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# *What Was Old Is the New Fad: Examining the Rhetoric of the Paleo Diet*

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## **Introduction**

Dieting is a significant aspect of health and popular culture. Many diet books have been written, and all kinds of diets, both fabricated and scientifically-based, have been promoted and followed. One popular example is the Paleo Diet, a diet whose effectiveness and health benefits have sometimes been challenged. According to an article in *Men's Journal*, the Paleo Diet involves eating like a caveman from the Paleolithic Age. It consists of primarily eating meat and vegetables, stressing high amounts of protein and low amounts of carbohydrates. The diet also recommends replacing processed food items with organic ones. The goal of the diet is to become more in tune with the ancient human's way of life to become healthier, lose weight, and be more physically fit (Graham).

Examining the rhetoric of the Paleo Diet is key to understanding its widespread appeal, as well as the relationship that is created between the authors and the people who read about the diet. Writings on diets are part of a rhetorical situation, or scenario in which communication takes place, where the audience consists of people looking to lose weight or live a healthier lifestyle. But the rhetors come from a variety of backgrounds, and that may be reflected in their writing. Diet books and diet websites are genres, which Charles Bazerman defines as "recognizable, self-reinforcing forms of communication" (316). Rhetors of these genres are creating "social facts" for their readers, or "things people believe to be true" that affect how the audience sees a situation, whether these "facts" are accurate or not (Bazerman 311). The different pieces of information offered up by the diets would be described by Bazerman as "speech acts," or statements that have some authority and are intended to have a certain effect on the audience (314-15). These "speech acts" constitute the meaning in genres such as diets (Bazerman 316). The language used within the diet advice scene is used to persuade the readers and to motivate them to join in "social activity" (Bazerman 317), such as following the diet with a community of other dieters.

Diet books and websites continue to reinforce the idea of a diet as a means to control the body and most often to control weight. People often believe diets are only for weight loss as a social fact, but there are many other interpretations of the word diet. Dietitians, for example, define "diet" as the way people choose to or are recommended to receive nutrition and sustenance. However, as long as the general public chooses to believe that diets are for the purpose of controlling the body, diets such as the Paleo Diet will continue to be published.

Academics focused on diet marketing, rhetoric, and social behavior should be interested in finding out more about the rhetoric of the Paleo Diet. Dietitians may also be concerned about the language of the Paleo Diet, as it has been convincing to many people. Health impacts of diets are

important, but the language and rhetoric behind the diet may be just as meaningfully assembled as the recommended foods. The language within the diet genre is used to create a social meaning of the word diet and social facts about the impacts of eating or living a certain way.

### **Motivations for Losing Weight and Dieting**

People have a few main reasons for trying to lose weight or go on a diet, based on both societal expectations and personal motivation (Brown; O'Brien et al.). According to Kerry O'Brien et al., the main motivations for people wanting to lose weight are "appearance, health, and mood," with 50% of his respondents citing health as their main concern (132). These authors argue that people who are trying to lose weight for health reasons are in the market for diets and are the primary audience of diet marketing; therefore, many diets attempt to focus on improving health. On the contrary, Dr. Sonya Brown finds that people are motivated to lose weight based on the societal view of fatness. She argues that the "control the body, control the life" rhetoric that is frequently found in popular culture creates a motivation for people to go on diets (68). An analysis of various weight loss success stories revealed that "the reasons subjects became fat and the reasons they wanted to lose weight intertwine" which signifies the psychological aspect of weight loss success stories and "explains part of the genre's rhetorical power" (Brown 70). The significant social and psychological motives for weight loss have prompted the creation of self-help weight loss programs. The rhetoric in these programs insists that people had subconscious reasons for becoming fat, but now that they are choosing to lose weight, they are in control (Brown 75). The rhetoric of weight loss stories is related to the rhetoric of the diets that the stories promote and gives additional insight into diet programs' use of language. Understanding motivations for weight loss can help determine why people may be attracted to certain diets or their language use.

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### **Language of Diets**

Diets contain certain keywords that express what writers want the reader to think the diets are about (Johnson; Knight). For example, Christine Knight shows that the word "natural" was used to describe the Atkins Diet, but its meaning changed when it was convenient for the author, such as when he recommended cheeses and oils, as well as nutritional supplements (106-07). She also notes that to further emphasize the importance of avoiding carbohydrate heavy processed foods, Atkins would rarely refer to them as foods at all (Knight 105). According to Adrienne Johnson, the Paleo Diet is a self-described "lifestyle choice" and self-help movement as opposed to just a diet, which adds to its appeal (108). The diet compares human eating to that of rabbits and dogs in order to make humans seem more similar to one another, so that the diet can be viewed as an approach for all people (Johnson 109). Johnson focuses on the idea of the Paleo Diet as a method to create a "dietetic body utopia" that stands for how all humans are meant to eat (114). The Paleo Diet compares industrial, starchy foods to "real foods" that came from "Mother Nature" in order to emphasize the importance of avoiding processed food (116). Along with describing foods as real or fake, diets use metaphors from popular culture, such as "food as fuel," and "junk food" (Spoel et al.). Metaphors about healthy eating have a strong influence on how people view foods and eating habits (Spoel et al.). Language, especially concerning natural versus unnatural food, appears to be commonly used in diet books to promote eating less processed foods. Familiar metaphors, such as "junk food" enhance the effect of these comparisons (Knight; Johnson; Spoel et al.).

### **Understanding Nutrition Focused Advertising**

Products and diets can be marketed to consumers in a variety of ways including some that appeal to scientific fact and others that do not (Goldberg and Gunasti; MacDonald; St. James et al.). Marvin Goldberg and Kunter Gunasti focus on the marketing of food and diets to children, noting that most of the food advertising on kids' TV channels is for unhealthy food (169). However, the advertisements can change from "upstream" influence of parents and teachers who want to limit the advertising of these products (Goldberg and Gunasti 164). Goldberg and Gunasti also note that "improving children's media literacy may enhance their ability to evaluate advertising messages critically so that they are more vigilant in processing them" (164). This concept is also expressed in a different context by Helen MacDonald, a dairy marketer, who writes, "[S]cientific illiteracy runs rampant among the general public and poses a real threat to the dissemination of sound nutrition knowledge in general" (145). While media and scientific literacy differ, both are important to properly interpret nutritional claims, and they are skills that many people lack (MacDonald).

Besides often lacking the analytical skills to interpret information about food, consumers can also be swayed by their own "magical thinking" or wishful thoughts about the possibilities of a product (St. James et al.). This means that consumers may choose a product or diet to follow even if they know it may not be effective because they believe that the act of dieting will work "magic" and help them achieve their dietary goal (St. James et al. 641). Similarly, MacDonald also claims that "it is not easy for misled people to resist the rhetorical fuzziness of fashionable ideas" (145). She adds that an effective method of advertising and persuasion is the "advertorial" or an advertisement in the form of an editorial (146), further emphasizing the influence of news sources and the public's limited abilities to perceive the difference between potentially misleading advertisements and scientific fact.

### **Furthering Research**

Diet writing involves many considerations such as tone, language, and content. People are attracted to diets for different reasons, so diets are written to target certain audiences. Most people are interested in going on a diet for improved health, appearance, or mood, but some may be drawn to dieting from societal views expressed in mass media such as televised weight-loss success stories. Certain uses of language and metaphors also have strong effects in making diets popular and influencing large audiences, but some language can be misleading. However, while many aspects of the audience and marketing of diets are known, research has not yet been done on the relationship between the author's background and the type of rhetoric they use to sell a particular diet. Through my research, I investigate how an author's background influences their tone, content, and language, and I also observe similarities between texts written on the Paleo Diet. In this paper, I will argue that Paleo Diet websites are a genre characterized by a common message and a social relationship between the author and reader that is created by the rhetoric used and that is influenced by the rhetor's background.

### **Methods**

My data collection process consisted of one in-person interview with a registered dietitian as well as a textual analysis of four Paleo Diet websites and their corresponding author bios. The interview transcript can be found in Appendix A. I chose to interview a family member who is a registered dietitian. She had a useful perspective because she is an expert on diets and nutrition and a scientific thinker. Interviewing her was practical and allowed me to have an outside expert opinion about diets. Due to time constraints and limitations on dietitians available near me, I only conducted one interview.

The websites I selected all focused specifically on the Paleo Diet and were meant to be resources for dieters and people interested in starting the Paleo Diet. The process used for the textual analysis was primarily coding which involved creating a few specific categories for language commonly found in the text, and isolating language that fits into those groups. My categories for the different paleo websites were benefits and positive language; risks, things to avoid, and negative language; credibility and scientific appeals; and social aspects and popularity of the diet. These categories allowed me to separate different aspects of the paleo websites to determine how they convinced the reader and affected the tone of the writing. To analyze the author biographies for the authors of these websites, I used different categories. They were intellectual accomplishments, fitness and health accomplishments, successful publishing of writing or business success, and personal interest in the Paleo Lifestyle and related topic areas. These four aspects all provided insight into the background of authors of the websites that applied to an analysis of their writing. By synthesizing the coding analysis from the paleo websites and their authors' bios, I found patterns and interesting results. Graphs displaying the results of the coding analysis can be found in Appendix B.

Limiting factors on the analysis process were time and the number of webpages that I could visit. For this project, I limited myself to the overview of the diet page or the homepage of the website only. Given more time, I would look at more paleo websites and more articles on each website. I would also read and analyze some of the diet books advertised on these websites. Since the registered dietitian I interviewed is someone I know well, I may have some bias toward her opinion of the Paleo Diet. I will attempt to limit this bias in my discussion of the results.

## Results

The interview yielded responses that were focused on fad diets and what they promise, as well as some shortcomings of these types of diets. The dietitian interviewed is a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) who works in a hospital setting. She deals with much more complex diets daily than the Paleo Diet or any general health or weight loss diet. However, she is knowledgeable about the field of diets and nutrition and is capable of noticing when information seems off. Her responses focused on criticizing the research that backs up the Paleo Diet and other fad diets as well as the notion that the diets promise unrealistic benefits such as quick, lasting weight loss and cures for all kinds of diseases. Keywords she associated with the Paleo Diet included "caveman," "meat-based diet," and "popular low carbohydrate, high protein fad" (Appendix A).

Textual analysis of the four different paleo websites yielded several interesting patterns and common themes. Coding analysis revealed that different articles used different balances of positive and negative language as well as different amounts of credibility appeals. From taking a tally of different aspects found in the coding process, I created the graphs found in Appendix B. Another pattern I noticed in some of the webpages was listing one positive benefit of the Paleo Diet then immediately following that with a negative impact of not following the Paleo Diet, or some usage of negative language. This pattern was also often adjusted to two positive benefits then one risk of eating non-paleo foods. Also, from the coding analysis from the author biographies on the websites I observed that all the authors had previous success publishing books or starting companies. The creators of the websites are all familiar with selling things, whether they are books, diets, or products. The second graph in Appendix B gives the results of the coding process for the author bios, but instead of recording instances of seeing particular language, I rated each author on a scale from 1-10 for each aspect. Since rating the authors required some personal judgment based on what I read, the ratings are more subjective and may be more flexible than the results of the website coding analysis.

## Discussion of Results

### Paleo Websites as a Genre

To qualify as a genre, a work must be a form of “recognizable, self-reinforcing... communication” (Bazerman 316). While the websites I analyzed may be considered different genres by some (a blog, magazine, and official diet website), I believe that Paleo Diet websites may be considered a genre. From just a glance at each of the websites, we see Bazerman’s definition in practice. There are recognizable aspects of each site, such as a blog section, links to cookbooks and diet books, and lists of paleo or non-paleo foods. All the sites indicated negative effects of eating non-paleo foods and dangers that could be prevented by following the paleo lifestyle, as well as new benefits to be gained by following paleo. These aspects were apparent in all sites and make them a recognizable form of communication.

However, there were less obvious similarities between the websites as well. Each website attempted to demonstrate how the Paleo Diet is backed by science, although each author went about this in a slightly different way which I will discuss later. Most of the websites also focused on making the Paleo Diet seem simple and easy to follow either with colorful charts and diagrams or by splitting the article up by food groups or “eat” and “don’t eat.” One other key similarity of the websites was that they were all selling something. Diet marketers are in the business of making money, and therefore have plenty of products to sell. *Paleo Magazine* sold subscriptions to its magazine, the *Paleo Mom Blog* said in a disclaimer at the bottom that the Paleo Mom receives commissions when she sells products seen on her site, and *Ultimate Paleo Guide* was trying to sell the reader on an app with a comprehensive list of paleo and non-paleo foods. The websites all demonstrated that they had the same goal of convincing the reader to follow the Paleo Diet or lifestyle and assist those already committed (and persuade readers to buy products that would assist them in the process).

Common language was also seen between the websites, which makes sense as the rhetors should want to keep a consistent definition of the Paleo Diet. Some of the words used across multiple sites include natural, real, and unprocessed food (Runyon). These types of words appear as specific examples of foods as well, such as “grass-fed beef” (Cordain), “wild-caught seafood, and local organic fruits and vegetables” (Ballantyne). Clearly, the rhetors of the Paleo Diet sites, who are also the authors of several Paleo Diet books, stress the importance of eating “natural” food, especially meats and vegetables. This aspect of the diet may be a way to appeal to people who view themselves as environmentally friendly or as big meat eaters. Criticism of processed foods is also likely to appeal to people who are concerned about the chemicals in our food, and those who are skeptical of the processed-food industry’s practices. The significance of the use of words such as natural or unprocessed is that they establish continuity from other diets such as the Atkins Diet which also focused on eating more naturally (Knight). The Paleo Diet websites showed differences from previous diets through the mention of prehistoric humans and new lifestyle aspects. However, all the paleo websites had fairly consistent messages and language making them an effective genre that is easily recognizable and persuasive to the reader.

### Analysis of Author Bios

The authors of each website varied in terms of their scientific backgrounds and personal experiences with paleo. Some were less intellectual or did not have a background in science, but they were very fit and personally involved in the paleo lifestyle. Others were more academically accomplished such as the author of *The Paleo Mom*, Sarah Ballantyne, PhD, who was a postdoctoral fellow researching areas such as innate immunity, gene therapy, and epithelial cell biology. However, the authors typically did not excel in just one area. For example, Ballantyne became a stay-at-home mom who raised her kids paleo after the “transformation” that occurred when she

followed the diet. She had both an academic background and personal experience with the diet and lifestyle, making her appear to be a highly credible source of information. By contrast, Joel Runyon, the author of the *Ultimate Paleo Guide*, had less academic credentials, but he started a company and travels around the world running marathons. The variety of backgrounds of paleo authors seems to indicate that paleo can be accepted by anyone who wants to take it on. This is expressed often in the websites through words such as “flexibility” or “room to experiment” (Ballantyne). An important factor in the persuasive power of any advertisement or article is who is doing the persuading, and the Paleo Diet has authors who appeal to a wide variety of people.

### **Tone and Author-Dieter Relationships**

I believe that one of the most significant aspects of the rhetoric of the Paleo Diet websites was tone. Each author used their own distinct tone when discussing the Paleo Diet, and those differing tones seemed to reflect who the author(s) was in his/her biography. The tone of Loren Cordain’s all-inclusive, official Paleo Diet website was primarily informational. There were also many more uses of ethos, or credibility appeals, compared to the other websites. The professional presentation of information on the website helped the diet’s credibility, and there were even references to scientific articles and academic sounding blog posts such as “Dietary Salt Impairs the Endothelial Glycocalyx.” The use of science on Cordain’s website relates to MacDonald’s findings about the general public’s scientific illiteracy. Although the titles of the papers and their contents seem legitimate, many of them suspiciously had the same authors, including several by Cordain himself, and several of the articles referenced seemed like they barely related to the Paleo Diet at all. One article I viewed was critical of the Paleo Diet, not promoting it, yet Cordain seems to know that by presenting a lot of scientific evidence, he can win over readers who view themselves as scientific thinkers or skeptics of fad diets. His tone and use of academic research and science relate to his background of university research and education.

The tone of *The Paleo Mom* was similar in some ways to Cordain’s in that it was also informational and at times academic. This makes sense, seeing that the Paleo Mom herself has both a PhD and postdoctoral research to her name. However, her website is more of a blog than Cordain’s and seemed friendlier. Compared to the other websites, she used the most positive language and had the highest ratio of positive to negative language. She also used the “two benefits-

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one downside” construct more than any other author. Her writing was very methodical, quick to explain the benefits of going paleo and then mention the downsides of continuing to follow the Standard American Diet (or SAD as she calls it). Typically, after mentioning these things, she adds an ethos or logos appeal by explaining the results of a study or refuting claims against a certain aspect of the Paleo Diet. Unlike the other authors, she says that the reason why the Paleo Diet is effective “has little to do with reenacting what our early ancestors ate, and everything to do with... modern science” (Ballantyne). Her perspective and strategy here is clearly designed at targeting people who are skeptics of the diet,

such as the dietitian I interviewed. The dietitian said that she saw the diet as a “fad” and that it was about “hunter-gathering” and “pseudo-scientific verbiage” (Appendix A). Ballantyne counters this thinking while continuing to appeal to a less scientifically oriented crowd. She uses charts with colorful pictures and has plenty of language that is easy for an everyday reader to understand. Her background as both an academic and a mom lead to a friendly, optimistic, and informational tone that effectively creates a relationship with many types of readers. Through her tone and mentions

of personal experiences, she takes on both the role of a teacher and a guide or parent-type figure in the realm of dieting.

The *Paleo Magazine* article entitled “What is Paleo?” had a different tone from both of the aforementioned websites. The article was fairly short and to the point. While informational, it had a more casual and less forgiving tone. Where there was more language suggesting flexibility in other articles, *Paleo Magazine* focuses on what its authors believe to be the core of the Paleo Diet, and they do not leave much open for interpretation. The article contained many benefit-risk constructs instead of Ballantyne’s two benefit-one risk patterns, and rarely used ethos appeals. There were claims that science backed up the paleo lifestyle but there were no studies or journal articles shown to back up those claims. The authors were basically telling the reader that the Paleo lifestyle is the best way to live and not leaving much room for interpretation. Someone who knows more about nutrition might not buy into all of the claims made right away, but there were some aspects that seemed more appealing to a nutritionist. In my interview, Madison mentioned that most diets do not have “a total lifestyle change... a total complete holistic approach” (Appendix A). However, *Paleo Magazine* successfully countered this argument by including sections on fitness, sleep, sun, community, technology, and stress reduction (“What is Paleo?”). The confident tone of the article was convincing, but the article lacked some of the evidence required to back up the claims made. This may relate to the fact that many of the authors have published books and are very successful, but none of them have PhDs. The authors created an authoritative relationship over their reader about diets and lifestyle that seemed like it would be useful to sell the reader on ways to find more information, such as a subscription to the *Paleo Magazine*.

The *Ultimate Paleo Guide* was the least academic sounding of all the websites and was written by the least academic author. Runyon’s tone is mostly conversational. He often poses and then answers questions and rarely supplies any sort of evidence for his claims. His credibility appeals do not come until the end of the article where he links and references some rebuttals to critics of the Paleo Diet. Overall, he sounds less authoritative than the authors of the other websites, but he makes his points in terms anyone can understand and uses several persuasive techniques, especially watered-down logos appeals. Often, he explains a biological process in a very simplistic way and then gives an even simpler interpretation of what that means for the Paleo Diet. In that way, he provides some facts (although they are often left unchecked) that back up what he is saying. He also makes some problematic claims, such as “the Standard American Diet (SAD)... is simply ruining the health of almost anyone who tries to eat according to the food pyramid” (Runyon). There are several problems with this statement. First, the food pyramid is no longer used by dietitian/nutritionists and is an outdated concept. Second, the Paleo Diet also does not follow the structure of the food pyramid since it excludes two important categories, dairy and grains. In fact, according to Madison, the Paleo Diet is “low in calcium and vitamin D” and “is not well balanced.” The other problem with this statement is that he makes an overgeneralization that the “Standard American Diet” is the same across the country and bad for everyone. *Ultimate Paleo Guide* has several statements like this one that also have discrepancies. Runyon leans more heavily on the negative impacts of a non-Paleo Diet than the benefits of a paleo one compared to the other authors. He may subtly scare his reader into following the diet by taking on the guise of a friend with his conversational tone and then sharing urgent sounding advice. He also includes a major plug for his app, which does not enhance his credibility for a more academic reader. As Runyon says about the US News, his guide may be “a bit dodgy,” but he still makes some convincing points. He creates a bond with readers who are into fitness and those who care a little less about science and studies. While his style is markedly different from the other paleo writers, he has his own methods of convincing readers and developing relationships with them.

The academic conversation on diet marketing has previously centered on diet motivations and language used, but tone is a significant factor. From interviewing a dietitian, I can tell that for someone like her, Runyon’s tone would not be convincing, but Ballantyne’s might have a better

effect. The variety of prominent voices in the paleo conversation expand the potential audience for the diet and must have contributed to its popularity.

## Conclusion

The findings of my research into the Paleo Diet suggest that diet authors do try to develop relationships with their readers, but those relationships are dependent on who the author is. Paleo Diet websites make up a genre and have many similarities that add cohesion to their argument. However, more research could be done on this topic to further analyze scientific studies that have been done on the Paleo Diet to examine their validity. An analysis could also be conducted on the Paleo Diet books. The books are longer and are a sort of companion for the dieter, so they would be a better showcase of the relationship between the author and the dieter. More research could also be done on other popular diets to see what the differences are in the language they use. Research into diet marketing is important because many people go on diets, and they should be aware of the persuasive strategies being used on them so they can look at the diets available more objectively. The importance of tone in diet marketing should not go unnoticed as it clearly changes the impact of the message and the target audience. If dietitian/nutritionists and public health advocates want to sell a healthy diet to the public, they should look to the success of diets like paleo and apply the aspects of their rhetoric that worked.

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## **Hannah West**

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## APPENDIX A: Interview Transcript

3/16/17

Face-to-face interview conducted by myself (H) with Madison Smith\*, RDN with over 25 yrs of experience (M)

\*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the interviewee

**H:** What are the first words that come to your mind when you think of the Paleo Diet?

**M:** I think of the caveman having a meat based diet based on being a hunter. It's a hunter gathering diet where they kill their own meat and where they gather whatever food they can find, mainly berries and fruits for picking and nuts.

**H:** How often do you hear people speak about the paleo diet?

**M:** I heard them speak about it a lot more a few years ago. It seemed to be really really in the vogue between maybe 5 and 10 years ago. I don't hear about it as much lately but it's still very popular and I see people publishing recipes that are in line with the paleo diet and advertising the paleo diet and talking about it but it's not quite as much in the vogue as it used to be. It's in line with many of the popular low carbohydrate, high protein fads that are out there. It's a variation of that.

**H:** Mm Hmm. From any of the people you've heard talk about it, what do you hear them say?

**M:** I think it's really more of a fad diet and a diet that is not umm well balanced in terms of the different food groups and the nutritional value that it contributes. It's low in calcium and vitamin d as well. It's mainly what I hear about the paleo diet is in reference to weight loss and also preventing or delaying the onset of diabetes, decreasing the blood sugar levels, um having better control of the diabetes. I hear about it in relationship to metabolic syndrome which can be a pre-diabetic state but I think it's most popular regarding weight loss and health. People feel that by eating the way our ancestors did in prehistoric times, that they're going back to the biological prototype of their ancestors and it's more natural and it would confer some kind of health benefits for them.

**H:** Hmm. Now you already partly answered this question, but in your opinion, why do you think people are drawn to fad diets?

**M:** They're drawn to fad diets because of their exorbitant promises. Usually the rhetoric is one of making all kinds of claims that can't always be delivered on or are temporary. Uh fad diets often promise quick weight loss and everyone is always looking for a quick fix. How to get healthy, how to get thin, how to have more energy with just following a diet and not an all-inclusive lifestyle that combines exercise and stress control and a good night sleep and all aspects of what it would take to be healthy. This is just one; they want some kind of quick fix, something that has all kinds of promises, that'll solve the world's ills just by what they eat. 'Follow this diet and you'll be thin and healthy for life.' And that's, that's the rhetoric. That's what you hear of fad diets: making all kinds of claims that just by following this diet they will promise you some outcome and it's not substantiated by scientific based research.

**H:** In your experience as a dietitian, what language is the most persuasive to get people to follow diets?

**M:** The lang... this is across the board evident, and it's always the case. The language that is used to get people to follow a diet more than anything else is quick weight loss. People will do almost anything to lose weight to lose weight quickly and so any fad diet that can promise them quick weight loss, they want to get those pounds off, they want to be able to get into the dress for that wedding or they want to be able to go to their high school reunion and look great. They want fast results. They don't want to have a total lifestyle change that requires modification in their diet, modification in their lifestyle where they have to exercise, they have to stop smoking; they have to learn ways to reduce stress in their life. They have to learn how to have a good night's sleep. They have to learn perhaps meditation and other ways to reduce stress, maybe psychotherapy and

addressing the underlying psychological problems they're facing. Behavior modification, a total complete holistic approach to help in weight loss. They want a quick fix. The most significant rhetoric to sell these fad diets is quick weight loss, bar anything. There is also talk of, in these fad diets, often times their theories are couched in pseudo-scientific verbiage, that the food industries are conspiring against them, that the food industries have taken control and are promoting their products and sabotaging efforts of certain nutrition philosophies.

**H:** hmm. Is there any other rhetoric that might be used?

**M:** Health. Yes. Like you'll often times hear in the rhetoric of fad diets usually all kinds of false claims that are not scientifically sound or that are not substantiated with good scientific, evidence based research. I'm talking about large-scale, double-blind studies that can be replicated. There often times just based on very few studies of small numbers and they're making exorbitant claims and those claims usually have to do number one with quick weight loss but with all kinds of health issues like... I'll cure your cancer. Or, 'get rid of diabetes' or any kind of thing. All kinds of autoimmune disease. 'Follow this and you won't have any more problems with your colitis, your rheumatoid arthritis. And many different things. A lot of it is, we'll have pseudoscientific type of research and claims saying that this will help you prevent heart disease and stay healthy. This will help you prevent the biggest killers: cancer, heart disease, diabetes. You'll lose weight quickly and keep it off. They never keep it off. It takes a lot more to lose weight. It takes a lot more to keep it off. A lot of different diets can show you how to lose weight and lose weight quickly but there's never been one that has showed you how to permanently keep it off.

**H:** Thank you for your responses. They're very helpful.

## APPENDIX B: Coding Analysis

