Is Vegetarianism a Diet?
The Health Beliefs of Vegetarians and Omnivores

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BACKGROUND

Often vegetarians are studied with questionnaires which only measures explicit associations. Implicit attitudes can be measured using the Implicit Association Test (IAT), in which reaction times are measured as pictures are sorted.

Seventh-day Adventists are a unique group because of the wide range of motivations for vegetarianism: religious, health and moral.

Previous research has shown that for meat has negative representations (Allen & Ng, 2003), becomes moralized (Rozin, Markwith, Stoess, 1997) and that reasons for becoming vegetarian differ across generations (Pribis, Pencak & Grajales, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

PROCEDURE

● Lifestyle Practices Survey (Pribis, Pencak & Grajales, 2010) to assess their health food beliefs.

● The experimental group engaged in the “white bear task” (Wegner et al, 1987) to decrease blood glucose and self-control (Gailliot et al, 2007).

● The meat-vegetables Implicit Association Task (IAT) was run using PEBL 0.11 (Mueller, 2010) with 80 trials in each of the mixed categorization task blocks.

STIMULI

Pictures of happy/sad people were drawn from the International Affective Picture System, such as a smiling bride and groom (positive) or a car accident scene (negative; Lang, Barlow & Cuthbert, 2008) and representative food pictures were selected from the Internet (see below).

IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TASK

RESULTS

● Final N of 73 (51 omnivores and 22 vegetarians)

● Data was analyzed using a 2x2 ANOVA. There was a significant difference between vegetarians and omnivores (F=7.592, p<.05 ). There was numerical interaction between diet and task that was not significant (F=.228, p=.634), and there was no significant effect of task (F=.09 p=.765)

● The majority of subjects were classified as religious vegetarians

● Blocks 3 and 6 were split in two for data analysis

IMPLICATIONS

● Vegetarians and omnivores differ not only in their self reported attitudes but also in their implicit attitudes

● Implicit attitudes influence the ease of diet maintenance when in conflict with the surrounding environment.

● Long term diets prove robust in the face of depletion, suggesting that long term, healthy dietary change is possible.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While we have a picture of what short term and long term diets look like, there is little research examining the process of exacting long term change.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


