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Research Review

Vegetarianism. A blossoming field of study

Matthew B. Ruby

Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, 3126 West Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4



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Abstract

Vegetarianism, the practice of abstaining from eating meat, has a recorded history dating back to ancient Greece. Despite this, it is only in recent years that researchers have begun conducting empirical investigations of the practices and beliefs associated with vegetarianism. The present article reviews the extant literature, exploring variants of and motivations for vegetarianism, differences in attitudes, values and worldviews between omnivores and vegetarians, as well as the pronounced gender differences in meat consumption and vegetarianism. Furthermore, the review highlights the extremely limited cultural scope of the present data, and calls for a broader investigation across non-Western cultures.

Highlights

- Review of the extant literature on vegetarianism.
- Vegetarianism associated with concern for environment, equality, and social justice.
- Health vegetarians concerned primarily with personal well-being; ethical vegetarians with welfare of others.
- Women more likely to be vegetarian, express greater concern for animal welfare.
- Calls for a broader investigation of vegetarianism across non-Western cultures.

Keywords: Animal welfare; Attitudes; Culture; Gender; Health; Meat; Motivations; Veganism; Vegetarianism

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