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Hegans: An examination of the emerging male vegan

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a
Master of Arts
in Gender and Women's Studies

Minnesota State University, Mankato
Mankato, Minnesota

May 2011

This thesis paper has been examined and approved.

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, many people have turned to an alternative diet, veganism. The vegan diet contradicts R.W. Connell's (43) theory of hegemonic masculinity, which is supported by the domination of women and animals. This study focuses on the masculinity represented through promotion of veganism for men in two books, *Meat is for Pussies* by John Joseph and *Skinny Bastard* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin, and vegan related articles in four US men's magazines: *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health Magazine*, and *Men's Fitness Magazine*. These vegan-explicit texts, written for a male audience, reinforce the heteronormative idea of masculinity through masculine language and images of real men. Overall, the study found that these books and magazines promote a masculinity that does not support traditional reasons for veganism such as exploitation of animals and the environment, individual health. These findings suggest that books and health magazines that advocate for veganism do so in a way that maintains hegemonic masculinity rather than creating a new, more encompassing idea of what men can be.

Keywords: vegan, vegetarian, masculinity, media representation, health magazines

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Previous research on men's relationship with meat has focused primarily on the importance of meat for men. Research and theory in critical food studies and masculinity studies assert that men use meat as a source of power and domination. Previous research has ignored the discussion about men who reject meat consumption. Through analysis of hegemonic masculinity and its connection to meat, one could conclude that vegan men are reconstructing masculinity. Veganism, a diet that focuses on the exclusion of animal meat and byproducts, challenges hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, the concept of men attempting to live up to an ideal form of masculinity, asks men to exude power and domination, not compassion and empathy. But in this project, I examine if male vegan representation is a new form of masculinity or if it upholds the same rhetoric as hypermasculine meat-eaters. More specifically, does vegan marketing appeal to male vegan consumers using the same hypermasculine rhetoric employed by the meat industry?

Through this research, I discover that the rhetoric of vegan marketing for men still uses traditional masculine ideologies use even though vegan men have rejected a major connection to power and domination by refusing to eat meat. Men have used animals and their right to eat animals as a tool of power. While men choose to become vegans, they do so in the traditional constructs of their gender. Previous research finds that men choose to become vegans because of personal health reasons including sexual potency. A study performed by Gregory A. Guagnano et al. reported there are four major reasons to becoming vegetarian: anti-animal violence advocacy, environmental rights, world hunger, and personal health (538). Dr. Allan Kornberg argues that older men may be

choosing veganism for health reasons rather than animal welfare and younger people are turning to veganism for environmental and animal rights (Myron, "It's Raining Vegan Men, Hallelujah). Depending on gender, race, and class the reasons people choose to become vegan may vary.

I research male vegan ideals by analyzing popular media texts from which male vegans and others absorb messages about masculinity and veganism. I will perform a feminist content analysis of two overtly vegan books: *Skinny Bastard: A kick-in-the-ass for real men who want to stop being fat and start getting buff* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin and *Meat is for Pussies: A how-to-guide for dudes who want to get fit, kick ass and take names* by John Joseph. The two texts have personal health as the main theme rather than animal rights. This is so because the majority of masculinities discourage empathy and compassion. Hegemonic masculinity encourages aggression and is self-interested.

Skinny Bastard, published in 2009, argues for men to obtain a meat-free diet so they can become healthier. Freedman and Barnouin published a previous book, *Skinny Bitch*, in 2005 that was specific for women who wanted to lose weight. The authors then chose to make a complementary book for men. *Skinny Bastard* has sold over 100,000 copies in the year of publication. The book provides information for men on how to lose weight and still feel like a man.

Meat is for Pussies campaigns for a meat-free diet as well. Recently published in 2010, Joseph argues that to be a real man, a person does not need to eat meat. *Meat is for Pussies* and *Skinny Bastard* argue for veganism for health and environmental reasons, and a minimal connection to animal rights. These books have infiltrated mainstream

media such as being available at bookstores and become prime examples of when veganism and masculinity influence each other.

I use four magazines that are mainstream in the United States to broaden my research. The main magazine in my research is *US Men's Health Magazine*. This magazine will complement the two books by comparing vegan explicit material to a mainstream men's health magazine. *US Men's Health* magazine is the most widely circulated health magazine for men with approximately 1,650,000 subscribers in the United States. Its website states that the magazine offers advice on fitness, sex and women, health, nutrition, weight loss, and grooming. The magazine speaks to men in way that offers them friendly advice rather than a doctor doling out medical opinions.

The other magazines, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Men's Fitness*, are other influential media tools in the United States according to Ulrich's, a directory of printed media. *Esquire* has a subscription base of 70,000 and *GQ* has 91,000 subscribers. *Men's Fitness* has sold 700,000. All these magazines promote fitness and health through a variety of ways including guest articles, health articles written by doctors, and advertisement sponsored by medical institutions.

After reading both the books and men's magazines, I use a coding system to decipher if hegemonic masculine ideals and language was used. I expect this will determine how vegan men's relationship to masculinity is conceptualized. Vegan men's relationship to masculinity is important because in an ever-changing world of nutrition and health, many people have come to adopt a vegan diet. While the majority of vegans are women, men have turned to a vegan diet primarily for health reasons. When they do so, can they still abide by the rigid expectations of modern masculinity?

My research contributes new knowledge to masculinity and food discourses by examining the connection between masculinity and male vegans. Hegemonic masculinity is thriving and men are still feeling the limitations of gender norms. The texts I analyze all reinforce hegemonic masculinity. The masculinity enforced in these texts caters to a hegemonic masculinity that speaks to primarily white, heterosexual, able-bodied men. Previous research, while valuable and influential to masculinity and food studies, only interrogates men's interactions with food in terms of how it is used to assert their power and domination rather than as a new process to refuse food consumption norms. Carol J. Adams' (2010) groundbreaking work, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, interrogates the connection between masculinity and meat, but does not have an analysis of men who choose not to consume meat. Theorists supporting Adams' work, such as Sherrie Inness (2006) and Carole Counihan (1999), also do not analyze subcultures of masculinity when researching men's interactions with meat and other foods.

This thesis is of personal interest of how veganism is represented to people and specifically men. Masculinity has been of interest to me since my career in Gender and Women's Studies began because gender is relational. What affects men in turn affects women. In agreement with Carol Adams (2010), I believe that animal exploitation and women's rights are on a continuum affected by hegemonic masculinity and this project examines a personal question about why men eat what they do and how it affects masculinity.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While the subject of food seems to be popular in bookstores in recent years, *Eating Animals* (2007), *In Defense of Food* (2008), *Fast Food Nation* (2001), here are few scholarly works on the connection between gender and food, specifically men's connection to meat. Hegemonic masculinity is the prominent theory referred to throughout the texts covered in this literature review. The social construction of masculinity is vital in the discourse of food politics. Recently, the discourse of masculinity has intersected with the politics of food. Meat and men intersect in an overwhelming number of situations and this intersection is explored in the works of feminist theorists such as Carol J. Adams, Carole Counihan, and Sherrie Inness. Several studies have supported their work through surveys, interviews, and content analysis. The literature I review in this chapter provides insight into how women's and men's roles have been constructed around certain foods and explores the way these foods have been advertised to different genders. More specifically, the research that surrounds men's interaction with meat only focuses on the relationship between consumption and domination rather than engagement in food systems.

Currently, there is no published research on the subject of vegan men and their refusal to consume animal flesh. This literature review discusses veganism in the United States today, the basic tenets of masculinity, men's interaction with food, and a feminist critique of men's domination of animals. There is some research on how men view health and body image; however, there is only a small amount of content specifically focused on men and food.

Vegetarianism and Veganism

It is important to understand vegetarianism in the United States in order to examine the relationship between men and meat. Vegetarianism is the voluntary decision to end meat consumption. American society expects vegetarians to be women, weak, and extreme (Fox & Ward 259). A dichotomy is created between women and men as food eaters. Men are associated with meat and aggression, while women are associated with vegetables and lighter fare. Vegetarianism is stereotypically known as lighter fare and the consumption of weaker food. Veganism has been seen as a stricter diet than vegetarianism. Veganism, first defined by Donald Watson and Elsie Shrigley, is a philosophy of living that excludes all forms of exploitation of animals (vegansociety.com). This definition sees veganism as a benefit to all humans, animals, and the environment. Watson and Shrigley are the creators of The Vegan Society, which started in the United Kingdom in 1944.

Vegetarians, like any other subculture, are not a monolithic group when it comes to the reason why they chose to become vegan or vegetarian. Health reasons, environmental reasons, or compassion for animal rights are common motivators for becoming vegetarian. One demographic that remains constant for vegetarians and vegans is gender. Donna Maurer explains in her book, *Vegetarianism, Moment or Movement?*, the majority of vegetarians are women (8). Maurer notes Adams' work as probable causes of why men are not vegetarians and vegans; the decision to give up meat is seen as feminine. According to Lacobbo and Lacobbo, 3.6 percent of women are vegetarians while only 2 percent of men are vegetarians (7). The majority of vegetarians are women, and an even higher percentage of vegans are women.

Another common characteristic of vegans is that they are normally white women. Breeze Harper, one of the first to analyze veganism within critical race studies, examines people of color's views of veganism. Harper argues that while veganism would be beneficial to women of color, it has historically been a white movement. This movement outreached to people of color, but the tone and delivery, according to Harper, prevented people of color from adapting a vegan lifestyle (20). Even though the number of vegans of color remains small, Harper believes veganism is necessary to people of color's work in antiracist and antipoverty work.

Dr. Neal Barnard's text, *Food for Life*, encapsulates men's relationship to giving up meat. Barnard states that in order to get men to be vegans, their sexual potency must be threatened (51). Barnard argues that reducing a men's meat intake is difficult and it affects how the man views his own masculinity. Even with the large amount of research supporting the benefits of a vegan diet, men usually do not become vegan until their sexual strength is threatened because their sexuality is intimately connected to their masculinity.

Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity perpetuates the concept of an ideal man that men are expected to strive for, but it is an ideal that can never fully be actualized. R.W. Connell is the most well known theorist about masculinity and coined the term hegemonic masculinity. The masculinity that men attempt to strive towards emphasizes domination over women. Hegemonic masculinity reinforces the notion that men need to be better than they currently are. Connell argues that true masculinity connects to men's bodies

rather than their intelligence or emotions (45). Men's bodies need to be strong, fit, and muscular. This ideal form of masculinity is vital to how they conceptualize meat. Meat is made from strong animals and that strength is then transferred to men when meat is consumed. Adams argues this ideology is reinforced through common expressions such as "you are what you eat" (43). Men believe they need to consume animals to be strong.

Whether theorists critique Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity or build other theories of masculinity, theorists use Connell's work as a foundation to men's studies. Arthur Brittan continues the discussion by arguing for the necessity of multiple masculinities rather than one category of masculinity. Brittan argues that masculinity not fixed and is instead local and subject to change and is dependent on a historical time (3). This is important to research on men's interaction with their bodies and how they perceive themselves because data changes throughout the populations of men researched and cannot be generalized. Brittan complements Connell's work as both argue that masculinity is not static and that it is important to note that while there may be an ideal masculinity, masculinity incorporates race, class, and sexual orientation.

Brittan complicates the discourse by discussing the way in which men are in crisis regarding their masculinity because the expectations are impossible to live up to (26). The discussion of masculinity in crisis is a popular viewpoint when discussing masculinity. Roger Horrocks, in *Masculinity in Crisis*, discusses the issue of a problematic gender. His text is based on the notion that not only men are in crisis, but also masculinity itself is a crisis. Horrocks argues that masculinity is destructive and restrictive (42, 143). Hegemonic masculinity requires men to be emotionless, uncaring, and weak. In turn, these traits hurt women, animals, and other men.

Other related research includes Michael Kimmel's edited work on masculinity, *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*. Kimmel argues that men continuously change and have since mass media became mainstream in the West. Men are stuck between two types of masculinity: the violent, aggressive man and the progressive family man. He breaks down masculinity, reminding readers that men's gender is socially constructed as much as women's. The social construction of masculinity is in relation to femininity and men's attempts to be the opposite of women (Kimmel 13). Kimmel uses mass media and texts to convey the idea that the media has influenced men's ideas on how they define real men. As an example, he contrasts men's lived experiences of being caught between a loving father and watching aggressive and oppressive men on television.

Another important study in Kimmel's edited book is "The Embodiment of Masculinity: Cultural, Psychological, and Behavioral Dimensions." This quantitative study examines men's perception of masculinity in connection to their bodies through surveys and interviews. Marc Mishkind et al. found that most men had an idealized body image of the perfect man (41). This perfect man was powerful, strong, aggressive, and the opposite of feminine. This study was important because it complemented other theorist's ideologies on hegemonic masculinity since it contained real data collected from men.

Jackson Katz, an anti-violence activist and scholar, writes about masculinity in regards to men's violence against women. His argument is based in men's notion of masculinity being concerned with domination over women. According to *The Macho Paradox*, masculinity equals power over and feeling entitled to women's bodies (Katz 153). Men's power is produced from their physical strength and size rather than their

intelligence. In his notes published to the general public, Katz argues that men are expected to be tough, stoic, and rugged (2).

Throughout Katz' lectures, speeches, and books, he, like other masculinity theorists, argues for a non-violent world. The non-violent world he sees only extends to non-violence against humans. Nowhere does Katz mention a non-violent world that includes reducing violence towards animals or the environment. Katz does discuss the possibility of a world of non-violence but men need to take an active role (5). Men normally refuse Katz' proposition because it asks men to refuse their privilege.

Another anti-violence masculinity theorist, Michael Kaufman, interrogates the connection between masculinity and women's bodies, but does not extend his analysis to men's domination over animal bodies. A renowned theorist and activist, Kaufman argues that men's domination is culturally bound. In his article, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," Kaufman reinforces Connell's theory that men are taught about masculinity through their social influences (43). In regards to anti-violence work, Kaufman sees men's need to become powerful through the violence they perpetuate towards women and other men.

Christopher Forth offers current debates about masculinity. Forth argues that masculinity is highly connected to male anatomy. Like other masculinity theorists, Forth argues that many men form their embodied masculinity through the media they consume. For example, Forth sees the West as a commercialized society where men in movies have advanced muscular development (220). This development leads men to think masculinity can be achieved through the improvement of their body. Forth summarizes media's influence on men by stating that men's muscles have become fashion accessories (220).

The idea that gender is connected to the body has primarily previously been discussed in regards of femininity and women. Masculinity is now incorporated in the discussions of gender.

In 2003, Leon Rappoport published a book, *How We Eat: Appetite, Culture, and the Psychology of Food*, that examines how people construct food norms. Rappoport elaborates on the discussion of food's association with the human body in the United States. Rappoport not only makes the connection between phallic food and men's interest in them and sexual activity, but throughout the book Rappoport examines men's connection to meat. He argues meat has been known to cause aggressive behavior (Rappoport 173). Rappoport suggests that highly processed food, including meat from factory farming, make people hyperactive and emotional brittle, leaning toward an aggressive behavior. Beyond the chemistry of the food, Rappoport argues meat has been seen as an aggressive food. Americans think that meat is for predators and carnivores such as lions (Rappoport 173). As Connell argues, aggression is a masculine trait.

Hegemonic masculinity has encouraged and reinforced a specific type of masculinity. This form of masculinity is not only limits men, but also ignores other masculinities. While masculinity is fluid and ever changing, many new forms of masculinity have developed in the United States in recent years. But as Connell argues, while there may be new forms of masculinity, many men still attempt to live up to a constructed standard of the ideal man.

A Feminist Perspective on Men and Meat

In the early 1990s, Carol J. Adams constructed a new discourse on men's domination over consumable animals and connected animal oppression to women's

oppression. Consumable animals are animals that humans designate for eating such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Adams paves the way for a feminist analysis of the relationship between the consumption of women and the consumption of animals. In her influential book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams concludes that patriarchy and meat are intimately connected in the United States. *The Sexual Politics of Meat* connects the violence that animals endure during the process of food production to violence against women. Adams writes on the strong connection between men and meat thoroughly and concisely. Adams claims that meat becomes the center of the meal, which in turn reinforces patriarchal domination in United States. Meat represents masculinity and is an image of strength and domination for men.

While Adams labels her book a feminist-vegetarian critical theory reader, her writing and use of examples is suitable for a non-academic audience. Adams claims men's domination over women and consumable animals is evident in an everyday context such as language and advertising. Adams also explores the connection between men who do not consume animals and their masculinity. She argues that the dominant society constructs vegetarian and vegan men as effeminate (48). The popular notion that real men eat meat and women eat vegetables speaks to this construction. In her text, Adams argues that through the United States' patriarchal structure, gender construction seeps into the discussion of food. Being a real man means consuming meat (17). Not only do men align themselves with meat, but also men reject vegetables or healthy alternatives.

In 2004, Adams published a companion to *The Sexual Politics of Meat* titled *The Pornography of Meat*. Rather than adding new material to the discussion, this book complemented her first. With the inclusion of more advertising images and slogans as

evidence, Adams argues that advertising and meat are seen as male products. Since the 1990s, her theories have become mainstream in the feminist and vegetarian worlds. Many researchers have attached to Adams' work and pursued their own analysis on hegemonic masculinity and the oppression of female humans and non-human animals.

Adams is not the only feminist theorist who tackles the intersectional relationship between meat and men. Carole Counihan, in *The Anthropology of Food and Body*, supports the notion that food is gendered. Women are connected to vegetables and men to meat (Counihan 13). While Counihan makes this connection, she barely acknowledges the complexity of men's privilege and their association with meat. She does note that there is a connection to what men choose to consume and their body image, associating men's interest in meat with appearance reasons (65). Counihan avoids meat's role in the production and reinforcement of patriarchy in the majority of her texts. Counihan, in the introduction to her edited text *Food and Culture: A Reader*, repeats the idea that food is important and socially constructed, and that the relationship between food and humans should be studied. An example that Counihan shares is men's power over food resources (5). Counihan's focus is primarily on how men decide what and who is consumable. She ignores how men are subjects to social food norms.

Marti Kheel, a self-identified ecofeminist theorist, elaborates Adams' work. Meat eating encourages male domination. Manliness derives from hunting and controlling others (Kheel 331). Kheel joins many other food theorists such as Adams and Counihan when she argues that men exert power by consuming animals' bodies and using women's bodies. To have compassion for animals or to be a vegetarian or vegan is to be seen as effeminate, weak, and unmanly (Kheel 334). The consumption of meat creates a

dichotomy between men and women and non-human animals. Men are dominant, masculine, and powerful whereas women are feminine, othered, and subordinate. Kheel revisits Connell's notion of men needing to distance themselves from animals and women in order to reassert their power over them.

Another feminist theorist who makes connections between food and gender is Sherrie Inness. In *Secret Ingredients*, published in 2006, Inness argues that compassion is at the heart of vegetarianism. According to Connell's theory of masculinity, this contradicts the characteristics of an ideal male (45). Inness acknowledges the only way to convert a man is to make vegetarianism appealing to their sexual identity (149). In *Vegetarians and Vegans in America Today*, Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo reinforce the idea that vegetarians and vegans sell their lifestyle by appealing to men's sexual desires (100). The only way to make a diet without meat appealing to men is to incorporate vegetarianism and veganism into the current ideologies of masculinity. Inness argues that a vegetarian lifestyle requires compassion in all aspects of a person's life. If this is true, vegetarian lifestyle contradicts Connell's claim that hegemonic masculinity is aggressive and apathetic. Inness builds on Adams' idea that people associate what they consume to who they are.

Inness, Counihan, Kheel, and Adams recognize that vegetarianism has become an alternative lifestyle for people, primarily women, in the United States, but meat's importance to men is undeniable. Adams ignited the conversation surrounding men's domination over women and consumable animals, and the feminist food discourse is supported through Counihan, Kheel, and Inness' works.

Through the scholarship below, it is evident that men connect food to identity, body, and sexuality. R. Povey, B. Wellens, and M. Conner argue that American diets fall on a continuum from meat eating to veganism (16). Through their study, they found that the majority of vegetarians chose to do so for health reasons rather than environmental or animal rights. This study did not provide an in-depth discussion or analysis of gender, but what is important is the knowledge of why people choose the diets they do. In summary, they found that people in the survey had negative connotations and stereotypes associated with vegetarianism and veganism (25). Both men and women in this study speak only of the benefits of their diet and believe their diet is the correct lifestyle, and did not interrogate other dietary options.

Throughout 2000-2010, many studies have been done to support Adams' claims made in 1990. "Getting Down to the Meat: The Symbolic Construction of Meat Consumption," by Bettina Heinz and Ronald Lee, strengthens Adams' claim of the centrality of meat to the meal. Heinz and Lee argue that advertising identifies animals as purely for human consumption (90). Through their analysis of meat in the United States, they identify meat eating as a masculine activity and report that society sees meat as a power food (95). The evidence provided in this study replicates the findings in previous work.

In "Investigating Hegemonic Masculinity: Portrayals of Masculinity in Men's Lifestyle Magazine," published in 2010, Rosemary Ricciardelli, Kimberley A. Clow, and Philip White argue that hegemonic masculinity is unattainable for men, but is still advertised through magazines. In the past decade, men's bodies have become central to consumerism including magazine advertisement. With this scrutiny now placed on the

male body, Ricciardelli, Clow, and White argue that the male body needs to be muscular, strong, and in control for men to be happy (66). These three characteristics still maintain the prescribed hegemonic masculinity that men in the United States are expected to uphold.

More specifically, health magazines are examined to define men's relationship with meat and other dietary needs. Arran Stibbe wrote in his 2004 article, "Health and the Social Construction of Masculinity in Men's Health Magazines," that even in men's health magazines, health was tangential. Stibbe studied the United States' *Men's Health Magazine* and found that the magazine supports the ideological agenda of male power (48). *Men's Health Magazine* is a source for men to gather news and advice on health and other personal issues, and thus reinforces hegemonic masculine traits. According to Stibbe, the magazine supported meat and beer consumption, perceived staples of true masculinity (39-41). Stibbe's findings support the claim made by feminist theorists about main stream media's support of hegemonic masculinity: it supports the domination of men over women.

Brendan Gough examines men's health in the United Kingdom through analysis of men's health magazines and public newspapers. In his article, "Try to be Healthy, but Don't Forgo Your Masculinity: Deconstructing Men's Health Discourse in the Media," Gough argues men do little to maintain their health and partake in risky behaviors to ensure their manhood (2478). Health magazines appeal to men's desire to be the ideal male because of their reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity. Gough found that in the United Kingdom, health is feminized and masculinity is narrowly defined as unhealthy (2481). In another article, "'Real Men Don't Diet': An Analysis of Contemporary

Newspaper Representations of Men, Food and Health,” Gough recognizes that when men are concerned about food, it is in comparison with and in relation to women (334).

Gough provides examples of how food, cooking, and health are primarily designated as women’s concerns; when men become involved, they become a marked category. Gough explains that in order for men to participate in healthy eating, which includes a decrease in meat consumption, diets have to become male friendly (335). Diets and the reduction of meat consumption must appeal to hegemonic masculinity.

Another study that examines advertisements is “Beasts, Burgers, and Hummers: Meat and the Crisis of Masculinity in Contemporary Television Advertisements” by Richard A. Rogers. Rogers posits that not only is there a value placed on hegemonic masculinity in the United States today, but men are in a crisis. Meat is used in commercials to revitalize hegemonic masculinity (Rogers 282). Red meat in a *Burger King* commercial supports a true hegemonic masculinity and puts men back in control over the environment (297). This study supports previous work done by Adams in several ways. Most importantly, Adams examines *Burger King*’s commitment to support men’s hunger for red meat while reinforcing dominant masculine ideologies.

Finally, research conducted by Jeffrey Sobal concludes that hegemonic masculinity is confining, thus keeping men from exploring a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. While some men abstain from meat to conform to their wife’s dietary choices, they make excuses to avoid rejection or humiliation by their male peers (Sobel 140). Sobel upholds previous research and theory through his work. Men who consume meat do so because of a hegemonic script that says if men eat meat, they will gain protein, thus making them healthier and stronger (Sobel 146). Sobal notes that men use meat as a

source of power, a way to bond with other men, and as a tool to become healthier. Sobal argues that there are gender scripts, and the importance of food assists in the reinforcement of these scripts and sets their limitations.

An important example of gender scripts in relation to food is Bruce Feirstein's 1982 text, *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche*. This book acts as a handbook for hegemonic masculinity. This book was sold to the masses and provided pertinent information about manhood including what men should and should not eat. Feirstein demonstrates how extreme men's exertion of their masculinity can be when it comes to food. He concludes that real men cannot eat salad, tofu, or fruit (Feirstein 75). Although this text is a satire of what men perceive food and meat to be, it becomes a cultural text that supports the politics of meat.

Fabio Parasecoli examines media's role in the construction of masculinity in his article "Feeding Hard Bodies: Food and Masculinities in Men's Fitness Magazines." Along with Fox and Ward and Stibbe, Parasecoli argues that men's bodies are supposed to be an example of sexual power and dominance, and men accomplish this through their consumption of meat. Parasecoli continues the exploration of the representation of men in the media, especially the connection between manly food and patriarchy.

Parasecoli argues that body image defines hegemonic masculinity, which embodies the control over flesh and domination over women (35). Parasecoli makes the claim that food industries exploit gender norms and reinforce hegemonic masculinity. The media encourages men to discredit healthy food and to view cooking as feminine, while encouraging them to view meat as masculine. In *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture*, Parasecoli examines the media's influence on gender and race in regards to food.

Parasecoli finds that movies that include men participating in feminine tasks such as cooking portray them as temporary, not permanent, tasks (29). The stereotypical man only jokes about taking food and health seriously. Parasecoli does highlight the notion that men who are concerned about their body and health are only concerned because of the power associated with a fit body (99). Again, masculinity is intimately tied to men's bodies and what meat can do for men's bodies.

Nick Fiddes examines the persuasive argument for meat at the table. In *Meat: A Natural Symbol*, Fiddes argues that men are positioned as hunters, controllers, and primary consumers of meat (144). In his text, Fiddes makes the case that society has constructed meat as the quintessential masculine food and that this has been reinforced by mainstream media and advertisement. Men use their bodies as entities of power through being more powerful than animals or by consuming animals.

Todd Reeser, author of *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, reinforces Connell's argument for men's need to connect power with their bodies. Reeser argues that men unconsciously live with the idea that they are what they eat. Men need to be meaty, so they need to eat meat. Reeser argues there is a cycle that men reinforce: society designates the importance of meat and, in turn, men believe that meat is powerful and only men need to consume it (95). This relationship to meat, Reeser adds, is a direct relationship to a specific kind of power. This power is physical; it is not mental power in the sense that men can obtain power through knowledge. Reeser argues that men are known as warriors, not intellectuals. In history, men are remembered as soldiers, warriors, and even Neanderthals, but men during periods such as the Enlightenment era are ignored (94). This is because even as Neanderthals, men were aggressive, fit, and

agile. While there are notable male philosophers, intellectuals, and scholars, men in the Enlightenment era were emotional, knowledgeable, and passive. These traits are seen as feminine rather than masculine. Reeser concludes that men and their bodies, which include their health, cannot be separated. Their identity is completely intertwined with their meaty body.

It is clear that much work has been done surrounding meat and masculinity. Work in both masculinity studies and food studies encompasses the intersection of gender with food and, more specifically meat, but there remains much more work to be done, especially in the new trend of men renegotiating masculinity to work with new diets and lifestyles. The literature explored creates an opportunity for discussion about vegan men and their masculinity.

CHAPTER 3. METHDOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Men's dietary choices have been marginalized in the discussion of food studies. Feminist food studies have primarily analyzed the way men dominate the production and distribution of food, rather than examine men who reject normal food habits. My work adds to research done by feminists who interrogate the relationship among women, men, and meat because of the lack of feminist research on men who refuse to consume or use any part of an animal.

In order to examine male vegans appropriately, research must first be done on media's representation of them. Feminist vegan theorist, Carol J. Adams, has done groundbreaking work on men's connection to meat, which focuses on how meat supports hegemonic masculinity in the United States. Adams' work, done in the 1990s, focused on a content analysis of advertisements in U.S. mainstream media. She reproduced and updated her work in the early 2000s and again in 2010. This vegetarian-feminist critique arose from women's experiences of being objectified as pieces of meat. In contrast to women's experiences as meat, she examines men's domination over and need for meat. What is absent in Adams' research are men who reject that domination and subsequent power.

The research I conduct, through feminist content analysis, fills the gap in research that Adams and other theorists ignore. The content analysis focuses primarily on the marketing that seeks to make veganism appealing to men. According to Patricia Lina Leavy, feminist content analysis examines dominant ideas and representations (224). I use content analysis because I am examining stereotyped representations about vegan men. Vegan men already challenge dominant ideas by refusing to eat meat, but the

question is what do the dominant messages in United States society say about vegan men? This content analysis examines textual evidence that represents vegan men through two texts and multiple men's magazines to see if hegemonic masculinity emerges. I use both deductive and inductive processes in this research project. Deductive approaches, according to Leavy, use an already developed coding system (243). Inductive research, on the other hand, consists of letting the themes emerge throughout the process (Leavy 244). I employ both research methods because I have ideas of how hegemonic masculinity may emerge due to the research I have read, but I am open to looking at new themes that become evident as I analyze the texts.

More specifically, I examine *Skinny Bastard* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin published in 2009 and *Meat is for Pussies* by John Joseph published in 2010 for how veganism is sold to men. The two texts are vegan explicit texts targeted to men. Freedman and Barnouin published *Skinny Bitch*, which was targeted specifically to women, before *Skinny Bastard*. I expected to find themes of hegemonic masculinity due to previous research on masculinity and veganism, but I did not know how those themes would come to fruition in the two books. These books also advertise a vegan diet specifically to men. While the population of vegan men is small, these two books are popular. *Skinny Bastard's* authors have published previous books that have made the *New York Times* Bestseller list (front cover). Both books can be purchased in national bookstore chains and found on-line easily.

This thesis will demonstrate the ways in which these books promote hegemonic masculinity ideologies. Hegemonic masculinity reinforces the idea that when it comes to food, real men eat meat. This language penetrates the vegan world by making veganism

sexually appealing or for real men. This is not only evident in the books I analyze, but also in the magazines I examine.

Another component to this research project is inductive content analysis that covers publications and advertisements that have been produced in mainstream United States men's magazines: *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health Magazine*, and *Men's Fitness Magazine*. I was unsure of the themes that the magazines would produce although I hypothesized that the magazines would perceive veganism as feminine and a diet that would be demeaned. I assumed the magazines would enforce hegemonic masculinity. Advertisement may play a role in what the magazines publish. According to Gloria Steinem, advertisement influences what gets published in magazines. Advertisements construct what gets published and what articles will attract products (Steinem 178). Throughout the magazines, advertisements consisted of beer, cars, and alcohol. There were no advertisements for vegetarian living. The magazines could not run an article next to an advertisement for beef. Veganism has become more prevalent in the United States, but the amount of content I could use in the magazines was minimal. I searched the magazines' websites for articles pertaining to veganism, meat, and diet. Any article that had one of the issues I examined more in-depth to determine the magazine's perception of veganism for men. All content analyzed can be found on the magazine's website unless stated otherwise.

I chose the four magazines primarily because they were the magazines I most commonly heard of. I chose *Men's Health Magazine* and *Men's Fitness Magazine* for the obvious reason of men's health related issues. *GQ* and *Esquire* complemented *Men's Fitness Magazine* and *Men's Health Magazine*; their main focus is current events and

social issues (Magdirect.com). These two magazines targeted a different audience. *GQ*'s readership profile contains mostly upper middle class men with the median age of 34.

Men's Health Magazine and *Men's Fitness Magazine* have readers from all income, age, and educational levels.

I choose to analyze two separate groups of content in the hopes that they would complement each other. This is so because the two books are blatantly pushing a vegan agenda to men while the magazines are selling ideas of hegemonic masculinity. The two groups have different but overlapping themes. I use deductive research through the analysis of the magazines to see the themes that support my hypothesis and inductive and deductive content analysis in regard to the books because I had a preconceived hypothesis that they would produce a form of hegemonic masculinity, but I was unsure as to how that would be developed in the texts.

I examine only content written in the United States, as that is my primary focus. This could lead to other research done on a global level through a much longer range of time and location. Research on the relationship between men, women, and meat has been examined previously.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Meat is for Pussies by John Joseph, and *Skinny Bastard* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin, offer insights into the complexities of selling veganism to men. The texts describe veganism as a way of life that promotes a healthier and happier man. They encourage men to live a vegan lifestyle, without forfeiting their masculinity, by reinforcing hegemonic masculinity through their language and marketing tactics. The four magazines examined, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health Magazine*, and *Men's Fitness Magazine*, offer an opposite look at veganism by arguing that it may be healthy, but it is not manly. The articles selected from the magazines perpetuate the traditional view of masculinity, which reinforces the idea that males are dominant and aggressive meat-eaters, not consumers of vegetables.

Meat is for Pussies is a “how-to guide for dudes who want to get fit, kick ass and take names” by demanding that men give up eating meat (Joseph front cover). Joseph's primary reason for men to stop eating meat is for their own health; the environmental and ethical reasons are left on the outskirts of his reasoning. Joseph argues for a vegan diet through appealing to health reasons. *Skinny Bastard*, by Freedman and Barnouin, is a male-directed version of the authors' best selling book *Skinny Bitch*. The information provided speaks directly to men about health issues. *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* have similarities, such as the information provided to men about sexual health. Both books discuss sexual health, but more importantly, they discuss men's health issues in relation to meat. Both books provide weekly diet plans and information on vegan staples such as tofu, nuts, and leafy greens.

The two sources of content, the vegan explicit texts and the magazines directed toward a male audience, support the same argument: men need to maintain their masculinity. *Meat is for Pussies* and *Skinny Bastard* both argue that men can still be real men without enjoying meat. The four magazines uphold the argument that a man's diet matters if he is to be considered manly. These magazines do not attempt to conceal the ideals they are proclaiming. Many of the magazines promote a healthier, sexier man, not a compassionate man. Traditionally, compassion is a feminine trait that men are discouraged from demonstrating.

Throughout the texts and magazines, although they advertise completely different products, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is exercised. The five major themes that emerged are **credentials, language, sexual potency, heterosexism, and individual health v. animal rights**. The authors of the two books provide credentials in the beginning of the book to appeal to their consumers by announcing the fact that the authors are either a real man or understand what real men need. All of the texts consulted use traditionally masculine language. The books and the magazines associate men with sexual competency and advocate for a meat-free diet that will make men more sexually potent. Through the promotion of sexual ability, heterosexism appears in both of the books through their emphasis on describing only heterosexual sexual activity. Finally, veganism is promoted through personal health rather than environmental rights or animal exploitation. These specific themes emerged throughout the analysis of the books and magazines. Traditional rhetoric of masculinity appears through all of the texts and the magazine articles. These texts promote traditional hegemonic masculinity throughout the themes addressed below.

Credentials

Without the author's credentials, readers do not know whether they are able to trust the information presented to them. Attempting to sell the concept of veganism to men is a challenge because of society's construction of masculinity. This construction includes men's reliance on meat and males typically not wanting to take others' advice when it comes to their own health. The authors needed the perfect credibility to be able to sell veganism.

Meat is for Pussies author, John Joseph, clarifies his masculinity through his credentials. Joseph's masculinity is prominently displayed in *Meat is for Pussies*. Joseph is currently in a metal band and argues that even though he follows a vegan lifestyle, he is a real man. Joseph describes his childhood to establish himself as a hypermasculine, tough, and aggressive male. Through validating his masculinity, he also validates veganism. Joseph argues that he is aggressive and hypermasculine by enduring orphanages, abuse, and New York City's streets (3-4). He argues that many people cannot believe he was a vegetarian or is a vegan because he is a hypermasculine-appearing man. Because he embodies the physical ideals of manliness, he provides credibility for a vegan lifestyle. Joseph validates his credentials as a real vegan that men can listen to through discrediting all the "sickly weak-as-fuck string bean" vegetarians (Joseph 4). Joseph distances himself from other vegetarians by saying they are hippies or that they only eat sprouts (4). Through this distancing, Joseph discredits others while making a claim that he understands real men. Joseph adopts a tone that he is the only vegan who understands why men do not want to become vegans. He does not blame men

for not wanting to become vegans, but he provides the important knowledge to sway them. He uses his masculinity to convince other men to follow his lifestyle.

Skinny Bastard's authors, Freedman and Barnouin, need to gain male reader's attention more than Joseph did because they are female. Their main purpose when explaining their credentials is to distance themselves from anything feminine. Readers may assume that because they are women, they may not know what it takes for men to be healthy or the expectations of masculinity that inhibit men from being vegan. Rather than convincing them that they do understand the difficulties, Freedman and Barnouin appealed to men's heterosexual and sexual needs to attempt to reach them. Freedman and Barnouin were already known for their first book, *Skinny Bitch*, which was sold to a female audience asking women to quit eating meat and animal byproducts in 2005. They also have produced other texts specific to women's dietary needs such as *Skinny Bitch in the Kitch* and *Skinny Bitch Bun in the Oven*. Between *Skinny Bitch* and *Skinny Bastard*, their biographies changed on the back sleeve. On *Skinny Bastard*'s back sleeve, they advertise Freedman's "epic ass" and the fact that the two authors are single (back cover). Their credentials do not focus on their expertise, but rather their sexual appeal to their potential male followers. Barnouin's biography advertises her former career as a model before her master's degree (back cover). Just the back cover alone relocates these women from intellectuals to sex objects. Their credentials are based on how they look and how they describe their bodies, not their education or knowledge of the topic.

The two female authors provide their credentials in other forms throughout the book. In their introductory chapter, they clarify that they are not trying to make men skinny. They know men do not want to be skinny, but healthy (Freedman and Barnouin

9). Immediately, Freedman and Barnouin discredit their own title. *Skinny Bastard* does not have the same connotation as being called a skinny bitch in the United States. Even though they have chosen this title, they admit men do not want or need to be skinny. Through undermining their own ideas about being skinny, they encourage men to be concerned about their health, not with their body image, which is traditionally seen as a women's issue.

Both books include pictures of the authors on the back cover. Joseph is standing without a shirt, flaunting his tattoos and muscles. Freedman and Barnouin stand together wearing fashionable clothes, make-up covered faces and are in an open posture. These pictures establish that all the authors are good-looking and thin—people the reader can rely on for advice about sex appeal.

The authors also need to validate veganism as a lifestyle. Men's gender construction does not permit men to engage in any lifestyle outside the norms of aggressive, unemotional behavior. Joseph contrasts the stereotypical image of vegans being emotional and peaceful with his inclusion of pictures of hypermasculine vegans. In *Meat is for Pussies*, there are ten pages of pictures that act as visual proof that vegans are not feminine (Joseph 140-150). As if Joseph's words are not convincing enough, he includes another way to make veganism credible.

The authors of *Skinny Bastard* convince male readers that veganism is for "tough ass mother fuckers" (Freedman and Barnouin 52). Freedman and Barnouin compile a list of famous men who are vegans. The list is approximately two pages long and most men on the list are considered real men such as Brendan Brazier, an Ironman triathlete, or Mic Danzig, an Ultimate Fighter Champion (106-107). Every man mentioned in the list of

real men who are vegans has his profession listed next to their name. Their professions fall in the category of masculine careers or hobbies such as fighters, wrestlers, or athletes, which further reinforces their comfortable fit with hegemonic masculinity.

The credentials for the magazines and their authors are not as big of an issue, as many of the magazines are sold to subscribers or regular buyers. It is also easier to sell veganism in a magazine that is published with other topics on which men may be more focused. The books, on the other hand, had to be bought with the primary goal of men's reduction of meat consumption. Therefore, the book authors needed to assert their credibility.

The four magazines do not promote individual authors, but advertise that experts write their articles. These experts are typically physicians, who provide medical information, or professional athletes who support nutritional health plans. The publishers do not advertise how many magazines have been sold or how many countries carry the magazine because they do not need to. They do not attempt to convince men to buy the magazine. The magazines are acceptable reading material for men because they sell sex, health, and fitness information. Books about veganism would incite humiliation unless sold with the credentials Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph have supplied.

The credentials that Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph display encourage men to see the authors as buddies rather than professionals. By advertising Freedman's backside rather than professional credentials, the authors offer sexual appeal to a heterosexual man instead of making men feel inferior about their own credentials. Joseph appeals to men in the same way. Offering street credibility, rather than professional distinction, Joseph becomes the male reader's friend. The male reader feels more comfortable with a friend's

advice than that of a professional. When men seek out assistance from a professional, they are acknowledging that they are unfamiliar with a certain topic, which makes them feel inferior in their masculinity. Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph appeal to readers by adopting a friendly tone of advice.

The credentials that the authors use for *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* are relevant to the target audience only. The books and the magazines have a primary audience of white, middle-class, and heterosexual men. The authors do not attempt to argue for veganism for every man. Joseph's book attempts to speak to men who are very much like him. Joseph, while growing up underprivileged, believes that a person can make himself into whoever he wants to be (8). He speaks to people who spend a large amount of their time in gyms working on their physical appearance. Most of the men he describes in the book are white, and there are no people of color in the pictures he has included. *Skinny Bastard* targets the same audience. They do not include the challenges faced by different cultures or varying socioeconomic classes when discussing veganism as an alternative lifestyle for men.

Masculine Language

Meat is for Pussies and *Skinny Bastard* use masculine language to argue that veganism can be masculine. Throughout these two texts, the language they use argues that men do not have to forfeit how they speak or act when they choose to become vegan. Because veganism is seen as feminine, the authors must present their argument in an aggressive tone. Beyond acting aggressively, men often speak in a violent manner due to hegemonic masculinity's limitations.

Unlike the magazines, the book authors have to exaggerate their masculinity. The language that the authors use maintains gender roles by encouraging men to continue to use aggressive and oppressive language. William C. Gay in “The Linguistics of Violence” argues that violent language can be indirectly used to harm another person (465). While language cannot physically hurt someone, it allows for systems of oppression to continue. The language in *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* perpetuates the fact that real men are aggressive even when discussing a topic previously associated with empathy towards animals. Freedman and Barnouin argue that vegans are “tough-ass sons of bitches” (145). The language they choose associates veganism with a masculinity that takes control, is destructive, and uses profanity.

The language used in *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* is more active than passive. Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph ask men to “fight the good fight” (Joseph 26). They ask men to take a stand and question their food choices. Joseph asks men to stop being lazy and do something with their lives (25). Joseph refused to use medical terminology, but asked readers in colloquial, friendly language to stop eating meat because it would directly affect their health. They energize men by calling them traditional masculine names such as warrior (Freedman and Barnouin 52, 145 and Joseph 169). Labeling male vegans as warriors encourages readers of these books to continue to be aggressive; they do not feel as if they are forfeiting their masculinity.

Joseph, Freedman and Barnouin use profanity to convey their message. Without their aggressive language, they may have been viewed as feminine, passive, and weak. These texts, although briefly, do acknowledge the violence against animals in factory farming but continue to speak in a masculine manner through turning people and animals

into objects. The authors of *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* write about cruelty against animals in a violent manner.

Previously, vegans had been known as pussies, wimps, and pansies (Joseph 14). Joseph, Freedman and Barnouin are creating the opposite effect by calling men who eat meat the same names: pussies, wimps, and pansies. Vegetarians and vegans choose to become so for a variety of reasons including animal rights. Hegemonic masculinity perpetuates the idea that men must speak in a certain way and, in this case, men must be spoken to in a certain way for the message to be received.

Freedman and Barnouin fall prey to using the language of male dominance. By using words traditionally used to demean women, they become complicit in male oppression of their own gender. This tool is used in traditional masculine language to separate women and men and to make women feel inferior. By calling meat-eating men feminine names, the authors imply two ideas: women are inferior, and vegan men can still be dominant over women and animals. Joseph also calls men feminine names to make them feel inferior. *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* emasculate meat-eating men. In the title alone, Joseph reinforces the idea that by calling men a feminine adjective, they will attempt to counteract that accusation. Calling men feminine names to belittle them is a traditional tool perpetrators of hegemonic masculinity use. Peggy Reeves Sanday writes in *Fraternity Gang Rape* that men use language to demean other men in order to encourage them to rebuild their self-esteem within a brotherhood (149). Through name-calling, the authors have control and power over readers. Joseph demeans them and questions their masculinity as a tool to convince them to choose another lifestyle (Sanday 162). *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* authors call men pussies

in a variety of ways. This tool is meant to emasculate and humiliate men in an attempt to convince them to choose veganism as a diet.

Many reviews criticize Freedman and Barnouin's outlandish language. According to *The New York Times* critic Motoko Rich, the two are just repackaging *Skinny Bitch* in an over-exaggerated masculine tone. While Rich offers this critique, she also acknowledges that using masculine and aggressive language is the only way to convince men that it is acceptable to engage in a vegan diet. Self-identified feminist blogger for *Bitch Magazine*, Malori Maloney, takes Rich's tough love commentary to another level by naming *Skinny Bastard* as a tool to body-shame men. Maloney argues that the book is full of "gendered insults or some sort of stereotypical reference to the way men and women supposedly are." The reviewers criticize the books for encouraging oppressive language and demeaning men just as much as traditional masculinity has demeaned women.

The language used appeals to male readers because that is presumably how the ordinary man speaks. The language in the magazines and the books are applicable to what R. W. Connell would refer to as the ideal man. This man, a heterosexual white upper-class man, can identify with a text that uses understandable language. The magazine offers medical advice from the perspective of a friend rather than a strange professional. As Arran Stibbe notes, men are more willing to receive health advice from a friend than a "know-it-all" doctor (36). In all four magazines, the professional-as-friend advice model is evident. Even though *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health Magazine*, and *Men's Fitness Magazine* are known for giving advice about women, sex, health, and fitness, men need to feel competent about all forms of knowledge. The magazines intentionally

use language intended to be relatable in the hope that men will connect to the content more readily.

John Joseph becomes a man's best friend through the language he uses as well. He claims to be a "bro" who can offer medical and health advice rather than an expert (Joseph 91, 125). While Joseph mentions studies throughout his book, he never gives exact details or cites them. While he is knowledgeable, he does not want to offend men by directly challenging their intelligence. Although at times he challenges men's knowledge, he does so in a manner that the male reader cannot easily suspect. By being blunt and speaking to men as a friend, he can inform them of medical information without seeming like a professional. Because the male reader has bonded with Joseph, the reader does not see his advice as challenging or threatening.

Skinny Bastard and *Meat is for Pussies* follow masculine norms seen in other texts. Jessamyn Neuhaus argues that in cookbooks, men were relegated to barbecuing and cooking meat (193). Neuhaus notes that cookbooks for men encourage men's relationship with meat through masculine language (198). Joseph, Freedman and Barnouin use the same masculine language to encourage men's refusal of meat. Other venues, including movies, texts, and television shows, that encourage men to consume meat through the use of aggressive masculine language.

One main concern about men's body image and veganism is the interaction of soy and estrogen. *Men's Fitness Magazine* uses Sirius XM Radio scripts to inform on-line subscribers about health information. In one episode, one subscriber writes in that he has recently given up meat, but he is worried about eating soy because of the rumor of "man boobs." Dr. Steve corrects his language, calling it gynecomastia, but acknowledges that,

to men, that means “ladylike boobies.” This example illustrates hegemonic language in multiple ways. First, it offers medical advice in a friendly manner that allows men to retain confidence about their own knowledge. He offers medical advice, but in a way that men can understand. The knowledge Dr. Steve provides supports the idea that men do not want to understand the medical field and would rather take advice from a friend. Second, Dr. Steve encourages men to remain separate from women and to see women as inferior to men. Men do not want to have their bodies compared to a weaker feminine body. The threat of soy’s body-changing estrogen can discourage men from engaging in any other food than the typical meal. Third, Dr. Steve’s name alone implies that he is on the same level of men reading *Men’s Fitness Magazine*. By not using his last name, he breaks down barriers between himself, the magazine, and subscribers. He is no longer the medical professional, and becomes a friend.

In an on-going section of *US Men’s Health Magazine* where men ask questions about health and dietary needs, few questions are asked about vegetarianism or veganism. A sole inquisitor asks *US Men’s Health Magazine* in January 2006 if he should go vegetarian for his girlfriend. Heidi Skolnik’s answer for the magazine was that he should not go completely vegan because of his need to get enough protein (58). According to *US Men’s Health Magazine*, meat is the only way to get essential amino acids. Skolnik answers the question as a friend, not as a professional. She does not provide research-informed facts about the benefits of soy, but does encourage him to do whatever he may want. By not discussing facts, Skolnik avoids making him feel intellectually inferior.

US Men’s Health Magazine discredits vegetarianism in “The truth about veggie burgers” posted in the Nutrition Bulletin section of the magazine. In the December 2007

issue, one of the authors claims a study discredits the benefits of veggie burgers. The study is not specifically listed but is credited to Germany. Without intimidating men with medical information, *US Men's Health Magazine* provides information as a peer. The article contains information men can use to make a decision about health, but does so in a manner that still allows men to make their own decision. *US Men's Health Magazine* argues that men “don't [have to] chuck the ground beef. A hamburger is as healthy as a veggie burger.”

Another attempt to disengage men with veganism is to make veganism feminine. While they do not have the same brutish attitude that *US Men's Health Magazine* may be considered to have, *GQ* does reinforce a masculinity that is completely opposed to femininity with no room for challenging gender norms. For example, in an article titled “The Man Code,” advice is offered to men on how to be manly (June 2008, 88). Most of the items on the list are opposite to what men would describe as feminine, such as “if your man bag is too small to hold cleats and a baseball glove, it is a purse, and you may not carry it” (June 2008, 88). These tips reinforce the idea that there is a specific way to be masculine, and if a person crosses that line, he is feminine.

US Men's Health Magazine produced a small article with a massive amount of real man attitude. An article, “Meatless moms lead to pink bedrooms,” argues that vegetarianism is not manly (December 2000, 66). It is so unmanly that vegetarian moms are having more daughters than sons. Not only does the author, Ted Spiker, use an untitled British study to reject vegetarianism, but he also stereotypes and ridicules vegans by telling men they should not date vegans and vegetarians because not only will these women give them girls, but they are also hairy and have “bushy underarm[s]” (66). This

five-sentence article not only discredits veganism and vegetarianism, but also promotes gender roles for both men and women just like the magazine itself does. Men should not enjoy vegetarianism nor can they be excited about producing a female child. In this article, women are seen as little more than child bearers.

While many articles in the magazines discourage veganism, some articles promote alternative lifestyles. One way to make veganism more appealing to men is to have men who have been designated as real men note their approval of a vegan lifestyle. Although *Men's Fitness Magazine* promotes men who choose to be vegan, it does so in a way that other men can accept. For example, *Men's Fitness Magazine*, in an article about men over the age of 60 who still deserve respect, argues that Clint Eastwood is still a man's man even though he's a vegan. He's still a real man and enjoys guns and has a "crap-inducing stare" (Over 60 and Badass). He is a man in every way from starring in macho roles in movies, such as *Dirty Harry* or *Gran Torino*, to reinforcing men's needs for guns and aggression.

Masculine language is the most prominent theme throughout the books and magazines. The hypermasculine rhetoric is evident through all texts and is easily observed through the rest of the themes. The messages of hegemonic masculinity were conveyed through the language choices the authors made.

Sexual Potency

For men, sexual appetite is as important, if not more so, as their health. Even though *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* directly admit to being health books, they connect their male readers' health with sexual potency. Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph

argue that men can become better sexual beings if they discontinue meat-eating and animal byproduct consumption. All magazines express the desire to help men understand relationships and sex and promote sexual activity.

Joseph admits that sex sells, and he uses it to sell veganism (118). While Joseph acknowledges other media tools use sex as a selling point, he also continues to use sex. In a stand-alone chapter, “Meat and your meat,” Joseph’s primary goal is to threaten meat-eating men’s sexual prowess. Throughout this section, Joseph connects veganism to being better sexually. Even though Joseph has a whole chapter on the impact of meat on sexual organs, he avoids the word penis. He calls men’s sexual organs “schlongs” or “main veins” (Joseph 118, 119). This example identifies Joseph as just one of the guys who can bond with men without using correct anatomical terms. Joseph argues that veganism can assist a man sexually. Joseph demands that men take charge of their sexual lives (122). He realizes the primary way to convince men to become vegan is to threaten their sexual potency.

Joseph uses phrases such as “meat and your meat” to heighten men’s interest in meat’s effect on sexual potency. This section highlights the importance of sexual activity to men. Joseph writes, “nothing takes the magic out of your stick quicker than a poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle” (120). Here, and throughout the chapter, Joseph argues that eating meat has a direct effect on men’s sexual abilities. Joseph uses specific people as examples. He argues saturated fats hurt all organs (119). Eating meat directly impacts erectile dysfunction and eating more vegetables improves sexual performance (119).

Sex is an integral part of masculinity in the United States, and is emphasized in these two texts. It is what makes men real men. Men encourage other men to have sex

and sex sells. As Joseph acknowledges, sex can encourage men to be in control of their diet. A fear of sexual impotency will convince men to change their diet. Connell argues that a threat to sexual potency is a better argument than health risks when convincing men to become healthier (51). This is evident because the texts maintain hegemonic masculinity and focus the discussion on sex, not health.

The push for veganism is coded in sexual innuendos. Rather than discussing health information in medical terms, the authors of *Skinny Bastard* disseminate information through sexual innuendos such as “size matters” (133). Such language reinforces the belief that men’s importance lies within their sexual organs. Connell argues that men use their sexual potency as a form of power (51). By encouraging men to be vegan through improved sexual functioning, the authors continue to perpetuate the importance of sex to men’s masculinity. *Skinny Bastard* argues more vegetables make healthier men, which means more testosterone for more sex (137). Freedman and Barnouin argue that eating meat may lead to losing an erection (137). *Skinny Bastard* encourages a vegan diet by advertising the direct benefits of giving up meat.

Not only are the books laden with sexual innuendos, but these sexual innuendos are coupled with the threat that men are not sexually potent if they eat meat. Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph argue that meat eaters’ sexual organs have failed due to meat. They promote the idea that sexual potency is directly connected to masculinity. Connell states that men’s fear of sexual impotency is due to their fear of being feminine (51). Veganism, according to *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies*, can make men more sexually effective by providing them with more energy.

Meat is for Pussies and *Skinny Bastard* work to deconstruct the idea that vegans are weak, pale, and sexually unattractive by offering images and ideas that men can be tough. *Men's Fitness Magazine* does the same with Persia White and the men interviewed. *Men's Fitness Magazine* incorporates interviews to sexualize veganism. Persia White, a woman who is interviewed about vegetarianism, is highly sexualized. Not only do they talk about her sexual preferences throughout her interview, but *Men's Fitness Magazine* website boasts a picture of White in a sexualized pose wearing black leather-like pants and a barely-there tank top. *Men's Fitness Magazine* connects her sexual appeal and her body to vegetarianism. *Men's Fitness Magazine* combines sex and health into one section. This combination implies that men's health directly affects their sex. Breaking this apart more, health includes food and what men consume can directly affect their sex life.

The books use sexual potency to encourage men to live a vegan lifestyle. The magazines also promote sexual virility through the health and food choices men make. Sexual potency plays a key part in why men choose a certain lifestyle because hegemonic masculinity reinforces the idea that a real man is sexually active.

Heterosexism

Sexual potency is enveloped in heterosexism in *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies*. Not only do men have to be sexually active, but they also need to be heterosexual. The target audience for both of the books is straight men rather than a diverse range of men. The vegan message is directed towards men who are interested in opposite sex relationships.

John Joseph ensures his readers that he is heterosexual throughout his text. In his first chapter, “Stop poisoning your body,” Joseph tells the reader that he dates women (20). He also encourages the readers by telling them that women enjoy a man who is fit and vegan. In his book, a gender divide that allows men to dominate over women reinforces heterosexuality. Joseph calls women throughout the text “chick” or “little lady” (70, 120). Joseph assumes women will be impressed by the new man that the reader will become. In *Meat is for Pussies*, Joseph states that he understands why men would not want to be vegans because the stereotypical vegan is a hippy and unmanly. Joseph gives little credit to men for the reason they choose to change their lifestyles. For men, diets or alternative lifestyles were only adopted in an attempt to impress a chick (70). He hopes the readers can pick up a “hot new girlfriend” (119). In other words, Joseph implies men become vegans because of their heterosexual lifestyle.

R.W. Connell argues that Adrienne Rich’s idea of compulsory heterosexuality applies to men too. Compulsory heterosexuality, according to Connell, is also enforced on men (104). Men absorb heterosexual images within these magazines and are taught to be sexually attractive to white females. When Persia White was interviewed in *Men’s Fitness Magazine*, she appealed to heterosexual men’s sexual appetites. Not only did she make veganism look sexy, but also the target audience was straight men. There were no gay men interviewed in any of the magazines, *Skinny Bastard* or *Meat is for Pussies*.

The authors of *Skinny Bastard* acknowledge that they are heterosexual and use it to their advantage to sell their books. On the back cover of their book, they admit that they are single. Throughout their texts, they promote the idea that men attempt to meet women through adopting this lifestyle. In the beginning of the book, Freedman and

Barnouin wish the men luck with the ladies (13). The authors immediately set the tone of the book by stating that this book will help heterosexual men find women because women will find them more attractive since they are healthier. Freedman and Barnouin use heterosexism with real man rhetoric stating that men will be more sexually appealing because they have lost weight and are now real, active, and healthy men (96). When the authors refer to real men, they only include heterosexual men. The only mention of gay men is when they say that that not only will women be flocking to vegan men, but gay men will too (231). Freedman and Barnouin reinforce the concept of hegemonic masculinity because the ideal man is heterosexual.

The magazines perpetuate the idea that the ideal man is heterosexual. An article in *US Men's Health Magazine* targets only heterosexual men. For heterosexual men, there are six women they need to date according to Sarah Miller. One of them is the “vegan yoga gal” who, because she’s a vegan and a yoga enthusiast, will take care of her body including her “tight rear” (February 2008, 102-103). While this is not promoting veganism for men, it does encourage some readers to explore this lifestyle by dating a woman who is vegan. The author makes a vegan lifestyle appear appealing because not only will a man get a woman with a good body, but she will also be a soulful lover (February 2008, 102-103). In one of the few articles about veganism in all of the magazines, heterosexuality is privileged over the vegan lifestyle itself.

All magazines and books examined in this study are deeply rooted in the fact that men are attempting to become healthier, but their attempts to do so are motivated by the goal of impressing women and exercising their heterosexuality. The books examined

encourage adopting a vegan diet through the idea that men need to be sexually active and heterosexual.

Health promotion vs. animal rights

A study performed by Gregory A. Guagnano et al. reported that there are four major reasons to becoming vegetarian: anti-animal violence advocacy, environmental rights, world hunger, and personal health (538). *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* have personal health as the main theme. The majority of masculinities discourage empathy and compassion. Hegemonic masculinity encourages aggression and is self-interested. Veganism can be difficult for men because it demands that they cross into an unfamiliar space outside of their gender norms. *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies* reinforce the concept that men do not need to be compassionate toward animals, but can be vegan for solely their own health reasons. Both books emphasize losing weight and reducing fat rather than saving animals and the environment. Freedman, Barnouin and Joseph argue that veganism, for men, means becoming healthy.

Skinny Bastard takes it to another level by arguing that even though the book is titled *Skinny Bastard*, the authors know men do not want to be skinny (9). Thinness has primarily been associated with femininity. According to Laura Fraser, thinness became fashionable for women at the end of the 19th century, but men's bodies never came into question (13). The thin ideal for women became a trait desirable by men (Fraser 14). Encouraging thinness was not the book's intention. The topic of men has recently entered the discussion of healthy eating and body image. According to D. Blake Woodside, men account for five to ten percent of eating disorder cases (53). Men want to be healthy,

strong, and sturdy rather than skinny. R.W. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is deeply intertwined with men's fit body (45).

The concern for animals is a peripheral issue in these two texts. *Meat is for Pussies* author John Joseph discusses animals as though they are objects. His only goal is for men to become vegans for their own self-interested reasons. Joseph reports that by eating meat, men are being killed by meat industries. Joseph's major concern with meat-eaters is that what they consume affects them. His concern is not that factory farming slaughters and exploits animals, but that the government and businesses are killing men (83). Joseph argues that there is an attack on men. Stibbe notes in his research that men's primary concern when discussing health issues is not actually their health (49). By writing about health concerns in this aggressive manner, Joseph curtails any suspicions that men may actually care about their health. Men's health magazines' advice is usually deeply rooted in hegemonic masculinity, reinforcing the idea that men do not need to worry about their health, but instead need to worry about their manliness. Men are more concerned with how they appear or how they act.

Freedman and Barnouin primarily focus on men's health, but also discuss animal rights. They do not refer to animals as meat like Joseph does. Because the two authors are women, they can embrace more compassionate arguments without breaking gender expectations. In a chapter titled "You are what you eat," the authors argue that animals suffering in cages at factory farms cannot be good for men's health (82). Freedman and Barnouin force the male readers to connect to animals. The authors bring empathy into the book, even though it is only for one chapter. The primary goal of the book is not to end animal suffering, but to encourage men to become healthier.

Both books advocate for healthier men by appealing to the vulnerable issue of body image. Freedman and Barnouin inform men that they can be leaner and have better muscle size and tone if they convert to veganism (103). There is no strong argument for animal rights or environmental justice intertwined within the argument for health. When discussing health, they speak of it in terms of only individual health, and do not include the health of the earth, other people, or animals.

Greg Gutfield, a television personality and magazine editor, writes about his trials and tribulations during his four-week journey into vegetarianism in *US Men's Health Magazine* (June 1995, 116). Gutfield succeeded at the challenge and argued that vegetarianism had made him a better athlete, contributed to weight loss, and seemed to increase happiness. Even though he promoted vegetarianism, he knew he was not going to be able to continue it in the long-term because it was too hard to maintain. He gave up his vegetarian diet but now eats less meat. Although he lists the benefits of vegetarianism, he also argues that vegetarianism was difficult for him to maintain while he traveled and due to the cost.

Men's Fitness Magazine, among many others, in an online forum, asks if vegetarian food is really better for people. *Men's Fitness Magazine* employees bought vegetarian and vegan brands and then consulted a medical professional for nutritional advice. What they found was both the tasters and the doctor said vegetarian and vegan food was not better than meat. The tasters argued that the vegan food sampled was tasteless, mushy and nothing like real meat while the doctor argued that there were better ways of getting nutrients and protein than suffering through tasteless foods with a high sodium content. This contradicts *Meat is for Pussies* and *Skinny Bastards'* appeals to

men. John Joseph, Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin believe that vegan food is fantastic, but the posters in the online forum disagree. *Men's Fitness Magazine* argues that vegans and vegetarians have it wrong when it comes to the reason why men are vegans. It is not worth forfeiting animal flesh to enjoy a “freakish combination of Fruit Roll-Up and Play-Doh” (faux bacon) that does nothing for a man (Meatless Mondays). In this example, the magazine discredits veganism because it is not healthy or valuable to men.

US Men's Health Magazine publishes readers' questions about diets and health restrictions. In one case, the writer asks if he will be able to build muscle on a vegetarian diet (June 2008, 36-40). The magazine responded with an absolute yes. The magazine tells the readers that a man can achieve an ideal body; he just has to be healthy. They support their story by identifying basketball players and a triathlete who are vegetarians. The reader is validated because they are able to relate to these real men who are vegetarian.

In “A lazy way to lose cholesterol,” Brian Good, a writer for *US Men's Health Magazine*, tells men that they do not need to be vegan to enjoy vegetarian meals once in a while (April 2003, 44). Promoting vegetarian eating is done strictly through an appeal to health reasons. Men who consume vegetarian meals a few times a week will be healthier. The Canadian study found that men who ate more vegetarian meals had thirty percent lower cholesterol levels than when they consumed only meat-heavy meals (April 2003, 44).

The interviews on mensfitnessmagazine.com argue that men can still be tough, strong, and healthy while being a vegan. One interviewee, Milo Ventimiglia, who is an actor on *Heroes*, promoted vegetarianism as a way to gain muscle mass without gaining

weight. While Ventimiglia advocates for a holistic approach to vegetarianism, his primary motivation stemmed from concerns about body image. *Men's Fitness Magazine* tells Ventimiglia's story about his journey to a fitter body.

Mic Danzig, a UFC fighter who has been vegan since 2004, was interviewed in *Men's Fitness Magazine* about his vegan lifestyle. The author interviews Danzig in a series of "Fittest Guys in America." Danzig explains that veganism was the best choice for him and he can still be a UFC fighter and win. He argues that tofu, vegetables, and grains help him become a better fighter because of his ability to reduce his weight. In this article, *Men's Fitness Magazine* is enamored with Danzig's ability to professionally fight and be a vegan. The author connects Danzig's veganism with animal abuse and factory farming. *Esquire* follows suit and interviews Bob Barker, an avid animal rights activist and a vegetarian. He notes that real men can be vegetarians too (June 2008). Having influential male celebrities may help promote veganism and encourage men to contemplate a vegan lifestyle while maintaining hegemonic masculinity. The magazines promote veganism's comfortable fit with hegemonic masculinity by only interviewing well-established masculine men.

While *Esquire* did promote vegetarianism with Bob Barker, other parts of the magazine were not as vegan-friendly. The Eat Like a Man blog on *Esquire's* website encourages men to stay within their gender norms. The blog has articles such as "how to cook steak in a fireplace" and encourages men to consume meat on a daily basis. This specific article, on how to cook steak, encourages men to consume meat regardless of their health. When the words vegan and veganism were searched for in the blog, there were no results in regards to men's health choices.

The books and magazines promote veganism in terms of what it can do for men. For example, it is clear through these texts that men's interest in veganism lies in the need for them to be healthy, not in the interest of preserving the environment or being involved in animal rights. By being primarily concerned with their health, these authors assure men they can pursue a vegan lifestyle without disrupting gender norms.

Conclusion

The two primary texts, *Skinny Bastard* and *Meat is for Pussies*, offer a guide for men to choose different diets while maintaining their masculinity. The books encourage a new way of living, but do so in a way that is safe for men and continue to encourage hegemonic masculinity. In the case of the magazines, the overall lack of vegan and vegetarian information means that the vegan movement has much further to go. Since veganism has been perceived as primarily a white female movement, the media has created a gap in its lack of promotion appealing to men. The two vegan explicit books argue for healthier men, but the difficulty lies in selling these books to men. The magazines are able to sell the concept of veganism more easily since they promote traditional masculinity too. Regardless, both groups of content promote hegemonic masculinity, not a new form of masculinity.

The authors of the two books provide credentials to appeal to their consumers by promoting their masculinity or understand what real men need. All of the texts consulted use traditionally masculine language. The books and the magazines associate men with sexual competency and advocate for a meat-free diet that will make men more sexually potent. Through the promotion of sexual ability, heterosexism appears in both of the

books through their emphasis on describing only heterosexual sexual activity. Finally, veganism is valued through the larger lens of personal health and self-interest.

The magazines represent veganism in two very distinct ways. The first way is by using interviews to advocate for veganism. These interviews usually consist of a vegan athlete or other real men who promotes a lifestyle without animal byproducts. These men, and the occasional woman, are active, aggressive, and sexy. These examples perpetuate the idea that authors need to make their argument sexually appealing. The second way is when men question their own health and veganism. In this situation, men insinuate that veganism is not possible for men unless they are feminine or weak.

These texts do not encourage alternative masculinities, but rather reinforce traditional masculine rhetoric. Through the language used and the unchanging ideologies, hegemonic masculinity thrives even in subcultures such as veganism. The books, as primary texts, encourage men to maintain a masculinity that reinforces aggression and discourages empathy. The majority of the magazines, as mainstream texts, choose to ignore varieties of masculinities and in doing so, strengthen ideologies that men are not to challenge gender norms. Overall, the texts reproduce one main form of masculinity: aggressive, violent, uncaring, and one that is only concerned with one's own livelihood.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Previous research on men's relationship with meat has focused primarily on the importance of meat for men. Research and theory in critical food studies and masculinity studies assert that men use meat as a source of power and domination. Carol J. Adams' (2010) groundbreaking work, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, interrogates the connection between masculinity and meat, but does not have an analysis of men who choose not to consume meat. Theorists supporting Adams' work, such as Sherrie Inness (2006) and Carole Counihan (1999), also do not analyze subcultures of masculinity when researching men's interactions with meat and other foods.

The vegan texts I examined reinforce hegemonic masculinity. The other mainstream texts analyzed have reinforced hegemonic masculinity by producing articles, blogs, and stories that encourage men to eat meat and discourage veganism because it is not masculine. *Skinny Bastard* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin and *Meat is for Pussies* by John Joseph have not challenged masculinity, but support the idea that men need to be aggressive, heterosexual, hypersexual, and self-interested rather than compassionate and concerned about animal rights, the environment, and other humans.

My analysis of *Meat is for Pussies* and *Skinny Bastard* indicates that within vegan marketing, traditional markers of masculinity are still maintained. Hegemonic masculinity is a challenge for vegan men to overcome. Currently, mainstream magazines still encourage men to consume meat, and vegan explicit texts ask men to forfeit meat, but reinforce hegemonic masculinity.

While the fields of masculinity studies and critical food studies are fairly new, feminist research has theorized and explored men's interaction with meat. New studies,

such as this research, can focus on subcultures of masculinity and their interactions with food norms. My research focuses specifically on media in the United States, but vegan masculinity can be explored in other ways outside of the United States. This would allow for the research to interrogate other masculinities. The analyzed texts only focused on white, heterosexual men in the United States. Future research can explore veganism within marginalized communities, such as veganism in black men's lives. Veganism can be explored with any marginalized community or subculture as can be seen in Breeze Harper's *Sistah Vegan*, which explores the concept of veganism throughout black women's lives. Also, masculinity and other alternative food norms need to be explored.

This research could be extended through interviews with vegan men. Interviews, surveys, and questionnaires of vegan men may offer different insights than the books do. The books and magazines act as cultural artifacts, while interviews with vegan men could vary. This would also allow for marginalized communities to voice their relationships with a vegan lifestyle.

The analysis here can act as an avenue to a variety of research opportunities. The research can be expanded to include other masculinities such as those ignored in the texts: gay masculinity and men of color masculinities. It is clear that these populations need to be examined because of the immense lack of research on these various forms of masculinity. This research can also be applied to a global level incorporating various cultures and why men choose to become vegans. Because this study was focused on the United States, it is specific to North American men. Other cultures have followed vegan diets for other reasons than those described in this research. Another avenue this research could follow is one that Breeze Harper mentions. While many people see veganism as a

white issue, many people of color live a vegan lifestyle. The research conducted could include a discussion of poverty-induced veganism and its relation to people who choose veganism for financial reasons. Personally, I would like to continue this research and incorporate men's voices. The inclusion of men's voices would present a different insight by acting as a comparative measure to see if the way vegan marketing is successfully selling veganism through hegemonic masculinity.

Vegetarians are becoming mainstream in the United States. People are engaged with critical food practices involving veganism and are encouraging others to take a stand and engage with their food choices. These two books, *Skinny Bastard* by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin and *Meat is for Pussies* by John Joseph, act as cultural artifacts for the United States and its current food movement. I contribute new knowledge to masculinity and food discourses by examining the connecting between masculinity and male vegans. Men, while taking on different choices, are still limited by hegemonic masculinity.

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