Matwa, Bradly, Hughes, 2006).

4.5.2. Family conflict and social isolation

As stated earlier the males in this study did not find their home environment conducive to maintaining their vegetarian identity. Firstly, there were practical challenges. They were dependent on their families and to accommodate their dietary preferences would mean additional expenses. It would also mean preparing several pots and for the cooks it meant doing new and unfamiliar things. Nkosi explains his struggles:

“When I come to my family, that is my mother and father it was very hard. I would eat that, that was left because I was concentrating on removing meat. They were not happy when I started not eating these other things, because I became so thin, and I would choose not to eat especially when they cooked pork because they would mix all that. My mom would forget most of the time, and I would be angry that they

would forget and put all these and there would be nothing else for me to eat.”

Nkosi

Yanga faced similar problems:

“Now, they would cook at home, and they would just remove the meat. That was one problem, because I could not prepare my own meal while there was food prepared for everyone. Also the fact that I was not financially good also contributed, but all that actually drove me to move out because it was going to create problems, because I would always be like: I don’t eat this; don’t cook it this way, and at the end of the day I’m not the one cooking, somebody else is cooking, so I could see that people were not liking that idea now of me being vegetarian and not eating this and that, so I had to run away from that to stay on my own.” Yanga

The practical considerations brought about challenges that lead participants to remove themselves from their families. This shows that the commitment to vegetarianism was very strong, strong enough to sunder familial relations. It shows that the belief that vegetarianism was life, was not a mere sentiment. Thus they were prepared for any sacrifice. *“It was very hard, as I told you that I had to leave my uncle’s house to live with these people in order to eat this proper diet. They told me they couldn’t provide that food for me.”* Nkosi

Besides the practical difficulties of accommodating vegetarians’ dietary needs, their families also feared that they will become malnourished, thin and sick. *“Basically... they told me I am weak, I am weak person. I am gonna be frail, I am gonna be thin. I am gonna start looking ugly, all those stupid things, their superficial things that didn’t make sense to me, because I could overstand (understand) them, they don’t know what it is to be vegetarian,”* Ludo

“They thought I was so mad.... that I would become slim, and also I will be sick and I would become mad, because I won’t get sufficient protein for my body.” Mandla Mandla’s family share the popular idea that animal protein is essential for building the human body. This argument is popularly given by people who believe that meat is essential and indispensable to human nutrition (Piazza, *et al.*, 2015).

Another reason why family members feared the vegetarians’ weight loss was how they might be perceived in the community. In the Black Cape Town townships people with more fat are presumed to be healthier and happier, whereas optimal weight and thin individuals are viewed as being sick or sickly (Okop, Mukumbang, Mathole, Levitt & Puoane, 2016). To complicate matters, weight loss among Black Cape Town residents has been associated with HIV and Aids and people fear being identified with this syndrome (Puoane, Tsolekile & Steyn, 2010). Thus the family feared the stigma that may result from the change in weight in the participants.

Yanga explains his family’s reaction:

“For example they would refer to an uncle in the family who was a Rasta, and he was too thin, so they would say I should look at him, and realise that I would look like him. The minute you look like that people would think you are sick, to an extent they would think you are HIV positive. So, to show that they don’t accept this is because if ever I look like that and people would classify me under a group of people who are having a certain kind of disease, in a way they were also feeling offended. So they were not appreciating it at all. So, they were negative.... They actually thought that I was lying, they wouldn’t take what I told them that I was a vegetarian. They were suspecting that I was already sick, that maybe I was just covering that up by saying I’m vegetarian.” Yanga

The final argument used by the participant's relatives is that vegetarianism is associated with Rastafarianism. It appears that the Rastafarian subculture was not approved in the participant's contexts and anything associated with it was thus viewed negatively. In fact Rastafarians in Cape Town report feeling discriminated against based on their ideology and practices (Van der Walt, Mpholo & Jonck & 2016). Yanga and Ludo both had this experience:

“According to them, they were associating vegetarianism with Rastas. So, it was all about I was adopting the Rasta diet and to them it was not about health, it was just a matter of choice... yes, yes, they were negative, if I can put it that way, they were not supportive.” Yanga

“They were negative about it obviously... they were obviously attacking me, in a very violent way, without knowing the bigger picture. They were looking at it in a short-sighted view, that yah its Rastafarai you know, this is what's causing this.”

Ludo

“Also if I didn't eat meat they would associate me with Rastafarianism, and there were many more other things they were saying that I can't really recall now.”

Mandla

It is evident that there was a marked difference between the interactions of the male and female vegetarians with their families of origin. The question that needs to be answered is, why the proximal processes in the home microsystem were so radically different between male and female vegetarians. In my opinion the difference lies in the person characteristics. Bronfenbrenner divided person characteristics into three categories, the *demand*, *resource* and *force* characteristics. Demand characteristics include age, gender, skin colour, physical appearance, etc. These characteristics act as initial stimulus in to the context and determine how the person is viewed and interacted with based on preconceived expectations. I believe

that age and gender as person characteristics influenced the difference in proximal processes in the family context.

Firstly in the Black South African family males do not get involved in menu issues. Cooking is seen as a women's domain (Ratele, Shefer & Strebel, 2010). Men normally just eat what they are given. Thus it was not expected for these young males to determine what they will or will not eat, especially since their dietary choice was foreign to accepted norm. The only time that a male may influence the menu is if he financially contributes to it. The female participants may have had easier time because as women they are expected to be concerned about food, health, diets, weight issues, etc. Thus adopting an unorthodox diet was welcome, whereas it was repulsed in males.

Another advantage that females had is the resource characteristics, such as cooking skills, access to the family kitchen and ability to influence the menu. The female vegetarians were able to cook vegetarian meals for themselves as well as for their families. They presented these meals in ways that won the favour and support of their family members. They could demonstrate that a plant-based menu can still be delicious and filling. So these person attributes and their symbolic association to food made the difference between support and opposition to vegetarianism.

The male participants attributed some of the opposition to lack of knowledge or understanding of the health implications of a meat based diet.

“They don't understand, yah, that is the problem. They don't take serious what happens when you are eating a zero percent fibre meat, they really don't understand what are the results of that.” Nkosi

“It was just a bit difficult when it was my grandmother talking because myself and her had a good relationship. So she would speak with that seriousness and showing so much sadness. I tried to explain but she was just not getting it. That was the painful part for me because I so wish if only her. I wasn’t worried about other people, just her, if only she would get it and accept that situation.” Yanga

4.5.3. A hostile religious community

From the official church website the Seventh-day Adventist Church states that it “recognizes the autonomy of each individual and his or her God-given power of choice. Rather than mandating standards of behaviour, Adventists call upon one another to live as positive examples of God’s love and care. Part of that example includes taking care of our health—we believe God calls us to care for our bodies, treating them with the respect a divine creation deserves. Gluttony and excess, even of something good, can be detrimental to our health. Adventists believe the key to wellness lies in a life of balance and temperance. Nature creates a wealth of good things that lead to vibrant health. Pure water, fresh air and sunlight—when used appropriately—promote clean, healthy lives. Exercise and avoidance of harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol and mind-altering substances lead to clear minds and wise choices. A well-balanced vegetarian diet that avoids the consumption of meat coupled with intake of legumes, whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables, along with a source of vitamin B12, will promote vigorous health.” (Seventh-day Adventist, General Conference, 2015)

Since the church does not mandate that church members adhere to all these health standards, but leaves them to their choice some members in South Africa do not practice vegetarianism.

“I live with Adventists, so they don’t mind vegetarianism, it’s just that they don’t want to practise it.” Siphwe

“There are not lots of vegetarians in our church, where they were supposed to be, so you don’t get any people to share information with. You don’t even find people who are eager as well.” Nkosi

So although the Adventist participants are practicing what the church endorses, they feel like a minority within their local churches. And they have found that the local church structures and members often act as barriers to their practice of vegetarianism to the extent that Nkosi sees no difference between the attitude of church members and his non-Adventist family members. He actually thinks the attitude of church members is worse.

“I can put my family and the church’s response in the same level, especially the church’s response is totally up against, with some bitter hatred that is there towards anyone who practises this lifestyle.” Nkosi

One would expect that fellow believers would have more sympathy with vegetarians than their non-Adventist families. However, because Adventists share a common understanding of the moral implications of diet habits, they may have more feelings of guilt aroused by the presence of vegetarians. Hennigan (2015) demonstrated that people whose moral identity is more threatened by vegetarians have a harsher evaluation of their diet.

Monin (2007) concluded that those who feel threatened by the moral minority employ several defensive strategies. Firstly, the moral virtue of the behaviour is denied or minimized. If that does not work, they adopt derogatory attacks on the moral minority. Minson and Monin (2012) demonstrated that anticipating reproach or guilt leads other disparage vegetarians. Lastly those who feel morally threatened distance and dissociate themselves from the moral minority. The participants have experienced these reactions to a greater or less extent within the church setting. For example, Nkosi finds that local church leadership structures bar the teaching of vegetarianism in churches. In his opinion, they do this because they don’t want to feel

condemned: *“You don’t find platform to present these things. Months can go without a health message or (a health) talk in our churches today. It is one subject people do not like because it stops people from entertaining or gratifying perverted appetite.”* Nkosi

Nkosi describes the distancing and dissociating that he has observed:

“The people who are vegetarians, there’s a certain stigma, there’s a certain war still on the other side. They want the others not to associate with these ones, now there’s very few good relationships that you can have with people, they see you as a person who wants people to be thin; to be sick from not eating the so called proper food.” Nkosi

Besides that, the local church is not sensitive to the needs of vegetarians and does not accommodate or cater for them appropriately. Khazimla cites an example where she went for a weekend training organized by the church. In registering for the program she had indicated that her meal preference was a vegan vegetarian, but when meal time came she found that she was not catered for. She says: *“So I discovered that they were using eggs and milk, which is the food that I don’t eat... It hurts, I was hurt.”* As a result Khazimla had to buy her own food and eat in her room, further isolating her.

As the weekend came to a close and time came to evaluate the workshop, she sat next to someone who told her that that morning they were served white bread. She could not believe her ears:

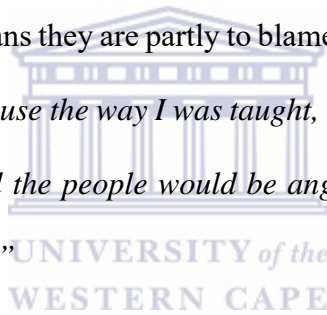
*“I asked “Why, why white bread, because this is a Seventh-day Adventist (event)?”
They are not supposed to cater white bread for people knowing that they are vegetarian... And I put everything down (on the evaluation sheet) (I told them)
“Hey, you need to cater for vegetarians” and I emphasised that you need to teach*

people how to cook healthy, nice and healthy food. .. So I told them please next time cater for us vegans... It can't be that even in our church the catering we have, people don't know how to cook vegan. It's a problem.” Khazimla

At some stage Nkosi found the church social environment to be so inhospitable that he stopped attending services:

“Oh, my brother, you get less friends, most of the people would no longer be your friends. I even have an experience, whereby the very people who taught me this (vegetarian) lifestyle, that is the Seventh-day Adventists, I had to spend 2 years outside the church, staying at home.” Nkosi

Nkosi also admits that as vegetarians they are partly to blame for the hostility: *“Yes, they didn't have good approach as well, because the way I was taught, it was meat; meat; meat every time you had to present on health and the people would be angered. As a result there are those relationships which are not good.”*



4.5.4. Countering the carnist culture

The participants actively attempt to influence those around them not just to tolerate and accept them as vegetarians but to join them. They employ various strategies to make others see the wisdom of the vegetarian lifestyle.

“I mean here (at work) everyone knows I am vegetarian, I sometimes bother them (laughs) to try it out.” Thabo

Thabo is aware that nutrition can be a touchy subject for certain people so he usually couches his messages with humour. He usually appeals to his colleagues to consider the health implications of a meat based diet.

On the other hand, Sipiwe entices her colleagues with delicious and picturesque vegan foods that she carries to her workplace. She allows them to be the ones who initiate the conversation. This reduces the discomfort of having to be the one to bring up the topic. She explains:

“I don’t go to them, I work it strategically by bringing food to work and they come and taste my food and ask for certain recipes... I tell people, I don’t recommend that in one day you would become vegetarian. Do it in steps, maybe introduce it by choosing two days in a week to prepare vegetarian meals for your family. And then you give them recipes and in that way it grows, and some of them have more days that are vegetarian than the days of eating meat now.” Sipiwe

Another ice breaker for Sipiwe is the fact that her colleagues have seen her shed excess weight. *“At work, because they also know me to be overweight, so obviously they would ask, and the fact that I have been able to maintain it, so that would be a chance for me to testify. I always do emphasize that it is a lifestyle change. It’s not about losing weight, the minute I decided to change my lifestyle, then the weight came off, that is how I have managed to sustain it... and they take interest. Some people even ask me to go and do groceries with them; they ask for eating plans.”* Sipiwe

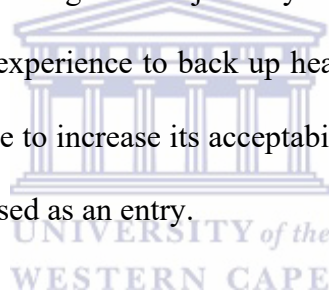
Khazimla and her friend are unemployed so they chose to occupy their time by actively evangelizing their community with the vegetarian gospel. *“Iyo! you can’t help but promote it (vegetarianism), especially when you see the impact that it has on your life, and the change that it has brought on your life. You have the desire that everyone can follow the same route that you have followed... so we decided to go door to door to door telling people about nutrition... then some people started bringing people to us... so we started here in Gugulethu... we were calling ourselves health promoters, because we were promoting health... so if you have diabetes we can advice you on diabetes, how to manage it, or how to cure it, what food*

you can eat, which herbs you can drink,... if you have heart disease this is what we can do for you.” Khazimla

Nkosi does formal presentations in clinics and churches. *“I like informing people about the dangers in their choices of food, and currently I am doing presentations at the clinics and at churches... I present on those lines, and how we can escape, especially the lifestyle diseases.”*

Nkosi

It is interesting to note that while the participants state that their primary motive for becoming vegetarian was either spiritual or ethical, they mainly appeal to the health motive when trying to convince others. Spirituality and ethics are usually very personal and subjective experiences, whereas health issues have a greater degree of objectivity. The participants are able to provide scientific evidence and personal experience to back up health claims. The vegetarians think about how to package the message to increase its acceptability to their target audience. Since health is a general concern, it is used as an entry.



4.6. Summary

In this chapter, I presented the themes that have emerged from the experiences of the participants about vegetarianism. I have demonstrated that vegetarianism is taken to be a very important value to the participants. It is so important they cannot imagine life without it. It is an integral part of their physical, mental and spiritual development. It is to them an expression of what life is. The participants also relate the process they underwent in adopting vegetarianism. Rastafarianism and Seventh-day Adventism are the main philosophical influences through which vegetarianism was introduced to the participants. They also provided contexts that have helped to maintain a vegetarian identity. Lastly the social relations of vegetarians and their immediate families were altered by them as a result of being vegetarian. With females there was a positive shift in relations, however the males found relations so

strained that some of them had to leave their homes in order to practice vegetarianism in peace. The vegetarians feel that it is their duty to share the benefits of vegetarianism with anyone who will give them an ear, and they employ various modes to get their message across.

The following and final chapter will conclude this whole study by contextualizing these findings with the broader scope of vegetarianism around the world.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the conclusions and recommendations that came from this study of the phenomenon of vegetarianism. A literature search to ascertain what is known about Black vegetarians residing on the African continent yielded very few results. In fact when this study was undertaken there were less than ten studies available in the English language after searching several databases. Furthermore no studies on Black South African vegetarians could be located. Thus this study was undertaken as a first attempt to collect and report scientific information regarding Black South African vegetarians.

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions, experiences and practices of Black South African vegetarians living in the urban settings of Cape Town. Since no scientific data was available on this phenomenon a qualitative exploratory design was used. The study was informed by the life stories of eight practicing vegetarians which were collected using individual unstructured interviews. The transcripts of the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. The analysis of the lived experiences of these vegetarians allowed me to sketch the terrain of this phenomenon from an African perspective and give an initial understanding of vegetarianism from a South African perspective.

5.2. Overview of objectives

The research study set out to meet three key objectives. The first objective was to explore the experiences of Black South Africans in developing a vegetarian identity. Two distinct starting points in developing a vegetarian identity have been identified. In the first instant there were participants who always had a discomfort with animal death and suffering. Although they ate

meat it was never with a clear conscience. These participants appeared to have an innate internal motivation for becoming vegetarian. The second group of participants had always enjoyed meat and had no issue with the fact that an animal had to suffer and die to provide them with their delicacy. For these participants initiation into vegetarianism required them to undergo an education process exerted by external forces which altered their carnist views. The conviction about the deleterious effects of animal-derived foods and the superior health promoting effects of plant-based foods were a big factor in adopting a vegetarian identity.

Most studies that have explored the initial impetus toward a vegetarian lifestyle have found that the individuals tend to fall broadly into two main groups. Those who are concerned about the relationship of a meat diet with the suffering of animals and those who are concerned about the impact of eating meat on health (Fox & Ward, 2008a; Fox & Ward, 2008b; Jabs, Devine, Sobal, 2000). The former have been labelled as 'ethical' vegetarians and the latter have been called 'health' vegetarians (Radnitz, Beezhold & DiMatteo, 2015). Thus the two groups identified among the participants in this study are analogous to the two broad motive groups of health and ethically motivated vegetarians. The first group would likely identify with ethical vegetarians because of their innate aversion to animal suffering. The second group would likely identify with health vegetarians because of their emphasis on the personal health benefits of vegetarianism.

Furthermore, the animal loving vegetarians tended to more strongly identify plant-based diets with being authentically African. Thus they also claimed a cultural influence to their vegetarianism. The other vegetarians while they acknowledged that plant-based diets are common in rural Africa, they did not as strongly assert vegetarianism to be African. Actually some emphasised that Africans love meat and tend to be intemperate in their food habits. This perception has been confirmed in research on perceptions of Black people living in Cape Town

townships. The health motivated participants could also be identified with vegetarians who are religiously motivated because their views of vegetarianism were largely shaped by the Seventh-day Adventist religion.

One of the remarkable ways that the findings of this study differ from previous studies is the fact that previous studies often report ‘conversion’ to ethical vegetarianism as a result of encountering animal rights promoting material whereas in this study the ‘conversion’ experiences to vegetarianism occurs in people with health vegetarianism leanings.

The second objective was to explore contextual factors perceived by Black South Africans to be implicated in their experience and practice of vegetarianism. Contextual factors were found to be both facilitators and barriers to the development of vegetarian identity. The two macrosystems that were most influential in developing a vegetarian identity were Rastafarianism and Seventh-day Adventism. These macrosystems as embodiments of ideologies were able to use their resources to alter the symbolic meaning of meat in the minds of the participants. As products of the carnist culture participants had previously viewed meat as a necessary and nice article of food. However through the influence of Rastafarianism and Adventism they came to regard meat and associated foods as deadly articles inimical to life and well-being.

Although Rastafarianism and Seventh-day Adventism have been noted in previous studies as motivators toward vegetarianism, this study is unique in that it described the process by which these macrosystems initiate carnists into vegetarianism. The study also described the differences between these macrosystems and why Seventh-day Adventism may be a more effective mediator vegetarianism than Rastafarianism in the South African context. The Adventist organizational structure as well as its vast resources make it a more potent initiator

of vegetarianism. This study is the first to describe the similarities and differences between Rastafarianism and Adventism as mediators of the gospel of vegetarianism.

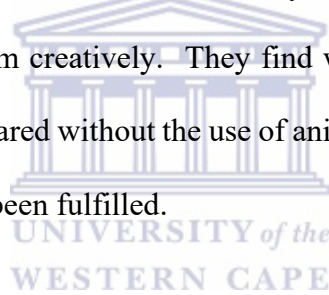
The other contextual factor that impacted on the participants was their significant others. The participants rated positively the influence of their peers in developing a vegetarian identity. The participants found peers to be supportive in at least two ways. Firstly in most cases the participants were introduced to vegetarianism by peers. Secondly peers provided social support in the form of information, tangible food items, companionship and feedback. This finding is in harmony with previous studies where peers have been found to be a major influence in the dietary choice of adolescents. Being socially connected with vegetarian peers has been shown to be important in the initiation and maintenance of a vegetarian identity among adolescents.

When it came to blood related significant others the male and female participants had contrasting experiences, with the females reporting positive interactions and the male very negative interactions. This finding was in contrast to previous studies which showed that relatives tended to be hostile to female vegetarian and treated male vegetarians with civility. In the African setting there are gendered food roles when it comes to provision and preparation. The older male's role is seen as provision and the both younger and older female's role is preparation. Young males do not feature's in this scenarios and thus they have no power to decide on menu issues. Thus they were excluded both by their gender and their age. When the males established their own families and took on the food provision role they then had power to decide the menu in their favour. These nuances which are unique to the African setting are a valuable addition to the international vegetarian discourse.

The last objective of the study was to describe how Black South African's practice vegetarianism. The study found that that the vegetarians are pragmatic, economic, creative and

scientific in their practice of vegetarianism. They are scientific in that their practice of vegetarianism entails more than the mere removal of meat from their diet. It actually included many other food related health practice including the culinary sciences. For example their practice of vegetarianism includes other evidence based habits such as regular breakfast consumption and inclusion of wide variety of foods in the menus. They also use the most nutrient preserving food preparation methods by favouring steaming over boiling and baking over frying.

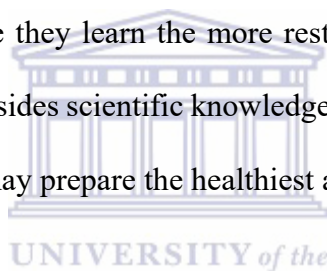
The participants practice vegetarianism economically by buying local goods where possible and buying in bulk. Their being economic also goes with being pragmatic, preferring to make as many of their foods from scratch on their own than buying prefabricated goods. Lastly the participants practice vegetarianism creatively. They find ways to still enjoy delicious foods such as lasagne and pizza all prepared without the use of animal products. Thus I conclude that the objectives of this study have been fulfilled.



5.3. Summary of findings

When the interview transcripts were analysed three main themes emerged. The first theme was “Vegetarianism is life.” The vegetarians associate vegetarianism with all things vital. They see vegetarianism as a means, a tool or an instrumentality that brings life into a person and leads to the truest ideal of life. While vegetarianism improves physical health and enhances mental acuity, its most important function is spiritual development. They believe that vegetarianism aids them in becoming their authentic selves and helps them in connecting with the divine. This they view as the most important aspect of vegetarianism. The views expressed by the participants are similar to those expressed by other vegetarians.

The second theme that emerged from the study had to do with the process of embracing a vegetarian identity in the South African context. The general trend is that at some point the participants were confronted with information about the benefits of vegetarianism in contrast to the deleterious effects of meat. The objective evidence presented through literature, persuasive authority figures and peers lead them to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle. The initial subjective experiences of various improvements in their mental and physical well-being were an important source of motivation to continue being vegetarians. To maintain and to enjoy vegetarianism participants see themselves as constant students of vegetarianism, especially with its relation to health. They are constantly increasing their scientific knowledge and adapting their lives to harmonise with their latest understanding of vegetarian best practice. The trend has been that the more they learn the more restricted their diet becomes, tending more toward becoming vegan. Besides scientific knowledge they also did their best to improve their culinary skills so that they may prepare the healthiest and tastiest foods.



The final theme was “being vegetarian in a carnist world” which detailed the interactions between vegetarians and their social environment. The participants found that their peers were generally supportive. Female participants received support from their families whereas the male participants faced opposition. Surprisingly the Adventist participants found the local church members and leadership hostile and unsupportive to their vegetarian aspirations. This is in spite of plant-based diets being one of the teachings that the church promotes as part of their health doctrine.

5.4. Recommendations

The findings of this research can prove beneficial to everyone that interacts with Black South African vegetarians and to vegetarians themselves. Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

For aspiring vegetarians:

- Being vegetarian as a Black person in South Africa is possible and with adequate planning one can thrive as a vegetarian in the South African urban context.
- Seek to understand as much as possible about human nutrition before embarking fully on vegetarianism.
- Do a diligent search in your community for resources that could be able to sustain you as a vegetarian such as health food shops, whole foods wholesalers and vegetarian restaurants.
- Spend time with several vegetarians to observe how they practice and see what you may learn from them.
- Plan how to introduce vegetarianism to your significant others in ways that will be least strenuous to your relationships.



For people promoting vegetarianism:

- Be aware of the social implications of adopting vegetarianism especially for young Black males and factor in ways to aid them with the transition.
- Always include a practical culinary component with your theoretical instruction, as it will likely lead to a more balanced and sustained practice of vegetarianism.
- Let your message dwell more on the virtues of whole plant foods rather than the ills of meat-eating.

For the Seventh-day Adventist church leadership.

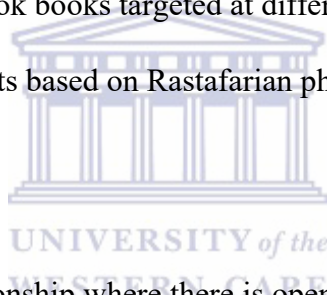
- Church leaders and health educators need to establish what barriers Black vegetarians face in adopting a vegetarian lifestyle

- Church leadership must investigate how the local church setting can be made more friendly toward practicing vegetarians
- Health educators could be more intentional in using the resources that the church has in promoting vegetarianism and a healthy lifestyle
- Increase the use of practical culinary skills training in conjunction with health and vegetarian nutrition education.

For Rastafarian Societies

- Design integrated programs which include cooking classes in the promotion of vegetarianism.
- Increase the number of cook books targeted at different audiences.
- Have vegetarian restaurants based on Rastafarian philosophy in the various cities.

For practicing vegetarians:



- Establishing a good relationship where there is open communication between yourself and family members will assist in preserving the relationship in spite of dietary differences.
- Connect with other vegetarians because the social support helps.
- If you are going to promote vegetarianism to people provide practical means such as cooking classes and information about where to obtain substitutes.

For family members and peers

- Challenge your carnist bias and note that there are people who for various reasons do not eat animal-derived foods.
- Whenever planning an event anywhere always ask people if they have any special dietary requests and go out of your way to accommodate them.

For health professionals:

- Try to understand and respect the beliefs and motives that have lead your clients to be vegetarian. It will give you an influence over them.
- Understand the possible prejudices that vegetarians may hold against orthodox biomedical model and learn how to deal with it.
- Be informed of the scientific reasons vegetarians use to justify their practices so that you may be able to more appropriately advise them.

5.5. Further research

As much as this study has answered one question, it has left many more unanswered and in the process has also raised several questions. We have barely begun to grapple with vegetarianism in Africa so the scope for research wide open. Following are the possible further study that can be undertaken as a direct follow up:

- An examination of the feelings of Black omnivores about vegetarianism.
- The reasons why certain Seventh-day Adventists do not choose to become vegetarians even though the official teachings of the church promote it.
- Comparative cost analysis of vegetarian and omnivore diets in South Africa since there is a perception that eating vegetarian is more expensive.
- The nutritional and health status of Black vegetarians compared to omnivores because both vegetarians and omnivores believe that their diet is healthier and they are healthier.
- Comparative analysis of the nutrition and health knowledge of Rastafarian and Seventh-day Adventist vegetarians in correlation with nutritional and health status.
- The knowledge of health professionals about vegetarianism and their attitude towards vegetarians.
- The portrayal of vegetarianism by South African media.

5.6. Conclusion

I have found this sample of Black South African vegetarians to be deeply convicted of the importance of vegetarianism. It is wound up with their deepest life aspirations of well-being, personal development and spiritual growth. Thus they are prepared to make almost any sacrifice to live the vegetarian lifestyle. They have even been willing to sever familial ties which were hostile to their endeavour. However they will do anything in their power to present vegetarianism in the most positive light. They are also careful not to needlessly arouse conflict around their chosen lifestyle.

They put a lot of thought into the practice of vegetarianism. They see discarding meat as merely the initial step in a quest for the optimum lifestyle. This quest leads them to constant acquisition of knowledge and skills to become competent vegetarians as well as adoption of other habits believed to improve life and well-being. They do not see vegetarianism as something opposed to the hedonic aspects of food, and they go out of their way to prove that to themselves and others. While being pragmatic economists in their practice of vegetarianism they are also adept at using their social networks to support and enhance their vegetarian lifestyle.

Lastly these vegetarians are very resilient. While facing opposition from various quarters they thrive on the approval and support they receive from others, as well as the inner conviction of doing something morally and ethically correct. They are passionate about vegetarianism and in subtle and overt ways are intent on making the world vegetarian.

The vegetarian discourse has been dominated by a vast ocean of Western ideas for the past century and a half. A small trickle of Asian studies has been forth coming for the past two decades. This study is the first to contribute an African perspective to the global vegetarian discourse. It has highlighted the way Africans develop a vegetarian identity and the contextual

factors acting as barriers and facilitators to this development. It has highlighted how this identity is informed by their Africanness while also posing a threat to their identity. It has defined how African vegetarianism view vegetarianism. Finally it has identified the social, cultural and psychological variables involved in the vegetarian phenomenon on the African continent. It is my hope that other researchers will explore what is still unknown of these variables and that their voices would add to this inquiry until we have a rich tapestry of ideas to compose a uniquely African vegetarian identity.



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Appendix 1



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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: A qualitative study exploring the experiences of black South African vegetarians residing in the urban settings of Cape Town.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by George Sedupane at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a black South African adult vegetarian living in Cape Town. Throughout the world very little is known about the lives black vegetarians. The purpose of this research project is to gather information that can be used to fill this gap of knowledge about the experiences of black vegetarians.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to take part in a face to face interview lasting approximately one hour. The interview will take place at a venue where you feel comfortable to talk. The interview will also be scheduled at a time suitable to you. Before the interview commences information on the research project will be given verbally. You will be requested to ask questions to make sure you have understood the study. Your rights as a research participant will be explained to you. You will sign an informed consent form to show that you agree to participate in the study. The interview will be tape recorded using a digital recorder. In the interview you will be asked questions about your experience as a vegetarian. Questions may include:

- Explain the process you took in becoming a vegetarian.
- Explain how being a vegetarian has impacts on your family.
- Explain how it is like being a vegetarian in your community

You will also be requested to check the transcript and the report of your interview to make sure that they are accurate.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the recorded audio files and the electronic transcripts will be stored in password

protected computer folders. Printed transcripts will be stored in a locked drawer. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some emotional risk from participating in this research study. Speaking about your own life may cause feelings of embarrassment.

What are the benefits of this research?

Possible benefits to you include gaining knowledge about research procedures. Having an opportunity to speak about vegetarianism may help you understand your experience even better. Furthermore the results may help the investigator learn more about vegetarianism among black South Africans.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Counselling services will be provided if you are negatively affected by your participation in this study.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by George Sedupane and the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact George Sedupane at: Telephone 021-959 3063, email: gsedupane@uwc.ac.za

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Researcher: Dr George Sedupane

Research Supervisor: Dr Firdouza Waggie
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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

Appendix 2



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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: A qualitative study exploring the experiences of black South African vegetarians residing in the urban settings of Cape Town.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Witness.....

Date.....



Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator's Name: Dr Firdouza Waggie

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Appendix 3

Interview Guide

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Central Question

Explain how you are experiencing vegetarianism in your current environment.

Subsequent probing questions

1. Elaborate on reasons/motivations/events/experiences that lead to the adoption of vegetarianism
2. Explain how practicing vegetarianism relates to your family life
3. Explain how practicing vegetarianism relates to your life in the community

