How working on Defra Animal Welfare policies shapes diet and lifestyle choices

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Public attitudes data reveal that British people care about animal welfare, but research shows that knowledge of the reality of farming is limited. Those who work in animal welfare policy are aware. So, does this have any influence on their choices around animal products?. The research will take a qualitative, interpretivist approach, using semi-structured interviews. Using purposive sampling, I plan to interview around 20 DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) staff who work on farm animal welfare policies in policy, delivery, analytical and veterinary roles. This approach will enable the understanding(?) of how subjective experiences and attitudes link together so as to shed light on the relationship between career, identity and choices. The research will also explore the human-animal relationship, ethical and moral values and how this intertwines with diet and lifestyle choices, particularly in reference to career and identity. The notion of knowledge and power, and Bourdieu’s habitus, will be used to aid in thematically analysing the data. I expect to gain rich insights about the intersection between career, identity and choices, with not only career influencing choices but choices influencing career.

Ellie Simonson is currently working as a Government Social Researcher for Defra in the central evaluation team. Up until this year, she was working in the animal health and welfare team as a social researcher, which is where her research idea was inspired. Working as a government researcher means she has and will in the future work on a range of projects using a range of methods, but she has an affinity for qualitative research as she believes we learn the most from delving deep into thoughts and experiences of individuals.