

This project will study vegetarianism. The number of people who are vegetarians is increasing in our society and across the world. Although vegetarianism is becoming more popular, vegetarians tend to have lower psychological well-being than omnivores. Although this has been found in numerous studies, there are no good explanations for why this is so. The project will focus on two types of explanations for this. One explanation is that vegetarians, as a social minority, are treated poorly by the majority of people who are omnivores. Such treatment may not be direct (e.g., physical violence, verbal insults); it can be indirect (e.g., excluding people from social events). Another explanation is that vegetarians see the world in ways that leads to them to be less happy. For example, vegetarians may be more sensitive to social injustice than omnivores are, and because of this they see the world less positively than omnivores see it. Also, all vegetarians are not the same in terms of why they are vegetarians, and another goal of the project is to understand why people become vegetarians. It seems that there are three broad reasons for this: ethical, eating meat is wrong; health related, eating meat is unhealthy; and environmental, raising animals as food damages the environment. The studies will determine how important each of these motives are for people who are vegetarians, and if these reasons are related to why vegetarians have lower well-being than omnivores. The project will also study how vegetarians are seen by omnivores and how vegetarians view omnivores, and will study if such perceptions are related to why vegetarians have poorer psychological health than omnivores. These topics will be studied using two types methods. First, people (vegetarians and omnivores) will complete online surveys. Their answers will be used to understand the reasons people become vegetarians, how such reasons are related to psychological well-being, and how vegetarians and omnivores see each other. Following this, a study will be conducted in which people will maintain a daily diary with which they will describe what happened to them each day and how they felt each day for two weeks. The results of this study will answer questions about differences between vegetarians and omnivores in daily psychological well-being and how daily well-being is related to social experiences such as rejection. It is hoped that understanding how vegetarians and omnivores view each other will help to ease whatever tensions such differences create. People may have differences about what they think is right and wrong and about what they think is healthy and unhealthy, but such differences do not need to lead to tension, derogation, and divisions in our society.