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# *Writer's Statement about "Where's the Beef? Communicating Vegetarianism in Mainstream America"*

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ALLISON WALTER

When it came to choosing the topic of my research paper I decided to go with a topic that was close to me personally, but also in which I could expand my knowledge to help better understand the complexities of this lifestyle. I chose to become a vegetarian in the middle of my junior year of high school, taking its shape through a New Year's resolution established on January 1st of 2011. Being a vegetarian for three years has had its challenges as well as providing many great things that have strengthened me throughout the process. As of today, I'm still growing and learning every day about who I am within this lifestyle, and I plan to continue to do that throughout the rest of my life.

One of the biggest hurdles that I had to overcome personally when I became a vegetarian was the task of communicating my viewpoints and ideas to others around me who didn't understand why I would ever make this decision. This made me highly curious as to how others viewed this same process. After finding research on the communication strategies of vegetarians, I wished to expand the perspective to both sides, vegetarians and non-vegetarians, in order to not only expose and enlighten myself and other vegetarians to the other perspective, but also to delve deeper into the vegetarian perspective and inform non-vegetarians of personal accounts of these communication experiences. Especially due to the more recent growth of vegetarianism throughout America, I found that this perspective of how both groups can best communicate with one another was highly relevant to not only vegetarians, but also to their non-vegetarian peers.

The biggest struggle for me when it came to writing this research project was taking the countless pages of research, personal interviews, and survey data and focusing on the most important and prominent ideas that surfaced throughout. Honestly, every single word was important to me. Everything was incredibly interesting to me. I had no idea how I was going to organize it all when all I wanted to do was share every detail of it. Thankfully, Dr. Tripp was there on multiple occasions to talk through the data I had gathered in order to form a few main focal points so that I could best organize the information for the audience. Once I had that helpful foundation in place, the writing became natural and flowed very easily.

As the words flowed onto the page, I made sure to consistently go back and make sure that my arguments were as balanced as possible. I didn't want to lose my credibility with those who aren't vegetarians, thinking that I was skewing the data in favor of vegetarians due to my own bias. The entire point of this research was to expose both sides of this experience. Working with peer review was a big proponent in helping me to keep not only the amount of research and personal

experience that was given for each side as even as possible, but also for the language used to be neutral. This was especially helpful because many of the peers I sought were non-vegetarians, informing me of anything that they didn't understand or something they felt could be worded better to lean less toward the vegetarian perspective. It surprised me how much of my own bias could be seen through simple wording. This arose in my first drafts of writing simply because of my own personal experience with these communication situations and how I felt as an individual. These peer reviews helped me to work harder at being objective and to focus on the fact that this research was not about me; it was about everybody who has or someday will come into contact with these situations. I hope that with this research paper comes much exposure to this growing trend of vegetarianism in America and how both groups can work together in order to communicate their ideas in a respectful and balanced manner.