

**Journal of Health Psychology**

hpq.sagepub.com

doi: 10.1177/1359105304040404

J Health Psychol July 2004 vol. 9 no. 4 567-581

A Rhetorical Approach to Discussions about Health and Vegetarianism

Marc Stewart WilsonVictoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, marc.wilson@vuw.ac.nz**Ann Weatherall**

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Carly Butler

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

Typically, research on vegetarianism has sought to identify the psychological characteristics that distinguish vegetarians from meat-eaters. Health concerns have been identified as a motivation for meat abstinence. In this article, rhetorical analysis of Internet discussions about health and vegetarianism highlights the argumentative orientation of explanations for meat consumption, with the various constructions of health serving a rhetorical function. We show the dilemmatic nature of arguments about the relationship between food and health: food can promote health and cause ill-health, and suggest that meat-eating as a dominant practice is supported by the rhetorical use of notions of 'balance', implying moderation, inclusion and rationality. This rhetorical approach represents a radical critique of past work that assumes opinions given in response to questions about vegetarian practices represent 'causes' of dietary practice.

[food](#) [health](#) [rhetoric](#) [vegetarianism](#)**Articles citing this article****Moral logic and logical morality: Attributions of responsibility and blame in online discourse on veganism**

Discourse Society September 1, 2005 16: 675-696

[Abstract](#) [Full Text \(PDF\)](#) 