

M. L. S. SANTOS and DAVID A. BOOTH

School of Psychology, University of Birmingham

Received 26 September 1995; accepted 18 December 1995. ; Available online 22 April 2002.

Abstract

Male and female undergraduates (18–23 years old; 68% in their first year; $N=158$) who had just chosen a vegetarian dish in a campus dining hall or restaurant reported a diversity of meat avoidance habits before arrival at University a few weeks previously. More women than men had avoided meat and other flesh foods, with the exception of fish. Consistently with the distinction between “red” and “white” meats, chicken and turkey were the least often avoided flesh foods among men and women. The only clear gradation from flesh-eating to vegetarianism was eating poultry and either beef/lamb or pork, eating only poultry and eating neither; fish was not on this Guttman scale, contrary to previous assumptions. Reasons for avoiding meat and perceived influences on preferences for food in their chosen vegetarian dish were elicited by open-ended interviews in 41 women from the meat-avoidance survey. Rationales spontaneously offered were as diverse as reported in previous studies, but always included at least two of the following: ethics of raising/killing animals, concern for health, sensory factors, disgust and influence of friends. In contrast, choices among described variants of the familiar dish were largely controlled by its sensory and nutritional features, presumably because other attributes had been factored out.

^{[*1](#)} We are grateful for financial support to Lourdes Santos from Programmas CIENCIA 2 and PRAXIS XXI, JNICT, Portugal.

^{[*2](#)} Correspondence to: David Booth, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, U.K.