

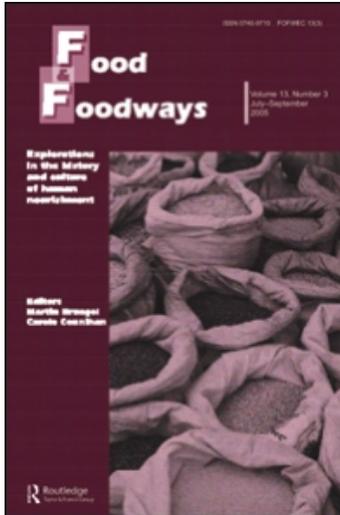
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MEN, MEAT, AND MARRIAGE: MODELS OF MASCULINITY

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Gender permeates all aspects of life, including foodlife, and can be examined using singular and multiple models of genderedness. Singular models of masculinity gender-type foods as masculine and feminine, suggesting that men and women “do gender” by consuming gender appropriate foods. Meat, especially red meat, is an archetypical masculine food. Men often emphasize meat, and women often minimize meat, in displaying gender as individuals. Dealing with gender in joint marital food choices requires negotiations about sharing masculine and feminine foods as partner foods in joint meals. Contemporary Western “proper meals” center around meat, creating masculine marital meals that reproduce wider patterns of male dominance. Meat is often a contested food in marriage, with food negotiations conflicting about whether, what types, when, and how much meat is consumed. Multiple models of masculinities suggest that marital meat consumption does not necessarily follow formulaic, hegemonic gender patterns. These plural masculinities offer various adjectival gender scripts that can be selectively invoked in negotiating meals shared between partners. Multiple cultural scripts for strong men, healthy men, wealthy men, sensitive men, and other conceptions of masculinities are employed in marital negotiations about “doing meat.” “Doing marriage” involves negotiating and managing masculinities and femininities in food choices that reflect, reproduce, and oppose a variety of gendered societal food scripts. Both singular and multiple models of masculinity offer insights about meat and marriage.

All aspects of life can be interpreted as being gendered. This analysis will consider how foodlife is gendered, focusing on how men deal with meat in marriage. Meat offers one lens on gender and food choices, and marriage is an example of one site for enacting gender and food. Men, meat, and marriage will be analyzed using two contrasting perspectives on gender: singular masculinity, and multiple masculinities.

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Singular masculinity analyses are essentialist perspectives that assume the dominance of one set of male norms in a particular society and historical period that drive and structure men's actions, including food choices. A singular normative conception of masculinity is the predominant way of thinking about gender in most psychological and social analyses of sex roles and gender identities. Singular masculinity is assumed both in positivist scales for gender analysis (e.g., Lenney 1991) and in constructionist approaches to "doing gender" (e.g., West and Zimmerman 1987). A singularity assumption also underlies unidimensional continuum thinking, where masculine and feminine are seen as polar opposites in a dichotomy (e.g., Lenney 1991) and combinatorial gender conceptualizations that cross-classify masculine and feminine to permit each to vary independently and androgyny to occur (e.g., Bem 1974).

Multiple masculinities analyses are relativist perspectives that assume plural conceptions of maleness (and femaleness) and operate in a society and time period, with many ways of being gendered available that offer a diversity of cultural scripts for particular actions (e.g., Connell 1995, 2000). Multiple masculinities (and femininities) are assumed to be developed, learned, considered, selected, and enacted as men (and women) engage in the continuous construction of gender in everyday life, including their food choices. Multiple masculinity assumptions are largely rooted in constructionist thinking, particularly more recent versions that draw upon cultural studies and post-modernism, although positivist perspectives can also consider the multiplicity of masculinities (e.g., Hern 1988; Kimmel 2001).

The next section employs a singular masculinity perspective to examine men, meat, and marriage. Following that, a multiple masculinities perspective is used to offer different insights about the topic. Finally, conclusions about singular models of masculinity and multiple models of masculinities are considered.

Singular Masculinity

Foods are objects that are inscribed with many meanings, representing ethnicity, nationality, region, class, age, sexuality, culture, and (perhaps most importantly) gender. Most research suggests that the gendering of foods is largely culturally constructed rather

than biologically based (Zellner et al. 1999). Foods are gendered differently in various cultures and historical periods (Bentley 1998; Bove et al. 2003; Counihan 1999; Counihan and Kaplan 1998; Gregory 1999; Jansen 1997; Jensen and Holm 1999). In the U.S. and many other Western post-industrial societies, men's foods are considered masculine and typically include beef (especially steak), hamburgers, potatoes, and beer, while women's foods are considered feminine and often include salads, pasta, yogurt, fruit, and chocolate (Bender 1976; Bourdieu 1984; Bove et al. 2003; Dickins and Chappell 1977; Jensen and Holme 1999; Logue and Smith 1986; Lupton 1996a, 1996b). Particular words and places are labelled as masculine or feminine, including names and sources of foods (Nilsen 1995), providing constant reminders of the genderedness of comestibles.

By attributing gender to particular foods, eating masculine or feminine foods becomes semiotic. Food represents gendered signs (e.g., a bachelor's refrigerator stocked with beef and beer (Hollows 2002)), signals (e.g., a single woman's rejection of eating steak on a date (Chaiken and Pliner 1987)), or symbols (e.g., a working man grilling beef on a Labor Day holiday (Julier 2002)) that reflect the male or female identity of the eater of that food.

While specific foods are uniquely gendered in particular times and places, many (if not most) foods are defined by gender in most (if not all) societies and eras (e.g., Counihan and Kaplan 1998). To the extent that people are what they eat, they establish their identity as man or woman on the basis of eating masculine or feminine foods. An archetype of gendering food is the relationship between maleness and meat.

Men and Meat

In contemporary Western societies, a particularly gendered connection exists between men and meat—red meat especially—which has been examined from many perspectives (e.g., Adams 1990, 2003; Beardsworth and Keil 1992, 1997; Bourdieu 1984; Fiddes 1991; Lea and Worsley 2001; Lockie and Collie 1999; Lupton 1996a; Smil 2002; Twigg 1983). Animal flesh is a consummate male food, and a man eating meat is an exemplar of maleness. Men sometimes fetishize meat, claiming that a meal is not a “real” meal without meat. Men often hypermasculinize meat

in male rituals. For example, men dominate meat cooking competitions, such as barbecue contests, and are the main contestants engaging in eating competitions, which often focus on meats (Berg 2003). Food riots (typically led by men) often focus on meat as a symbol of status and power (Orlove 1997).

Meat is symbolically grounded in images of men engaging in the particularly masculine activity of hunting (e.g., Loo 2001). Men demonstrate their power by dominating other species in nature, acting as carnivores who engage in aggressive acts to bring home food as providers for their families (Fiddes 1991; Lockie and Collie 1999). Thus, to eat in a masculine way is to eat meat, accomplishing maleness by the relict behavior of eating animals that were (or at least could be) hunted. Meat symbolizes the strength and virility of the conquering of beasts by men (Lupton 1996a; Roos et al. 1991; Willard 2002). Western men are often characterized by their suppression of emotions (Connell 2000), which is a useful attribute for the hunting, killing, butchering, and eating of animals.

Meat is central to the contemporary Western diet (Pillsbury 1998). Meat eating is embedded within a food system geared to masculine food production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption (Sobal et al. 1998). The masculine food of meat is promoted by globalization of the meat industry, standardizing the world steer, and making meat more affordable to the masses, in an extension of the earlier colonial development of social structures for producing masculine meat products for consumption (Gouveia and Juska 2002; Smil 2002).

Western men are socialized into adopting beliefs and behaviors about masculinity by the active and passive efforts of other men and women (Neuhaus 1999, 2003), with fathers acting as examples of meat-eating men and mothers reinforcing those gendered values. Exemplar role models of particularly machismo men eat male foods. Many athletes, for example, traditionally emphasize "real food," like meat, rather than "sissy" or "wimpy" foods, like grains, fruits, or vegetables (Bentley 2004). Meat-centered diets are seen as masculine and virile accomplishments that should be minimally diluted by what some men term the "rabbit foods" or "forage" of vegetables (Bentley 2004; Lockie and Collie 1999; Paisley et al. 2001; Roos et al. 2001). Additionally, meat may be further masculinized by eating it "rare," with minimal cooking, or "straight," with few sauces, to avoid civilizing and feminizing such male fare.

Meat Eating as Masculine

Men maximize and women minimize meat as they perform and advertise their gender in everyday life (Goffman 1979). Adult men who are not partnered often engage in food choices without obligation to consider girlfriends or wives in their eating decisions (Bove et al. 2003; Julier 2002). Non-partnered men include those who have never been married, as well as those who revert to singlehood by divorce, separation, or widowhood (Watson 2000). While these relationship categories differ, each represents the freedom of being unfettered by the need to negotiate food choices with a partner, as well as a potential for attracting new romantic or marital partners.

Independence is a hallmark characterization of contemporary Western masculinity (Helgeson 1994), and manly eating often represents a refusal to surrender food choices to authorities (including governmental, medical, and spousal). One strategy for men to “do gender” (West and Fenstermacher 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987) is to eat gendered foods in gendered ways. Accomplishing masculinity through food involves acts demonstrating and celebrating autonomy in the face of other demands, with men eating what they want, not what they should (Paisley et al. 2001).

“Doing masculinity” means eating like a man—consuming manly foods at manly meals in a manly way. For example, a Western icon of manly eating is the image of the cowboy or woodsman who hunts or fishes for his own game, minimally cooks it over an open fire, and eats the meat with few accompaniments in the outdoors in the company of other like-minded men (Wilkes, this edition). These images of masculinity are widely circulated in popular discourses (Lockie and Collie 1999; Symons 1984; Willard 2002) and promoted by those who have vested interests in encouraging meat consumption, such as beef producers and some restaurateurs. At the same time, research about cowboy and frontier life suggests these conceptions are more of a reconstructed mythology than a historical reality (e.g., Conlin 1986).

In contrast to the masculinity of eating meat, contemporary Western women often counter-masculinize or de-masculinize themselves as they minimize or eschew meat consumption (Lupton 1996a) or eat less masculine forms of animal flesh, such as seafood or chicken (Dixon 2002). While masculinity is displayed by what

men do eat (particularly eating meat), femininity is represented by what women do not eat (Bourdieu 1984; Fagerli and Wandel 1999). Feminine food consumption is associated with “eating lightly” and “dieting” (Basow and Kobrynowicz 1993; Bock and Kanarek 1995; Chaiken and Pliner 1987; Mooney and Lorenz 1997). Meat is considered “too heavy” or “too strong” for women (Roos et al. 2001), and taboos against eating meat are more common for women (Simoons 1994), especially during hyperfeminine times, such as menstruation or pregnancy (Tambiah 1969). Recent high protein weight loss techniques have permitted a masculinization of dieting (Bentley 2004) and a feminization of meat eating that otherwise is a feminine ritual of food rejection.

Masculine Management of Not Eating Meat

Not eating meat is considered feminine, offering a culinary counterpoint between genders. When men do not eat in a manly way, they often feel pressure to present gender “accounts” (Orbuch 1997; Scott and Lyman 1963), both to justify their failure to enact appropriately gendered eating and to resist being de-masculinized. Thus, men may make excuses for not eating meat because of their food source (for example, “My wife packed sandwiches with no meat”), their food choices (for example, “I’m avoiding salami because it gives me gas”), or their unmanly manners (for example, “I have a meeting after lunch and can’t eat barbecue because it will stain my shirt”). Accounts help to rescue a man’s masculine identity from a precarious or devalued state by placing the blame for unmasculine actions on another person or the situation. Such use of accounts employs the distinction between responsibility and control over food choices (Charles and Kerr 1986; McIntosh and Zey 1989), permitting men to prevent or recover from challenges to the masculinity of their eating.

Vegetarianism, the ultimate representation of not eating meat, provides an important negative case in support of the masculinity of meat consumption (Beardsworth and Keil 1997). Vegetarians do not eat various animal products and tend to be women (Kubberod et al. 2002; Larsson et al. 2002; Santos and Booth 1996), with only a minority (about 30%) being men in contemporary Western societies (Maurer 2002). Further consideration of age and marital status showed that young single women are particularly

likely to be vegetarian or vegan (consuming no animal foods), and older married men are often meat-eaters (Davey et al. 2002).

Vegetarianism provides an identity that transgresses masculinity in Western societies, with the wholesale rejection of the male icon of meat-eater associated with women's, wimpy, or even gay identities. Vegetarianism is sometimes the locus for gender struggles, with fathers more concerned than mothers about their children adopting vegetarian diets (Jabs et al. 2000). With some exceptions, most vegetarian men are marginalized, and therefore, have to make extra efforts to manage gender in relationship with their vegetarian identities (Beardsworth and Keil 1992; Maurer 1995).

Marriage and Partner Foods

Becoming married challenges the invisibility of masculinity to men (Campbell and Bell 2000). Entering marriage embeds partners in a different gender structure from the one they experienced when they were unmarried. Married men find that dealing with gender is more continuous and complex than managing masculinity in an unmarried state. The presence of children adds even more complexity to dealing with gender in marriage.

Unattached men do not have to negotiate with partners in the same way as married men (Julier 2002). For example, bachelors have fewer refrigerator regulations and kitchen politics than husbands (Hollows 2002). Watson (2000) suggests that youth is a time of masculinity-affirming behavior, and marriage marks a transition when men settle down and cede control to spouses. Some men who leave marriage see new opportunities for expressing masculinity re-emerging. While the focus here is on heterosexual marriages, many of the same patterns may also apply to homosexual unions. Carrington (1999) observed masculine and feminine patterns of food negotiations occurring in lesbian and gay male couples.

Marital food choices are potentially problematic, because they require negotiations about planning, procuring, paying for, preparing, and sharing masculine and feminine foods in common meals (Kemmer et al. 1998; Marshall and Anderson 2002; Pollock 1998). Contemporary Western married couples tend to share almost two-thirds of meals together (Bove et al. 2003), typically in commensal weekday breakfasts and dinners, and most weekend meals, rather than engaging in individual eating (Sobal et al. 2002;

Sobal and Nelson 2003). In post-industrial Western societies, married men and women eat red meat more often than their unmarried counterparts (Fraser et al. 2000; Raimal 2002). Spouses tend to correspond in the types of foods they consume (Hur et al. 1998; Kolonel and Lee 1981), but their consumptive eating relationships are not identical, because men tend to eat larger volumes of particular foods (especially meats).

Masculinity, Meat, and Marital Meals

Connell (2000:29) describes the family as a “gender regime” that reproduces and reflects the larger “gender order” of society. “Proper meals” in many Western societies are married peoples’ meals that typically center around meat in a cooked collective dinner (Charles and Kerr 1988; Douglas 1972; Douglas and Nicod 1974; Murcott 1982, 1983, 1997), although this may be eroding in younger couples (Marshall and Anderson 2002). Thus, family meals are culturally defined as masculine meals (Charles and Kerr 1988) that both reflect and reproduce wider patterns of male dominance and female subordination. This occurs irrespective of whether particular marital food choices are “consensual” or “coercive” (Connell 2000:25). A “patriarchal dividend” (Connell 2000:25) occurs for men in the form of establishing male foods as the core of family meals.

Meat is not just central to contemporary Western meals, it is privileged and celebrated as the essence of a meal. Meat dominates meals—when asked what they had for dinner, people commonly name the main meat dish rather than the subordinate side dishes (Gvion Rosenberg 1990). Marriage in the U.S. and many other societies has traditionally been a patriarchal institution, with men controlling many family decisions—including inclusion of meat in meals (e.g., McIntosh and Zey 1989). A considerable literature in psychology, sociology, and anthropology has shown that men’s food preferences dominate family food choices where men eat “first, best, and most” (Counihan and Kaplan 1998:2) and meals typically favor meat over other foods (Brown and Miller 2002; Charles and Kerr 1988).

Meat is often a contested food between marital partners (Bove et al. 2003). Marital food negotiations often conflict about whether, what types, when, and how much meat is consumed. Conflict about

meat may occur for many reasons, including class (e.g., cost), ethnicity (e.g., tradition), ethics (e.g., animal rights), health (e.g., fat content), and also gender (e.g., masculinity and femininity of foods). Many men desire and often demand meat in every meal. Western cultural models for masculinity suggest aggression is an acceptable way to express emotion (Segal 1990; Umberson et al. 2003), and domestic abuse sometimes occurs when wives do not prepare meat for their husbands (Ellis 1983).

In marital relationships, both partners are typically either meat-eaters or vegetarian. However, sometimes men eat meat, while their wives do not. Frequently, this involves meals where meat is eaten by the man, while the woman refrains from consuming meat (Brown and Miller 2000). Sometimes the family engages in vegetarian cooking, with men eating meat when they dine away from home, or when they prepare it for themselves after going out alone on “meat runs” to the supermarket. Similarly, what women eat in the absence of men is often meatless, and some women seek out non-meat foods not favored by their spouses.

Family food choices often become masculine food choices, with the structure of proper meals being “meat and potatoes,” “meat and two vegetables,” or “meat and two sides” dominating family food patterns in contemporary Western food cultures (Brown and Miller 2002; Charles and Kerr 1988; Douglas 1972; Douglas and Nicod 1974; Marshall and Anderson 2002; Murcott 1982). This symbolic meat-centered meal formula of Western food culture is even replicated in vegetarian meals, with a meat substitute as a core meal component (Gvion Rosenberg 1990).

The family meal is a men’s meal in contemporary Western patriarchal families. Fagerli and Wandel (1999:185) observe “. . . it is the men’s wishes that steer the meat-eating pattern in composite households.” DeVault (1991) and Kerr and Charles (1986) describe how women focus more on the sociability involved in feeding rather than men’s emphasis on the necessity of eating particular foods (particularly meat).

More egalitarian spousal relationships in Western societies may combine men’s and women’s foods into a merged category that has been termed “partner foods” (Worsley 1988). The marital pressures for husbands and wives to eat the same foods together creates a food category that encompasses married “men’s” foods and married “women’s” foods—blending gender-typed foods

together. Thus, foods that are for couples/partners/spouses are not fully masculine (being more formal and diverse than traditional men's foods) and not fully feminine (being richer and more standardized than typified women's foods). Partner foods reflect a special species of foods that constitute the ideal or proper meals of families (Worsley 1988). Partner foods include specially prepared foods, such as roasts or fresh baked breads, and partner meals remain centered around meat.

Marital relationships have a gendered division of labor (Connell 2000), with men engaging in less foodwork than women. About three times as many women as men plan meals, shop for food, and cook ingredients into meals (Harnack et al. 1998). However, harking back to the image of man as hunter, masculine roles often lead men to the identity of provider in accomplishing foodwork (as opposed to feminine roles for females in the identities of feeding work (DeVault 1991)). Men's traditional economic position of "breadwinner" in the external environment has often led them to disengage from household foodwork (e.g., Coltrane 1996, 1998, 2000). For example, when one husband was asked about his contribution to meals, he simply said "I work three jobs." (Devine et al. 2003:621). Good provision is often seen as providing adequate meat, as expressed in the American folk saying "bringing home the bacon" to represent paychecks to support the family. Even though most men do not shop or cook much themselves and rely on women to purchase and prepare their food (including meat), many meals remain masculine meals.

When men do cook, it is often in the form of a hypermasculine display of meat preparation. Masculine cooking is often public, outdoors, and involves fire (Jochnowitz 2003). Male rituals of hospitality frequently focus on barbecuing or grilling meat outside in settings beyond the kitchen (Julier 2002).

Singular Masculinity Summary

Thinking about masculinity as a singular construct provides many insights about men, meat, and marriage. A singular model of masculinity suggests that gender-typing defines meat as an exemplar masculine food, grounded in traditions of hunting, which makes vegetarianism problematic for men. Unpartnered men must make their own choices about food selection, and they may engage in

hypermasculine meat-eating to display their independence or to appeal to potential partners. By contrast, marriage is an institution of shared eating. Entering marriage complicates food choices for men, although family meals remain centered around meat as an important partner food. The next section will consider how multiple models of masculinities offer a different perspective on men, meat, and marriage.

Multiple Masculinities

Singular analyses of masculinity focus on the gender project that supports hegemony of males in a simple and static way, where men seek to follow formulaic gendered eating patterns in and out of marriage (Connell 2000). Alternative readings of gender, however, theorize greater diversity and variability in enactments of maleness in multiple masculinities (e.g., Connell 1995, 2000; Brod and Kaufman 1994; Hearn 1998). Such non-essentialist and non-monolithic models of multiple masculinities challenge, problematize, and hybridize normative and universalistic perspectives of singular sex role and gender identity analysis (e.g., Adams and Savran 2002; Brod 1987; Connell 1995, 2000; Kimmel 1987). In particular, they suggest that multiple models of masculinities co-exist in contemporary, complex, and segmented societies (Connell 2000; Hearn and Morgan 1990), permitting plural gender scripts to be selectively considered, invoked, and enacted. Plural masculinities represent definitions of manhood constructed “over time (history), across cultures (anthropology), over the course of a man’s life (developmental psychology), and within any one culture among different social groups (sociology)” (Kimmel 2001:22), although there is considerable inconsistency and ambiguity in conceptualizing masculinities (Clatterbaugh 1998).

Multiple Scripts for Masculinities

Scripts are models for action. Diverse cultural scripts for multiple masculinities are available in contemporary Western cultures (Kimmel and Aronson 2004) and can be applied by men in managing meat consumption in marriage. These various scripts circulate as discourses that can be invoked (and transgressed) in making food choices in the process of negotiating the construction of

meals. These multiple gender scripts represent what are often contradictory templates for masculinities. Some scripts are dominant and hegemonic (like those described in singular perspectives on masculinity), while others are secondary scripts that provide additional ideas and justifications for male behavior (Connell 2000). Significantly, some scripts provide more access to power than others. The interaction of multiple scripts allows insights into the negotiation of power in men's lives. Four examples of masculine scripts are briefly presented here.

A "strong men" script offers a model of masculine strength and power, where physical might and virility are enhanced by eating meat to gain protein. This represents a dominant hegemonic masculine script in contemporary Western societies. For example, Finnish carpenters saw meat as an essential strength food to build and fuel their bodies, and they encouraged their wives to cook meat for them (Roos et al. 2001). Athletes exemplify the dominant script of strong masculinity (Messner 1992), and hypermasculine athletes, like boxers, wrestlers, football players, and body builders, try to grow and strengthen their muscles by eating meat (e.g., McCaughey 1999).

A "healthy men" script offers a model of masculine functionality and survival, where warding off serious diseases is enhanced by not eating excessive meat. The focus on long-term health represents an alternative construction of masculinity to dominant masculine ideals (Courtenay 2000), challenging carnivorous food culture in food reform movements based on preventing cardiac and cancerous diseases (Austin 1999; Chapman 1999). For example, Finnish engineers saw meat as a component of a healthy diet, not to be consumed in excess, and to be balanced by vegetable consumption (Roos et al. 2001).

A "wealthy men" script offers a model of masculine prestige and status, where men have the ability to provide for themselves and their families. For example, meat is a high status food, representing material influence (Twigg 1983); many men traditionally desire to display their social status by eating meat (Barthes 1975; Bourdieu 1984). The "wealthy men" script also entitles men to greater hegemonic power through class identification and interests.

A "sensitive men" script offers a model of masculine emotion and empathy, where men are supportive and considerate of others,

such as their spouses. For example, some men eat less meat after they marry, as they engage in their roles of husbands who compromise and converge with the food preferences of their wives (Bove et al. 2003). Other men change their meat consumption patterns for their children, modeling different eating when children are present (Sobal et al. 2002).

Additional types of masculinities include “traditional men,” “smart men,” “pure men” (Griffith 2000), and others. All of these specific scripts are only one portion of larger sets of interacting discourses about masculinity that provide models that can be summoned in making food choices alone and with spouses. The multiplicity of masculine scripts available in personal networks and the mass media provides a variety of male forms for men to draw upon in negotiating, deciding, and justifying their food choices (Connell 1995), especially the consumption of particularly symbolic foods, such as meat.

Connell (1995, 2000) suggests that hegemonic masculinity serves as a prototype or ideal, but he also observes that many subordinate, oppositional, and marginal masculinities also operate in addition to dominant male forms. Hegemonic masculinity provides a comparison point that individuals may elect to adopt or reject in specific places, times, and relationships. Multiple masculine scripts are invoked as sources for particular individuals to draw upon in specific contexts. Thus, masculinities are enacted situationally, such as a man lunching on hamburgers at work with his pals and sharing salad for dinner with his wife. Models of multiple scripts offer the opportunity to consider the exercise of power as an act of negotiation.

Masculine scripts interact with other aspects of culture, including ethnicities, ages, classes, sexualities, regions, and ways of parenting (e.g., Pyke 1996; Watson 2000; White 1994). Food events are joint performances of multiple scripts of gender, age, ethnicity, or class (Julier 2002). This leads to many conditionalities, contingencies, and contextualities for masculinities, with particular “adjectival masculinities” (Clatterbaugh 1998:24) for Jewish men, old men, poor men, gay men, southern men, and men who are fathers, all of which may be drawn upon to tailor meat-eating in various times and places. For example, Dunier (1992) describes how black men engage in special struggles around masculinity and food choices at home and in other settings. Adjectival masculinities

that are contingent upon other characteristics provide men with choices in how they “do meat” in relationship to their gender, marital status, eating site, and other factors. These choices are often dependent on the kinds of power available to men in their multiple social locations: for example, they support, reinforce, or refute marginalization in other “sites” of identity.

Managing Multiple Masculinities in Marriage

The multiple models of masculinities that co-exist in a state of tension in contemporary, Western societies provide men with a variety of cultural scripts that can be actively and purposively combined and recombined in marital negotiations about consuming meat and other foods. Thus, rather than being bound as a man to demand that his wife prepare meat for dinner, a male can invoke the model of a healthy man to forego or minimize meat in particular meals and prepare food for himself. Similarly, a man can draw upon discourses about being a sensitive man and share his wife’s desire for a meatless casserole (or alternatively she can invoke alternative femininities and join him in eating more meat from wild game).

The complexity of multiple masculinities (and femininities) provides opportunities for marital partners to negotiate about gender and food choices, offering flexibility and fluidity for actively exercising their agency, rather than rigid roles driven by broader external, social, and cultural structures and values. More research on gender and food might provide better insights into why some gender scripts work better or worse for particular people in the complex terrain of settings, times, and relationships. Some situations demand particular gender performances, like eating turkey on Thanksgiving holidays, even if one person is vegetarian (Jabs et al. 2000), or avoiding bringing meat dishes to a potluck dinner where vegetarians will attend (Gusfield 1995).

Consideration of multiple flexible masculinities, rather than a singular monolithic masculinity, brings indeterminacy, uncertainty, ambiguity, and ambivalence into marital food choices. The existence of plural gender scripts in tension with each other amplifies the complexity of masculinity in everyday life, opening up questions about how food choices create and express male identities in relationships. Men have greater consciousness about the

meanings of meat when confronted with situations such as marriage, vegetarianism, and multiple masculinities, possibly because power issues in these domains are not culturally resolved.

“Doing Marriage,” “Doing Masculinities,” and “Doing Meat”

In the social performance involved in deciding how to “do marriage,” men must also select ways to “do masculinities” in decisions about ways they “do meat.” The lack of direct involvement in foodwork and the existence of options for hypermasculine cooking and eating provide possibilities for men to “do meat” in multiple ways, using the plural models of masculinities as justifications for a diversity of forms, types, times, and quantities of meat consumption.

Some authors suggest that meat intake is decreasing and becoming less important in Western societies (e.g., Allen and Baines 2002; Holme and Mohl 2000). This may be due to the rise in feminine aspects of eating (Roos et al. 2001), increasing multiplicity of masculinities available in contemporary society (Courtenay 2000), or alternative ways for men to express power (Kimmel 2001). Roos et al. (2001:54) suggest that the engineers they studied “. . . have negotiated new ways to be masculine and reformulated their definition of masculinity,” allowing them to more consciously consume or not consume meat.

A hegemonic masculine, meat-eating model exists in contemporary Western societies, but individual men may choose how they engage with that food script alone and with partners. Men who have access to and experience in using multiple models of masculinity have greater freedom and control in their food choices, and are less tightly bound by singular or hegemonic cultural prescriptions to consume meat. Awareness and experience with multiple masculinities may not rigidly require “doing meat” for “doing masculinity.” For example, the Straight Edge Movement (Irwin 1999) involves young men engaged in highly macho lives, where they listen to loud rock music and appear tough in leather clothing, but who also are vegans, who avoid eating animals (Larsson et al. 2003). Their aggressive masculine appearance scripts—as well as their extreme engagement in animal rights activism—permit them to avoid meat and successfully account for not being meat-eaters. Similarly, strong masculine scripts of Hindu religious groups in India and the U.S. permit Hindu men to avoid hegemonic masculinity

pressures to eat meat (Roy 2002). Also, historical examples of food abstinence offer a masculine model of virile resistance to the temptations of the appetite (e.g., Griffith 2000). Strong marriage scripts may also provide men with alternative justifications for positioning themselves with respect to their decisions about eating meat.

Multiple Masculinities Summary

Thinking about masculinities as a plural construct provides insights about men, meat, and marriage. Multiple models of masculinities suggest that gender-typing of foods is not absolute and hegemonic, offering many ways of engaging with meat. "Doing marriage" involves negotiating and managing the processes of "doing masculinities" and "doing meat" in varying and situation-specific ways. Marital food choices reflect, reproduce, and oppose the existing variety of gendered societal food scripts. The flexibility of drawing upon multiple masculine scripts permits men to more easily manage meat in marriage.

Conclusion

Gender is a pervasive component of society, and this examination of masculinity used meat and marriage as an example for analyzing gender. Two approaches to thinking about gender differ in their treatment of maleness as singular masculinity or as plural masculinities. Each approach has strengths and limitations.

A singular model of masculinity offers many useful insights about the gendering of meat and the dynamics of meat and masculinity in marriage. The efficacy of singular models of masculinity is grounded in their ability to identify and summarize information and develop clear understandings of idealized or dominant patterns.

Limitations of singular thinking include a tendency to overgeneralize and, therefore, not fit much of everyday reality. Singular thinking reduces masculinity and femininity into unidimensional, normative concepts, evaluating everyone at all times, in all places, against fixed standards of a society. Singular thinking does not deal well with marginal and complex cases, where nuances and subtleties are not easily captured by stereotyped versions of masculinity. Singular perspectives employ idealized gender types,

even though they are typically not attained (or even necessarily attainable). Singular thinking risks “false universalization and oversimplification” (Clatterbaugh 1998:24) of the importance of masculinity in food choices, with Probyn (1999) claiming that it is inappropriate to always equate meat with masculinity. Singular explanations may not fully portray everyday reality, because most men’s food consumption in contemporary Western societies is not wild game cooked over an open flame. Men exercise considerable agency in choosing among culturally structured classifications of gendered foods (Jensen 2002). Singular models of masculinity miss much of the situational complexity of contemporary Western societies, including the contingency of enacting masculinity in relationship with other characteristics, such as race, class, and age. They lack clear mechanisms for examining the complex workings of hegemonic power in men’s lives.

Multiple masculinities conceptualizations consider plural masculinities and emphasize the negotiation and management of a dynamic and situational process, in which men may select from a variety of models of manhood that may be evaluated, invoked, and enacted. Multiple models of masculinities incorporate singular models as the dominant, hegemonic masculinity in one place and time, and move beyond that to propose that other models of masculinity are available that can be employed in conjunction with or opposition to hegemonic models. The strength of a multiplicity approach is its comprehensiveness, offering many alternative explanations of how masculinities are actually constructed and performed by following one or a combination of models of masculinity.

Limitations in the use of multiple models occur in distinguishing masculinities from separate concepts, like class, ethnicity, or sexuality and in the risk of proposing so many masculinities that they inhibit clarity, offer less generalizability, and preclude achieving analytical closure. Pluralistic thinking about masculinity creates considerable complexity in thinking about meat and marital food choices that may offer deep insights situated in particular cases, but not provide useful generalizations about broader patterns of men and meat in marriages. The splitting of masculinities into many types ignores wider views of how masculinity operates for meat in marital settings. Models of multiple masculinities are more useful when attached to a clear theory of how power operates.

Overall, singular models of masculinity appear to be sufficient to provide some useful insights about men, meat, and marriage that are not necessarily negated by multiple models of masculinity. However, multiple models can incorporate the insights of singular models, put them into a broader perspective, and offer more complex and nuanced analyses of masculinities. In future analyses of food and eating, users of both singular and multiple gender models should explicitly acknowledge which model is being employed, state its advantages and limitations, and report that the other model may offer different insights.

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