Rationalizing meat consumption. The 4Ns


Abstract

Recent theorizing suggests that the 4Ns – that is, the belief that eating meat is natural, normal, necessary, and nice – are common rationalizations people use to defend their choice of eating meat. However, such theorizing has yet to be subjected to empirical testing. Six studies were conducted on the 4Ns. Studies 1a and 1b demonstrated that the 4N classification captures the vast majority (83%–91%) of justifications people naturally offer in defense of eating meat. In Study 2, individuals who endorsed the 4Ns tended also to objectify (dementalize) animals and included fewer animals in their circle of moral concern, and this was true independent of social dominance orientation. Subsequent studies (Studies 3–5) showed that omnivores endorse 4Ns more than restricted omnivores, vegetarians, and vegans. 4Ns correlate with dementalization, meat consumption, and lower consumer guilt.

Keywords

Meat; Vegetarianism; Rationalization; Justification; Animal welfare; Attitudes

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