

Soyboys Will Be Boys:

Negotiating vegan masculinities in the land of lamb 'lovers'



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Abstract

Vegan men wield the dual privileges of men (in a gender hierarchy) and human animals (in a species hierarchy), yet identify with a liberatory movement that is seemingly antagonistic to both patriarchy and anthroparchy. This contradictory positionality is predicted to be especially acute in Australia where meat – foregone by vegans – is closely tied to the Australian *master identity* (Plumwood, 1993). Homing in on these power dynamics, I conducted 10 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with vegan men living in Australia. I explored how vegan men conceptualised their identity in relation to patriarchy and anthroparchy, as well as how they related to animals – both human and non-human – that live within and across these hierarchies. Interviewees described feeling stigmatised in Australia, and responded to this stigmatisation by valorising reason, emphasising the importance of argumentation and practising tactics that weaponised masculinity. These findings align with work on *hybrid masculinity* (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018) which suggests that vegan men distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity, but ultimately fortify power relations between men and women. However, I also found that veganism appears to act as a ‘gateway’ through which vegan men could begin to appreciate other social issues. Ultimately, by investigating the experiences of vegan men, I hope to map a more discernible path towards equity on the basis of gender and species, and contribute towards building a more reflexive social movement.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____

Date: 29th November 2022

Alexander James Hill

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I live and learn: the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and the Wattamattagal clan of the Darug nation. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and future. Always was. Always will be. Aboriginal land.

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1. Introduction & Theoretical Context

This is a thesis about veganism and masculinity. However, I am not examining ‘vegan man’ as an innately stable identificatory category, nor one which is easily discernible. Rather, I am homing in on *representations, practices, understandings, and experiences* of veganism and masculinity. In doing so I am making the working assumption that our identities are produced by the way we describe and relate to them: they are contextual, not essential. However, that is *certainly* not to say that these are ‘empty categories’ as some might argue (Downs, 1993). Rather, the conflict between structures – like patriarchy and anthroparchy – and agents – like vegan men – is both context-dependent *and* often personally significant for the individuals living within and across these hierarchies.

As someone who identifies as a vegan man, I have lived experience of these tensions. Indeed, I believe that these experiences have had significant utility for shaping my research project: suffice it to say that I am very familiar with discussions about protein, evolutionary biology and ‘soy-induced feminisation’. However, I am also aware that my position is limited in other ways. That is, from where I am standing, my view of patriarchy and anthroparchy is necessarily an incomplete one. In short, other people will be able to see things that I cannot. Notably – as someone who is white, university-educated, human, and male – I occupy a significantly less precarious position than the majority of people in Australia. Therefore, I stake no claim to objectivity or universalism. Rather, I hope to leverage my own standpoint to unpack how patriarchy and anthroparchy intersect in particular ways to produce a plurality of vegan masculinities.

However, this plurality should not be mistaken for an equal distribution of power. My own experiences – and those of this study’s participants – are highly suggestive of a movement fractured by hegemony. These fractures are, of course, imposed in the sense that vegan men are widely stigmatised under patriarchy. Yet, this stigmatisation has itself cultivated a hierarchy of vegan masculinities according to which some vegan men are viewed as more *legitimate* than others. In a movement that has historically grounded itself in liberatory praxis, this intracategorical hegemony is concerning and perhaps speaks to the growing pains of a movement now grappling with the normalising pressures of increasing popularity (White, 2018).

The present study investigates these power dynamics throughout the course of ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with people who identify as ‘vegan men living in Australia’.

Australia offers an ideal context for investigating how vegan men negotiate these power dynamics. Indeed, with one of the highest – if not *the* highest – rates of per capita meat consumption in the world (Marinova & Bogueva, 2019), meat is central to the settler-colonial Australian identity. Following Chapter 2, in which I delineate my research design and methodology, I go on to unpack this Australian context. Thus, in Chapter 3 I introduce the interlocking oppressions that constitute an Australian *master identity*, account for the mediating force of settler-colonialism, and explore how the interviewees relate to this context. In Chapter 4, I explore how vegan men respond to being stigmatised by this *master identity*. I map out a process I term *everyday heganimism*, wherein vegan men weaponise masculinity to advocate against anthroparchy and/or their own stigmatisation. In Chapter 5, I note the phenomenon whereby, in going vegan, the interviewees developed an appreciation for a range of social issues they were not previously concerned with: for example, sustainability and gender politics. Before proceeding with each of these chapters, however, it is first necessary to map out how the existing literature approaches veganism and masculinity.

1.1. Vegans, Veganism and Vegaphobia

The Vegan Society – having coined the term *vegan* in 1944 – defines veganism as “...a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude – as far as is possible and practical – all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals...” (n.d). Thus vegans, like vegetarians, eschew the consumption of meat, but they also oppose *all* forms of animal exploitation. The Vegan Society’s definition remains widely cited, however recent scholarship has acknowledged that – though this definition remains an effective starting point for beginning to understand veganism – it “expands rather than resolves discussions of veganism’s meanings” (Giraud, 2021, p. 4). Giraud suggests that this definition opens up a veritable can of worms in the sense that it then becomes necessary to define ‘exploitation’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘possible and practicable’. Moreover, it is important to recognise that many self-described vegans are somewhat detached from the radical politics inculcated by The Vegan Society’s definition, and may emphasise that their veganism is motivated by health benefits, or a desire to be more environmentally sustainable (Oliver, 2021). Further, in both the literature and in popular culture (White, 2018), veganism is regularly conflated with vegetarianism or plant-based diets. Of course – being that veganism was originally coined as a response to dietary vegetarianism – this move to position veganism as a diet is directly antithetical to veganism’s own formulation. These epistemological differences complicate attempts to categorise an essential vegan identity.

Outsider interpretations of veganism often sideline this complexity in favour of reductive and negative stereotyping. Cole and Morgan (2011) reviewed 397 articles that referenced veganism in UK national newspapers, and found that almost three quarters of the articles were *vegaphobic*. That is, they were derogatory towards vegans or veganism: for example, by describing vegans as hostile – vegans were regarded as angry, militant, and in one case as “terrorists” (p. 146 – 147) – or veganism as impossible to sustain: in particular vegan food was characterised as bland, and contrasted with the supposed deliciousness of animal products (p. 142 – 143). Subsequent studies have converged on similar findings. In America, anti-vegan stigma has been empirically documented (Markowski & Roxburgh, 2019), and in one study, it was even more pronounced than homophobic stigma (MacInnis & Hodson, 2017). These stereotypes colour the ways that many people perceive vegans. Indeed, in popular culture these stereotypes are often more prominent than the voices of vegans themselves (Giraud, 2021). As such, a goal of the present study is to attend to vegan voices.

1.2. Patriarchy, Hegemony & Hybrid Masculinity

Defining masculinity is a similarly difficult task. Structurally, masculinity is embroiled in the social forces which create, maintain, and facilitate unequal power relations between genders. Here, the systematic and structural oppression of women is referred to as *patriarchy* (Hill & Allen, 2021). Historically, this term has provided women a language with which they can communicate, theorise about, and fight this oppression. For the feminist project, the tangible utility of doing so cannot be overstated, and the term has been crucial to emancipatory struggles such as the Women’s Liberation Movement (Beechey, 1979). However, the term has also been fiercely debated. Some feminist scholars argue that referring to an ahistorical patriarchy is predicated on *gender essentialism* (Pollert, 1996): the belief that gender is biologically determined. Others argue that the term reduces the experience of being a woman to being dominated by men – failing to consider individual agency (Mohanty, 1992). Sensitive to this critique, my study investigates patriarchy as socially constructed and specific to the everyday context of Australia in 2022.

An adjacent term – ‘*hegemonic masculinity*’ – is a form of masculinity that “legitimizes unequal gender relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity and among masculinities” (Messerschmidt, 2019, p. 86). Originally formulated by Raewyn Connell (1987), the emphasis on hegemony demonstrates how certain forms of masculinity are exalted within specific cultural contexts at specific points in history, and how masculinity itself is internally stratified. Theories of hybrid masculinities extend Connell’s thesis, arguing

that some men incorporate elements of marginalised and subordinated masculinities and femininities into their identity, symbolically distancing themselves from hegemonic masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). However, several studies have demonstrated that this incorporation is often only symbolic, with hybrid masculinities ultimately fortifying the unequal power relations between men and women (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014).

1.3. Theoretical Context

Sociologists studying *food* have long noted associations between meat and masculinity in western post-industrial societies (Bourdieu, 1984; Buerkle, 2009; Gal & Wilkie, 2010; Sobal, 2005) and with traits such as emotional stoicism, strength, and virility (Bogueva, Marinova & Raphaely, 2018; Gough, 2007; Heinz & Lee, 1998). Overwhelmingly, these studies have found that men consume meat to reaffirm their masculinity, accord with masculine gender norms, and distance themselves from femininity. Put succinctly “animal flesh is a consummate male food, and a man eating meat is an exemplar of maleness” (Sobal, 2005, p. 137). This body of work, while compelling, has historically elided consideration of the animals themselves who are literally and linguistically transformed into *meat* prior to their consumption (Nibert, 2003). Carter and Charles (2018) argue that this may be due a foundation of *human exceptionalism* in the discipline, and recent scholarship calls for a Vegan Sociology which more honestly engages with the tangible oppression of non-human animals (Taylor & Sutton, 2018). In the meantime, ecofeminism offers a particularly rich account of the relationship between gender-based and species-based oppressions.

When investigating associations between meat and masculinity, the work of Carol J. Adams is particularly influential. Adams (1990) notes that meat – regarded as virile and muscle-strengthening – is central to masculinity. Famously however, she builds on this connection to argue that meat-eating is linked to patriarchy. For Adams, a process of objectification, fragmentation and consumption conceals the violence inherent to meat-eating by distancing consumers from what they are consuming; thus, veal bears little relation to a dead baby cow, and the cow becomes what Adams terms, an absent referent. This concealed violence is then appropriated to describe the experiences of women under patriarchy – for example, referring to women as pieces of meat – and, similarly, the violence enacted on women by patriarchy is used to justify the murder and consumption of animals: cows, for example, are often sexualised as if they willingly consent to their own consumption. For Adams, the prevalence of this imagery demonstrates a mutually-reinforcing relationship between patriarchy, and the systems which oppress non-human animals. Ultimately, Adams positions vegetarianism – and

veganism – as challenging this link. Indeed, Adams refers to men who don't eat meat as challenging an essential part of their masculine role, or as “repudiating one of their masculine privileges” (p. 63). For Adams, vegetarian and vegan men are living feminist resistance.

Val Plumwood (2012) problematises Adams' endorsement of veganism. Plumwood argues that veganism – in rejecting the edibility and usability of other animals – is subtly dependent on a conception of human animals as ‘outside nature’ – and therefore does not fully challenge human mastery. Plumwood coins the term ‘Ontological Veganism’ to describe veganism's dependency on this mastery. Instead, Plumwood advocates for an ‘Ecological Animalism’ which takes up the task of “situating human life in ecological terms and situating non-human life in ethical terms” (p. 79). For Plumwood, Ontological Veganism only takes up the latter, and thus, Adams' endorsement of veganism as a solution to human mastery over other animals falls short.

This critique is grounded in Plumwood's earlier work – notably, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) – which theorises a set of interconnected and mutually-reinforcing dualisms that permeates much of western culture [Figure 1]. These dualisms – such as human/nature, male/female and civilised/primitive – are “intense, established and developed cultural expression[s]” (p. 47) of hierarchal relationships. Indeed, these dualisms are so established that the relata which constitute each dualism are viewed binarily, distinct and bound only by a relation of domination or subordination. Dualism thus obscures reality – for example, the reality that humans are animals – and normalises domination on the grounds that difference is only natural: expressed, for example, in the existence of factory farms, or in sayings like ‘boys will be boys’. However, while each relata is viewed as distinct from its binary pair, Plumwood argues that dualisms interlock horizontally in mutually-supportive relationships: for example, human implies male and civilised, whereas nature implies female and primitive. Of course, this relationship between dualisms – particularly between male/female and human/nature dualism – has been the subject of much ecofeminist analysis (Daly, 1979; Griffin, 1984; Adams, 1990). However, Plumwood extends these analyses by arguing that this set of interrelated dualisms supports a master model which, in turn, inculcates a hegemonic identity defined by the oppressive half of each dualism. Plumwood refers to this identity as the *master identity* and – though Plumwood's critique is significantly more involved than I am able to articulate here – this concept offers a language with which I can contextualise how vegan men relate to Australian culture, and how many Australians relate to vegan men.

Figure 1

To Val Plumwood, these dualisms are key to the structure of western thought, though she “does not claim completeness for this list” (Plumwood, 1993 p. 43)

Figure 1 of this thesis has been removed for copyright purposes

However, in leveraging Plumwood’s concept of a *master identity*, I am wary of Erika Cudworth’s (1998) warning that Plumwood’s analogising of oppressions is unrealistic. Instead, Cudworth suggests that “the oppressions of wimmin and animals are too divergent to be adequately encapsulated” (p. 106) by approaches that advocate for the existence of an overarching logic or system of domination. For Cudworth, an overarching logic is impossible because particular instances of oppression are themselves uniquely constituted of various other oppressive systems. Therefore, while I borrow Plumwood’s concept as a way of talking about an interlocking structure of oppressions in Australia, I simultaneously work to delineate *how* these oppressions interlock or enmesh with each other,

Notably, Cudworth also coins the term *anthroparchy*. Cudworth defines anthroparchy as “a social system, a complex and relatively stable set of hierarchical relationships in which ‘nature’ is dominated through formations of social organization which privilege the human” (2011, p. 67). Cudworth views existing terminologies, such as *anthropocentrism* – meaning the centering of human animals – and *speciesism* – discriminating against other animals on the basis of species – as insufficient. Human animals go beyond assuming that the environment exists purely for their needs, or simple discrimination. Instead, they “dominate the environment, controlling, manipulating, exploiting and abusing” (Cudworth, 1998, p. 35). The term emerges from Cudworth’s dual case studies of meat and pornography, wherein Cudworth argues that patriarchy and anthroparchy are interconnected, but not underlain by a single system of domination. Examined together, these theorists – Adams, Plumwood and Cudworth – provide an effective and multi-faceted overview of the systems which shape gendered and *speciesed* power relations.

Still, the extent to which vegan men might be said to destabilise these systems, however theorised, remains unclear. Recent studies challenge Adams' suggestion that vegan men distance themselves from masculinity. *Heganism* was coined by Kathleen Pierce (2010) to refer to the growing number of vegan men amidst the relatively larger numbers of vegan women. Wright (2015) identifies the hegan as "something other than merely vegan; they are so ultramasculine as to be able to be vegan and to make that dietary choice manly as well" (p. 126). Indeed, for Wright (2015), the existence of the term proves the extent to which veganism is regarded as a feminine endeavour. Johnson (2011) leveraged this archetype in a gender studies thesis, which analysed two popular texts authored by vegan men: '*Skinny Bastard: A kick-in-the-ass for real men who want to stop being fat and start getting buff*' (Freedman & Barnouin, 2009) and '*Meat is for Pussies: A how-to-guide for dudes who want to get fit*' (Joseph, 2014). Johnson found that these authors presented veganism as compatible with hegemonic masculinity. For example, the authors used violent language which actively associated veganism with destructive, profane, and controlling forms of masculinity: vegans are "tough-ass sons of bitches" (Freedman & Barnouin in Johnson, 2011, p. 36), and men need to "fight the good fight" (Joseph in Johnson, 2011, p. 36). Similarly, Jones (2021) studied UK vegan cookbooks authored by vegan men, and found that these men deployed some of the scripts of hegemonic masculinity to promote meat-avoidance. Heganism may also inscribe hierarchies within vegan masculinities. Drawing on Wright (2015), Randall (2018) suggests that heganism distinguishes manly vegans from the unmanly, paradoxically perpetuating the belief that veganism is a feminine pursuit: there are anaemic hippies, and there are alpha males. In each of these studies the message is clear: men need to maintain their masculinity, but they don't need meat to do so.

Interview-based research suggests that vegan men may practice hybrid masculinities. Notably, Greenebaum and Dexter (2018) found that – while some interviewees contested the narrow definition of hegemonic masculinity – others seemed to fall short of challenging gender inequality: exemplified in assertions like "being vegan as a man is a manifestation of toughness" (p. 342). Several of their interviewees emphasized veganism as a masculine pursuit, and highlighted how their strength and fitness improved after going vegan. These findings converge with those of DeLessio-Parson (2017) and Mycek (2018) who found that vegetarian and vegan men justified their veganism using logic, objective scientific and moral truths, and rationality. Oliver (2021) conducted selective discourse analysis on the Instagram accounts of vegan male activist-influencers alongside semi-structured interviews with seven

vegan men, and found that influencers often individualised hegemonic ideals of masculinity to ‘sell’ veganism. For example, ‘Will’ regularly shared gym videos which highlighted his physical strength. Oliver suggests that these men present themselves via redemption narratives which valorise activism as a gendered ideal. In contrast, Oliver’s interviewees were more sensitive to the complex entanglements of masculinity, veganism, and feminism. Still, Oliver concludes that the latter were nevertheless complicit in mainstream veganism’s patriarchal tendencies. For Oliver, there is a need for vegans to more fully embrace a “feminist and intersectional veganism that is not dominated by whiteness and masculine ideas” (p. 15).

Cumulatively, the existing canon points to a need for research that centres everyday experiences of veganism and masculinity, attends to patriarchy *and* anthroparchy, and investigates these phenomena in the understudied Australian context. Consequently, my research question asks: how do vegan men identify with and practice their veganism in relation to aspects of the Australian *master identity*?

I am aware that my thesis may be read as a call to use patriarchy to dismantle anthroparchy. This belief was at times held – if not in those exact words – by several of my participants, and has been infamously popularised by some animal rights groups (Deckha, 2008). These strategies ignore the well-established links between patriarchy and anthroparchy (Adams, 1990; Cudworth, 2011) that would complicate attempts to neatly separate them. But more importantly, propping up one group of people at the expense of another does not a liberatory philosophy make, and – in my view – undermines the ongoing struggle for total liberation.

Instead, it is my hope that by unpacking representations, practices, understandings and experiences of veganism and masculinity, we – as the Vegan Sociology community – might gain some further insight into the liberatory possibilities promised by veganism. Studying the beneficiaries of dual-privilege – vis-à-vis patriarchy and anthroparchy – will, I hope, be viewed as an effective way to both pose necessary critique, but also to think through these possibilities.

2. Design & Methodology

2.1. Preface

This chapter describes how I approached answering this paper's research question: 'how do vegan men identify with and practice their veganism in relation to aspects of the Australian *master identity*?'. I outline the principles that underpinned the project design: namely, feminist research principles with particular emphasis on feminist standpoint epistemologies. I also explain how these design principles informed my sampling strategy, interview design, interview questions and data analysis. Ultimately, this paper offers an exploratory study. In doing so, I am attempting to garner a better understanding of how vegan masculinities are practiced in the understudied Australian context.

2.2. Feminist Research Principles & Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist research principles emphasise the importance of power, particularly with regard to how power relates to gender (Parry, 2020, p. 2). As such, feminist research is often focused on issues of systemic inequality and redressing these issues through social change (Jenkins, Narayanaswamy & Sweetman, 2019). Historically, feminist research principles have developed alongside material struggles for the rights of women. Of course, the present study doesn't investigate women. However, this study *does* investigate a cohort privileged by patriarchy and anthroparchy – and yet, who are participating in a social movement that has been framed as an antidote to both of these oppressions (Adams, 1990). Therefore, feminist research principles offer an ideal methodological lens through which I can parse gendered and speciesed power dynamics as they sediment in a doubly privileged cohort. Further, borrowing on feminist research principles is somewhat appropriate for a project that hopes to contribute towards building a more equitable vegan movement.

Feminist research principles emphasise the importance of subjective experience. Specifically, feminist research acknowledges that individuals are embedded in systems of power, and therefore, any given individual's experience is dependent on where they are positioned (Harding, 1991). In a research context, the individual standpoint of any given researcher affects how they relate to their research, and therefore, influences the kind of knowledge that they produce. Coined as *feminist standpoint epistemology* (Brooks, 2007), this theory is grounded in the recognition that – under patriarchy – women's experiences are often marginalised, forgotten, or erased. In the social sciences, this epistemological violence has manifested in an academy that is often run *by* and *for* men, centring the experiences of men at

the expense of women and other gender identities (Smith, 1989). Notably, feminist standpoint epistemology highlights how the academy's steadfast adherence to objectivity is untenable: *objectivity* itself has been defined according to the dominant logic of an androcentric academy, and therefore the academy has valued knowledges which align themselves with said logic (Kiguwa, 2019). Therefore, a major aim of work guided by feminist standpoint epistemology has been to centre the experiences of women, thus ensuring better representation for women in the social sciences, and allowing access to knowledges that were previously inaccessible or ignored.

Fittingly, however, there is some variation in how researchers approach and define feminist standpoint epistemologies. The contemporary turn toward intersectionality has cultivated a standpoint theory that is sensitive to diversity (Hekman, 2004): these theorists clarify that the experiences of some women cannot be universalised across *all* women, and thus move away from the tacit essentialism of earlier theorisations. My design borrows on these *second-generation* standpoint theories.

Centring the unique standpoints of the interviewees allows me to explore the complexities that arise within the category of 'vegan man in Australia', and the various knowledges that are stratified throughout this category. Additionally, sharing an identity with the interviewees grants me *insider status*, facilitating rapport and allowing me access to knowledges that may be inaccessible to other researchers. There is some precedent for this in the vegetarian and vegan literature: DeLessio-Parson (2017) found that disclosing her vegetarianism to interviewees seemed to prompt more open conversation. However, the benefits of insider status have also been well-reported in mainstream sociology (Merton, 1972). Importantly, I am not centring the experiences of women and therefore do not claim to be *doing* feminist standpoint epistemology. Rather, by leveraging my own standpoint as a vegan man, I hope to unpack how the tensions between patriarchy and anthroparchy manifest in the everyday experiences of other vegan men.

2.3. Sampling Strategy

I contacted the admins of two of the largest vegan Facebook groups in Australia: 'Vegans in Australia' and 'Vegans of Australia'. In addition to their size, which I had hoped would translate to a high response-rate, these groups were chosen because they were generalist – that is, they did not focus on any particular aspect of vegan identity or practice – and because they were marketed to *all* Australian vegans, rather than targeting a more specific subgroup.

In the message to admins, I requested permission to post a non-paid advertisement which I had developed using Canva [Figure 2]. I attached a copy of this advertisement as well as an exemplar consent form to the message. The advertisement invited self-identifying vegan men to contact me via email if they were interested in participating in a research project. The advertisement described the project's goals, what would be required of interviewees if they chose to participate, and what they would receive if they participated. The advertisement emphasised that participation was voluntary and that interviewees would not be reimbursed financially. Having not heard back from the admins of Vegans in Australia, and in the absence of another Australia-wide generalist vegan Facebook group, I decided to reach out the admins of 'Sydney Vegans' – also one of the largest vegan Facebook groups in Australia – who quickly responded in the affirmative. I proceeded to circulate the advertisement via Sydney Vegans and Vegans of Australia.

Due to attrition, a low response rate and time pressures, I was eventually forced to supplement this strategy with snowball sampling, and, by leveraging my own personal networks. Later, I was also able to establish contact with the admins of Vegans in Australia and – with their consent – circulated the recruitment advertisement there as well. Ultimately, these strategies resulted in a sample of 10 interviewees. These interviewees shared the standpoint of self-identifying as vegan men who were living in Australia, and – as a cohort – provided an effective sample through which to explore the shared and divergent experiences of veganism and masculinity in Australia. Ultimately, seven interviewees were derived from Facebook groups – two from Vegans of Australia, three from Sydney Vegans, and two from Vegans in Australia – two from personal contacts, and one from snowball sampling. I did not interview anyone I had met before, or that I was already familiar with.

Figure 2

This advertisement was circulated via to prospective participants via Facebook

Do you identify as a **vegan man?**

We want to interview you!

What is the research trying to find out?
This research project seeks to better understand how vegan men negotiate their identity in the context of a movement that is sometimes associated with women and often focused on animals.

What will be required of me if I participate?
You will be asked to participate in a 60-minute audio-recorded interview. This interview will take place online via Zoom, phone, or in person if COVID-19 restrictions permit.

What will I receive if I participate?
No payment is offered for participation, but you will receive:
- a summary of the findings (if you wish!)
- an opportunity to help develop the field of **vegan sociology**.

To participate, please email us:
alexander.hill@students.mq.edu.au

After you have given your consent to be interviewed, the researchers will contact you to arrange a time.

2.4. Interviews

2.4.1. Interview Design

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews between May and September of 2022. This design was chosen because of its appropriateness to small-sample exploratory studies and because, unlike more didactic formats, in-depth, semi-structured interviews allow for both fluid and comprehensive expression of subjective experience. This design also recognises that interviews are relational spaces: as a study drawing on feminist standpoint epistemology, in-depth semi-structured interviews offered a format that acknowledged that meaning was *co-created* throughout the interview process.

Interviews ranged from one to one and a half hours in length. They were facilitated over Zoom, which allowed me to connect with vegan men I would have otherwise been unable to interview. Interviews homed in on representations, practices, understandings, and experiences of veganism and masculinity in Australia. I emphasised to interviewees that I wanted to hear ‘their story’, chose open-ended questions that elicited disclosure of everyday experiences, and where appropriate, prompted interviewees to clarify whether they were speaking from

experience, or simply speaking more generally. I opted to focus on everyday experiences for two reasons. One: I hoped that by grounding the interviews in everyday experiences of veganism and masculinity, I could avoid the sometimes-rehearsed nature of vegan practice exemplified by reverse “gotcha” moments (Giraud, 2021) – that is, the automatic responses vegans might offer when posed bad-faith questions, like ‘what if plants feel pain too?’. Two: I hoped to follow Greenebaum and Dexter’s (2018, p. 345) suggested direction that future research on veganism and masculinity should explore the everyday experiences of vegan men outside of the north-eastern United States.

I followed the lead of DeLessio-Parson (2017) and disclosed my standpoint as a vegan man prior to commencing each interview. I believe that this facilitated a comfortable environment, defined more by reciprocal learning than by an automated routine of question-and-answer. Indeed, interviewees often expressed excitement about being part of the research process. In some cases, they were very eager to help: one interviewee emailed me references following our interview and another suggested I get in touch with a particular vegan newspaper. I also recorded a few simple reflections immediately following each interview.

2.4.2. Interview Questions

An interview guide is “a set of topical areas and questions that the interviewer brings to the interview” (Hesse-Biber, 2007). I developed an interview guide by consulting the extant literature on the intersection of veganism and masculinity (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018; Oliver, 2021), and translating these findings, possibilities, and concerns into a set of key topics and questions which guided the general line of inquiry. Owing to widespread definitional idiosyncrasies, I was particularly concerned with eliciting self-concepts of veganism and masculinity, as well as how interviewees relate to veganism and masculinity. Careful to anchor discussions about gender and species in everyday experiences, I was also interested in how interviewees position themselves in relation to other vegan men, and non-human animals. Heeding Oliver’s (2021) suggestion that vegans need to embrace a more feminist and intersectional veganism, I asked how – if at all – interviewees related their identity and practice to other forms of oppression. The interview guide organised these general lines of inquiry into this set of key open-ended questions:

1. What does veganism mean to you?
2. How do most Australians think about veganism?
3. What does masculinity mean to you?

4. How do most Australians think about masculinity?
5. What is it like to be a vegan man in Australia?
6. If you could speak with other animals, how would you explain your veganism to them?
7. How do you think they would see your veganism?
8. Are there any other social movements that you're involved in, whether related to veganism or not?

Interviewees were also asked about why they chose to participate in the interview, and each interview concluded with two questions: “is there anything you want to raise with me that we didn’t touch on?” and “is there anything you want to ask me about my research?”.

The interview guide was not used as a rigid script. Rather, it served as a foundation that directed the general course of the interview, whilst also allowing interviewees to affect the flow of conversation. This format also allowed ample space for follow-up questions and prompts that may have been appropriate. The guide was refined as the interviews progressed, and I became more familiar with the interview process and emerging themes. For example, three interviewees compared their experience of coming out as gay, to ‘coming out’ as vegan. Though I was not originally intending to investigate sexuality, the presence of this theme in early interviews prompted me to raise this question in subsequent interviews with interviewees who shared that they identified as gay.

2.5. Data Analysis

Audio-recordings were saved following each interview, and I transcribed these manually. The transcription process was time-consuming, however, it allowed me to immerse myself in the data, blurring the space between data collection and data analysis. Transcripts were analysed using inductive theory. Initially, open coding was used to generate a set of codes which emerged from that data. This was an iterative process whereby each successive transcription necessitated the development of new codes or the refinement of old ones. Wary of obscuring the power differential between myself and the participants, I complemented this process with self-reflective memo writing. These ranged from comments on quotes I found compelling, to themes I was noticing across transcriptions, to experiences that I shared with interviewees. This initial stage of coding resulted in a simple codebook in which codes were named, defined, and substantiated with key quotes. At this point, key categories appeared to be emerging: for the most part, my data appeared to correlate with the existing work on hybrid

masculinity (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018). Therefore, I cross-referenced these categories with the existing literature and used axial coding to recode the data according to these categories. This process involved significant discussion with my supervisor, during which codes were reviewed and thematised. Three key themes emerged from the data: (1) Australia is antagonistic to vegan men, (2) vegan men practice veganism in a way that reinforces patriarchy and (3) veganism prompts men to consider other social issues. These themes inform the structure of the results chapters: (1) Australia's Trouble Children, (2) Everyday Heganism, and (3) Vegan Gateways.

2.6. Ethics

The ethical aspects of this study were approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee in late 2021 [Appendix 1]. Each participant signed and returned a consent form [Appendix 2] prior to their interview, which assured confidentiality and anonymity. At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were reminded that they were free to withdraw at any time without reason or consequence. Their verbal consent was also received before commencing. Each transcript was de-identified by removing data relating to personal information. De-identified transcripts – as sensitive data – were stored on CloudStor with a synched folder kept on my password-protected hard drive. Audio-recordings, data mapping documents, and contact details – as highly-sensitive data – were stored on Sharepoint, without a copy on my hard drive. Data access was shared only with my supervisor. After analysis, de-identified data was archived on the Macquarie University Data Repository and set as non-searchable.

3. Australia's Trouble Children: Contextualising Australia's *Master Identity*

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the interlocking oppressions that constitute the Australian context, and to explicate how the interviewees relate to this context. In doing so I build on existing sociologies of vegan men which have expressed a need to explore vegan masculinities in contexts beyond the north-eastern United States (Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018, p. 345). As such, I take some time to describe the Australian context. I borrow on Val Plumwood's concept of the *master identity* as a way to discuss Australia's unique assemblage of interconnected and mutually-reinforcing *dualisms*. I also posit the existence of meat/veg dualism in which meat is hierarchically ordered above vegetable matter. Then, I emphasise the importance of understanding settler-colonialism which – while not the main focus of this study – is essential for understanding the production – both historical and ongoing – of the Australian *master identity*. I map out this identity and the dualisms which constitute it alongside an exploration of Meat & Livestock Australia's (M&LA) iconic 'We Love Our Lamb' campaign. Following that, I move on to discuss how the interviewees felt stigmatised by this *master identity* as if vegan men were perceived as a *problem* in the eyes of many Australians. Discussions about how the interviewees related to Australian culture were often characterised by certain themes: rurality, class, and education. I conclude by discussing these themes in the relation to the everyday experiences of the interviewees.

3.1. Plumwood's *Master Identity* & Meat/Veg Dualism

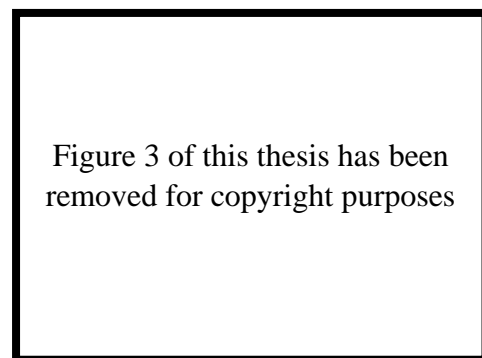
Plumwood's (1993) *master identity* offers a language with which I can contextualise how vegan men might relate to Australian culture, and how Australians might relate to vegan men. In doing so, I posit the existence of meat/veg dualism in which meat – as the symbolic representation of complete mastery over non-human animals – is both hierarchically ordered above the consumption of vegetable matter, and deeply enmeshed with other forms of oppression. While Plumwood does not identify meat/veg dualism, neither does she recognise her set as a complete one. Indeed, meat/veg dualism neatly explains the commonly-naturalised differences between people who eat animals and people who don't, as well as the seemingly-symbiotic relationship between vegaphobia and other forms of oppression. This chapter expounds on these differences and this relationship.

3.2. “We Love Our Lamb”

Or so proclaims the marketing campaign launched in 2004 by Meat & Livestock Australia (M&LA, 2005). The now-iconic campaign was designed to tether lamb to the national identity by promoting the consumption of lambs on ‘Australia Day’. Framed as a celebration of Australian nationalism, ‘Australia Day’ commemorates the date in 1788 when Sir Arthur Phillip raised a British flag at Warrane, or Sydney Cove (Glynn-McDonald, 2019). Having grown up watching M&LA’s annual advertisements, I keenly remember the words of the larrikin ‘Lambassador’ Sam Kekovich [Figure 3]: “It’s tradition. Don’t be un-Australian. Serve lamb on Australia Day.” (M&LA, 2005, 1:21). The message was clear.

Figure 3

Sam Kekovich as he appears in the inaugural ‘We Love Our Lamb’ campaign advertisement; he is seated in front of the Australian flag, and the Australian national anthem plays in the background (M&LA, 2005, 1:27)



However, for many First Nations Peoples and settler-Australians, this date symbolises the beginning of a “long and brutal colonisation of people and land” (Glynn-McDonald, 2019) defined by violence, dispossession of land, Stolen Generations, and genocide. Consequently, ‘Australia Day’ is sometimes referred to as *Invasion Day* or *Survival Day*, and (colonial-nationalistic) celebrations are eschewed in favour of mourning, protest, and celebration of First Nations culture. M&LA popularised – if not *created* (Redhanded, n.d) – the tradition of eating lambs on ‘Australia Day’, however the campaign’s royal ‘we’ leveraged a pre-existing *master identity* that naturalised the oppression of First Nations Peoples and the oppression of non-human animals via settler-colonialism.

Indeed, settler-colonialism can be said to have packaged particular dualisms that were prevalent in 18th century Britain, and then redeployed them in Australia. Meat was central to this process. For Regan (2001), “meat was equated with the very idea of Englishness itself”

(p. 5), and strongly and invariably associated with colonial and masculine power (p. 3). In contrast, vegetables were associated with women, and colonial subjects (p. 11). These associations have been noted extensively by the ecofeminist literature (Adams, 1990; Gaard, 2002), and more recently by Aph Ko (2019) who argues that white imperialism globalised systemic speciesism. Already, these associations speak to the existence of meat/veg dualism which is itself associated with other dualisms. However, having been transported to a settler-colonial context where ongoing British rule was dependent on an instrumentalist view of First Nations Peoples, and of Australia as *terra nullius*, these associations took on a *particular* salience. This is not to say that, in Australia, meat was loaded with *more* symbolic colonial power than it had been in 18th century Britain. Rather, metaphor was transformed from power over a distant colonial ‘other’, to power over a group of Nations whose sovereignty more directly threatened British rule. Importantly, while First Nations Peoples have consumed meat since time immemorial, *anthroparchy* – inasmuch as it is a system of oppression that frames human animals as subjects, other animals as objects, and that is *itself* tied to patriarchal and colonial power – only arrived in Australia with the British invasion.

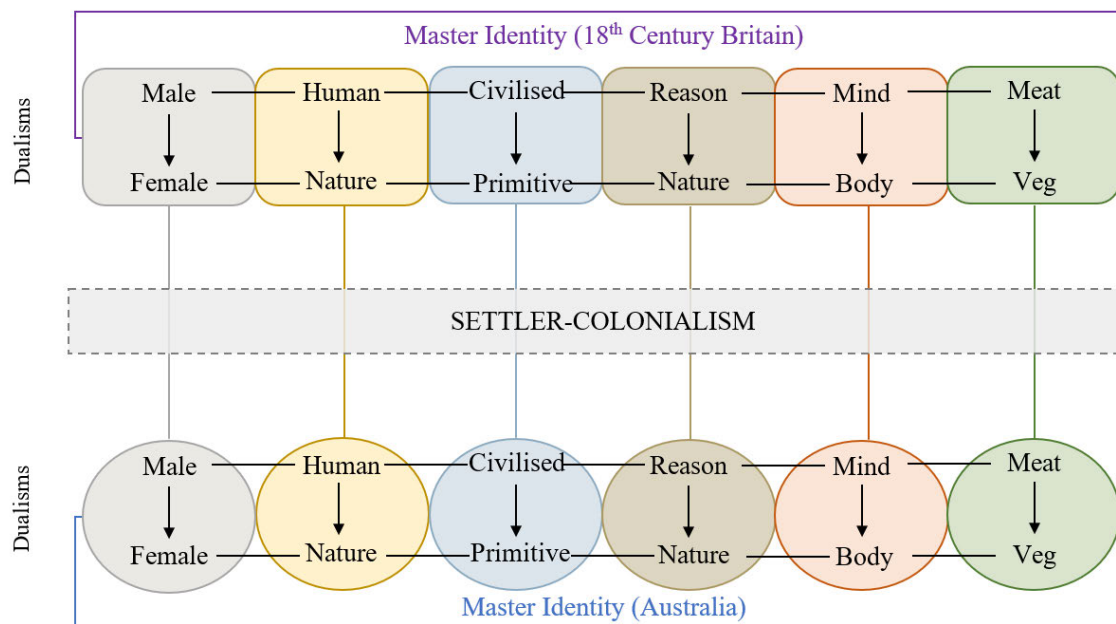
The economic dependency of early colonial Australia on animal agriculture further exacerbated this process. Indeed, some of the first British ships that arrived in Australia were veritable arks, carrying cows, sheeps, pigs, horses, rabbits, goats, turkeys, and ducks (Crook, 2018). Thus, the British invasion was a multispecies one. For Edgar Crook (2018), there was a clear motive to recreate the meat-focused British diet in Australia, and – due to geographical pressures that meant that animal agriculture was more immediately tenable than farming plants in Australia – this motive produced a settler-society where meat was very central to the developing economy. Indeed, Crook writes: “the landowning and business classes were dependent on the sale of feed, livestock and meat, while the working class was employed in animal captivity, transport, slaughter and meat distribution” (2018, p. 64). This process mirrors Plumwood’s (1993) description of *terra nullius* as an outlook that viewed nature as “empty, passive and without value or direction of its own” (p.111) and which therefore legitimated arguments for private property. Indeed, Chen (2016) writes that meat was so ubiquitous and inexpensive in Australia that prospective settlers were peddled migration with the promise of ‘meat three times a day’. Considering that meat often symbolic of wealth and power in 18th century Britain (Regan, 2001), this promise would have been compelling. Ultimately, settler-colonialism can be said to have produced a society in which agriculture was centrally tied to the capitalist exploitation of non-human animals, and

of the working class. These processes resulted in the creation of an Australian *master identity* that was derived from Britain, but then significantly shaped by settler-colonialism.

I have developed a model [Figure 4] to unpack this *master identity*, its relationship with settler-colonialism, and the dualisms on which it depends: notably, male/female (patriarchy), human/nature (anthroparchy), civilised/primitive (colonialism), reason/nature (hierarchy of reason), mind/body (capitalism), but also – I would argue – meat/veg (vegaphobia). Here, I am not attempting to catalogue *all* dualisms, merely those relevant to my study. The placement of specific dualisms in this figure is arbitrary. Their shifting shape is merely intended to demonstrate the mediating effect of settler-colonialism on the formation of an Australian *master identity* that was – in the end – structured somewhat differently to that of 18th century Britain.

Figure 4

This model visualises how the Australian identity was shaped throughout the process of settler-colonialism



The centrality of a meat/veg dualism to the Australian *master identity* – as inculcated by settler-colonialism – is immediately visible in M&LA’s ‘We Love Our Lamb’ campaign, and is given form in the shape of Sam Kekovich. As an ex-AFL footballer, Kekovich is the ideal spokesperson for an organisation attempting to link eating lambs with Australian nationalism.

Suited, often seated at a ministerial desk, and surrounded by Australian imagery – for example, see Figures 5 and 6 – Kekovich’s monologues can be read as policing subordinates, or the positioning of the inferiorised relata. Indeed, he inculcates the advertisements with sexism: “Helen Clarke... does a passable impression of a bloke anyway” (M&LA, 2008, 0:43)”; racism: “yet as mishap spread across the land, like bird flu through a Chinese chicken coop...” (M&LA, 2006, 0:33); classism: “...your long-haired dole-bludging types...” (M&LA, 2005, 0:35); and – of course – speciesism. Like Plumwood’s dualisms, these discriminatory discourses are often bound together. For example, the statement “if I hear another person say thong, when they mean those swimming costumes *poncey* Brazilian blokes wear up their bums, I’ll do my block” (M&LA, 2005, 0:18), reflects the enmeshment of racism and heterosexism.

Figure 5

Sam Kekovich as he appears in the 2007 advertisement; he is shown cutting a ‘ribbon’ of sausages to commemorate the opening of a barbecue (M&LA, 2007, 0:19)

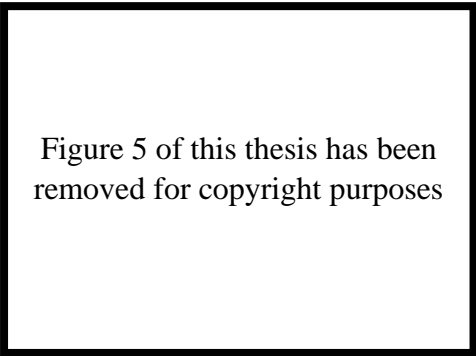
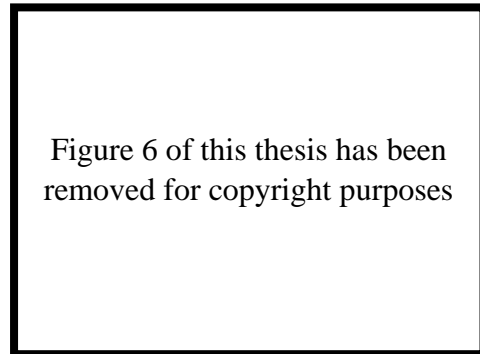


Figure 5 of this thesis has been removed for copyright purposes

Figure 6

Sam Kekovich as he appears in the 2008 advertisement; he is seated at a desk topped with Australian paraphernalia in a rural location (M&LA, 2008, 0:03)



The normalising pressure of this *master identity* was directly observable in the everyday experiences of the interviewees. One experience was particularly illustrative of this normalising pressure. Andy told me about a trip he made to a rural sheep farm in his 20s. Promised a trailer-load of firewood in return for help marking lambs, Andy – who believed this would simply involve spraying lambs with paint – figured this was a good deal. In actuality, ‘marking’ meant castrating the lambs with elastrator rings. Andy recalled the traumatic nature of this experience: “you’re watching them as they suffered in agony for some time while their scrotums became ischemic. And in the days that would follow they would become necrotic. They would die, and then they’d fall off”. In a conversation that followed, one of the farmhands was asked whether or not this process was painful. Andy was shocked by the response and considered this experience foundational to his decision to go vegan later in life: “...one of the blokes joked, and he said: ‘oh come over here and you can try it out if you like’. So, in other words, *yes it does hurt, but we’re doing it anyway*”. While M&LA’s campaigns tend to position eating meat as way to foster social cohesion, Andy’s experience highlights how this cohesion is itself dependent on exclusive ideas about who is and is not worthy of consideration in Australia. Of course, lambs are not worthy of consideration for the bloke in Andy’s story. Anthroparchy is a *natural* part of day-to-day life on Australian farms: as the saying goes, Australia was ‘built on the sheep’s back’. However, the bloke in Andy’s story also suggests that another group is not worthy of consideration: men who might have misgivings about how lambs are treated on Australian farms.

Actually, M&LA’s advertisements also have a long history of *vegaphobia*. For example, the earliest ‘We Love Our Lamb’ advertisement blamed un-Australianism on “soap-avoiding,

pot-smoking hippie-vegetarians” (M&LA, 2005, 1:06). Here, Kekovich’s endorsement of hierarchy is clear: “...they can get stuffed. They know the way to the airport, and if they don’t, I’ll show them” (1:11). Similar attitudes are evident in later advertisements. For example, the 2016 advertisement depicts state-sanctioned SWAT teams ‘rescuing’ expatriates by flying them home for ‘Australia Day’ (M&LA, 2016). In one scene, the SWAT team breaks down the door of an Australian man living in New York and – after discovering the man is now vegan – proceed to torch his food with a flamethrower while he cowers in the corner [Figure 7]. Reportedly, this ad is one of Australia’s most complained-about advertisements of all time, and was reviewed by Ad Standards (2016a) for inciting violence against vegans – though eventually, Ad Standards determined that the advertisement did not discriminate against vegans because M&LA depicted an “exaggerated and unrealistic” situation (2016b, p.10). Clearly, the humour of these advertisements is intentionally irreverent and satirical. Nevertheless, the advertisements are indicative of M&LA’s version of what the Australian *master identity* might find amusing: in this case, state-sanctioned violence against vegetarians and vegans. This vegaphobia commonly overlaps with the gambit of other discriminatory discourses regularly employed by M&LA. For example, as in: “...your long-haired dole-bludging types are indulging their pierced tastebuds in all manner of exotic, often-vegetarian cuisine” (M&LA, 2005, 0:35). Here M&LA links vegaphobia with racism, classism and – being that the intent of the advertisement is to encourage Australians to consume more lambs – speciesism. In doing so, the inferiorisation of vegetarians and vegans under meat/veg dualism seems to overlap and support the inferiorisation of other groups maligned by M&LA.

Figure 7

A swat-style unit is depicted destroying vegan food in the 2016 ‘We Love Our Lamb’ advertisement. The vegan man cowers in the corner next to a dolphin statue and the broken-down door (M&LA, 2016, 1:19)

Figure 7 of this thesis has been removed for copyright purposes

Plumwood (1993) is careful to describe dualisms – and therefore the *master identity* – as developing over time. And indeed, this appears to have been the case with the Australian *master identity*. Recently, M&LA have turned towards positioning lamb as “the meat we can all eat” (2017a, 1:59). For example, the 2018 advertisement features “extreme left and right-wing commentators” (0:23) debating in musical about identity politics, equality, religious heterosexism, the war on terror, global warming, and political correctness, but ultimately coming together over lamb. The advertisement concludes “see, we can all agree on something” (2:24). This platform of ‘diversity’ – or at least, acknowledgement of difference – is a far cry from earlier advertisements which were certainly more shamelessly discriminatory. However, M&LA’s new strategy has not been without controversy. For example, the 2017 advertisement was widely criticised for – amongst other reasons – depicting First Nations Peoples as celebrating the arrival of the First Fleet (M&LA, 2017b; Figure 8). While the advertisement includes moments that *seem* to challenge the civilized/primitive dualism – for example, by casting First Nations actors and actresses – the overall narrative of First Nations Peoples welcoming ‘boat people’ perpetuates settler-colonialism because First Nations Peoples are framed as complicit in their own invasion. Similarly, while a trio of vegans [Figure 9] *seems* to be included – and is, pointedly, *not* made fun of by the advertisement’s lead – their caricaturing as flowy-clothed, guitar-playing *hippies* divorces these vegans from vegan politics. Thus, the vegans are depicted as joyfully participating in an occasion that centralises the consumption of lambs. These advertisements give the appearance of a reluctant concession made by an industry marketing body that has been forced to realise that their campaign lacks diversity. And yet, the advertisements are *still* clearly shaped by a *master narrative* that is defined by patriarchy, anthroparchy and colonialism.

Figure 8

The captain of the ‘First Fleet’ – ostensibly Sir Arthur Phillip - meets with First Nations Peoples, and a Frenchman – ostensibly Lapérouse – arrives with an offering of ‘fromage’ (M&LA, 2017, 0:56)

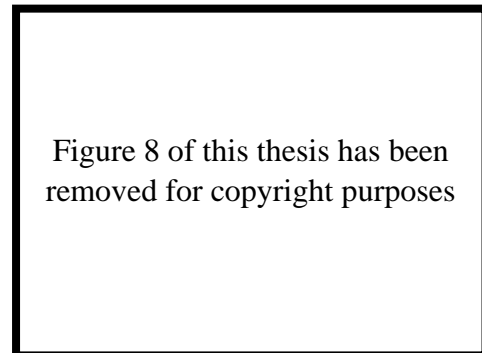
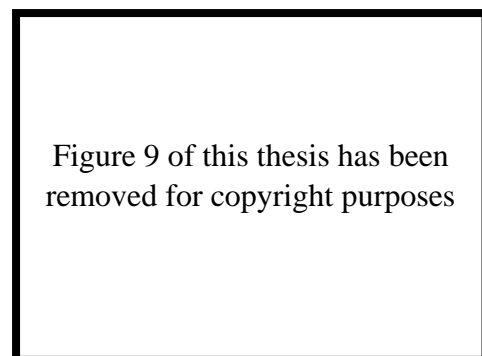


Figure 9

The advertisement’s leads decide not to “crack a vegan joke” about a trio depicted some distance away from the central gathering. The vegans slowly walk towards the celebrations, skirting the liminal space between on and offshore Australia (M&LA, 2017, 1:57)



3.3. Killing Joy / Killing Animals

In *Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed (2010) writes of feminists as killjoys. To Ahmed, the killjoy is a spoilsport who, rather than being treated as a signifier of a problem, is instead “attributed as the origin of bad feeling” (pp. 581-582). Given the Australian context, it is perhaps unsurprising that many interviewees described feeling like a *problem*.

Oscar summarised this attitude succinctly: “Australians have a horrible perception of veganism”. Oscar’s veganism *could* have been perceived as an appropriate response to any number of systemic problems associated with commodifying non-human animals. Instead,

Oscar himself was seen as the problem, or the killjoy. Actually, many interviewees mentioned feeling this way. Jason felt that vegans in Australia were treated like “the trouble child” because they interrupted patterns of consumption that most Australians would rather not think about. This description certainly hearkens back to the aforementioned *Kekovichian* vegaphobia whereby a hegemonic father figure (*the master identity*) disciplines the trouble children (*vegans*) by sending them away to the naughty corner (*offshore processing centres*; M&LA, 0:59). For Jason, this was a common feeling and he described how “...just your presence at the table... can be confronting, can be too much.”.

Though I did not set out to investigate sexuality, two interviewees happened to compare the experience of coming out as gay to the experience of ‘coming out’ as vegan. Jason referred to a *first* and a *second* coming out and described how his family’s toxic masculinity shaped both experiences: “It was kind of like ‘oh! We’re going through this... we’re going through this again!’”. Phil described that when he shared his veganism with people, he felt a pressure in his chest that was similar to when he shared his sexuality. While Phil joked “it [veganism] was a bigger problem for my family than being gay”, he went on to describe how going vegan really was a “similar experience to coming out as gay”. These experiences speak to the stigmatisation of vegan men in Australian society, and converge with existing literature that compares vegaphobic and homophobic stigma (MacInnis & Hodson, 2017).

However, it is worth noting that interviewees rarely referred to one aspect of Australian culture as singularly antagonistic to their veganism. Instead, they often characterised this vegaphobia as emerging out of several bound together or “tied in” institutions. For example, Jordan commented: “Aussie culture is very full of – you know – meat and three veg – you know – meat, like, meat and, and all sorts of – you know- things on the BBQ ...”. Jason phrased it like this:

I think that farm culture and – you know – I think – you know – Australia Day, and lamb and all this stuff and like... it’s... it’s all so tied in that... that people just become so confronted the moment you even try to get a little bit deeper into the concept of what it... what it’s [veganism] about.

Here, Jason is describing how Australia’s farm culture, national holiday, and the meat often associated with that holiday by virtue of M&LA, bind together to create an environment where veganism is triply problematised. This characterisation of Australia culture – as the coalescing or layering of separate but symbiotic institutions which come together to create a

broader vegaphobic environment – significantly informed my choice of theoretical framework. Indeed, it fits neatly alongside Plumwood’s description of a *master identity* produced from sets of horizontally-supportive dualisms. Ultimately, several themes and institutions emerged as I continued to explore how the interviewees characterised Australian culture. The remainder of this chapter explores those themes and institutions that were most commonly cited: namely, there was an overarching focus on regional and rural Australia, class, and education, though masculinity pervaded each of these discussions.

3.3.1. A “very noisy” rural sector

When I asked interviewees how they thought most Australians defined veganism, several referred to communities in rural and regional Australia. For these interviewees, these communities – often bound up with animal agriculture – were viewed as hostile spaces where living as a vegan might be especially difficult. Josh put it like this:

I really feel for the people that are deciding that they wanna go vegan in dairy towns and towns where there are... their livelihoods are dependent on the function of this industry, because what it means to be a man in that town... [means] to be taking over your father’s farm.

Josh tied financial dependence on animal agriculture to a masculinity which emphasises the importance of provision and patrilineal inheritance. Similar sentiments were echoed by other interviewees, like Andy, who viewed farmers as generationally “locked into an enterprise”.

Of course, these communities were also regarded as hostile spaces for non-human animals. For example, Dan mentioned how the centrality of animal agriculture to the economies of rural or regional communities meant that farmers were incentivised to treat animals as resources: “the farmer doesn’t know whether he’s got 3890 chickens or 3884 chickens”. Sometimes these discussions about rural and regional Australia were also related to the perceived overrepresentation of – what Jason called – “farming culture”. For example, Phil suggested that M&LA’s advertisements and the pro-animal farming sentiments on major news channels socially conditioned Australians to eat meat. For Phil, the predominance of animal agriculture in Australian media was related to the historical importance of animal agriculture to the economy, and the ‘story of Australia’ that emerged from this historical context. Thus, while communities in rural and regional Australia were regarded as uniquely problematic, there was *also* a general feeling that the weight of these problematics was felt all throughout Australia.

Similar sentiments have been observed in the extant literature. Bogueva, Marinova and Gordon (2020) surveyed 1053 Australian men living in Sydney and found that the responses of these men were significantly shaped by normative ideas about gender and national identity that centred around animal agriculture. For example, one respondent who consumed meat daily commented: "... they [vegetarian men] are pussies that are not supporting the agricultural efforts of our country" (p. 37). One of their respondents – who consumed meat four to five times per week – commented: "meat is part of who we are in Australia, Waltzing Matildas our sheep, cows, the meat industry supporting our nation."

However, rural and regional Australia were not necessarily characterised as *intensifications* of the *master identity*. Rather, they were sometimes regarded as spaces where hierarchy was ordered in a particular way, which – in turn – inculcated particular ways of relating to others. For example, though men in urban environments have often *also* been socialised to value provision, Josh regarded provision as qualitatively different when it was linked to working in an office rather than to killing animals. Josh went on to explain that the types of masculinity prominent in rural and regional communities – which, to him, were often emotionless and vegaphobic – were also, potentially, adaptive. That is, emotional disengagement might be somewhat adaptive in a community where your livelihood is dependent on sending "someone you raised from birth off to their death". Here, anthroparchy, capitalism and patriarchy work together to restrict the identities of some men – for example, vegans – whilst simultaneously *enabling* expressions of masculinity that accord with the *master identity*.

One of the participants in my study *was* a vegan man living in a rural community. Though he did not work in an industry that was related to animal agriculture, his job meant that he often interacted with people who did work in those industries. Andy spoke at length about the difficulties he experienced as a vegan man who had to navigate the social landscape of a community significantly defined by animal agriculture. The weekend prior to our interview was the 2022 Australian federal election, and Andy had spent the weekend volunteering for the Animal Justice Party. Andy – like Jason and Phil – characterised this experience as a 'coming out': "I put a black t-shirt on and uh... in front of others, and it was like, their jaws were dropping. You know, here's this... guy who um... who suddenly... you know... declared... declared that he stands for something". For Andy, groups of "middle-aged white guys" who had backgrounds in animal agriculture were the most standoffish. Andy described how after approaching one of these groups, their leader physically recoiled:

Andy: [He] didn't want to recognise me, um... *laughs* he was kind of... he was trying to distance himself from me – you know – it was very...

Interviewer: Physically? He was trying to move away?

Andy: Yes! Yes! Absolutely, yeah.

Interviewer: Wow – oh that's fascinating.

Andy: It is, yeah. Yep, it is indeed. I challenged their world

This reaction speaks to Ahmed's metaphor of the killjoy, and indeed, Andy described himself as somewhat of a provocateur. However, he also emphasised the importance of keeping "communication doors open". Andy saw this as a way to disrupt norms about what someone who was passionate about animal rights might look like, and how they might act – breaking ranks and challenging the assumptions about vegans that were embedded in his community. For example, Andy spoke about an interaction he had recently shared with a local cattle farmer. The farmer disclosed to Andy that he'd recently rescued a horse that was going to be sent to the slaughter yards. Andy framed this as an "olive branch" offered in recognition of some assistance Andy had provided the farmer via his work.

Still, living in close proximity to industries that relied on exploiting animals was difficult. Andy spoke at length about an especially harrowing experience that occurred whilst he was looking after a woman who had fallen off a horse. At the same time as he was providing pain relief to the woman, a slaughterman was called to kill the horse: "so he basically bludgeoned the horse to death with a sledgehammer". Andy suggested that – for the family that owned the horse – the sledgehammer was a cheaper alternative than paying the vet, and further, contacting the slaughterman meant that the horse's flesh could be sold untainted by the euthanasia drug. In short, Andy described a context in which one method of killing the horse was adopted over another method of killing the horse because the former was easier and more profitable for the human who *owned* them. Andy's experience clearly delineates the mutually supportive nature of anthroparchy and capitalism in rural Australia, and how this relationship doubly oppresses non-human animals. However, it also – along with the comments made by other interviewees – highlights the difficulties that might be faced by human-animals in these communities, both vegan and nonvegan.

3.3.2. Class

There was also a significant, albeit varied, emphasis on class throughout the interviews. As with discussions about Australian ‘farming culture’, there was an emphasis on context and how class difference might produce different kinds of veganism. Namely, several vegan men mentioned that they suspected being a vegan man would be especially difficult for people in blue-collar industries.

Here, Jordan’s description of someone who might be averse to conversations about veganism is illuminating: “I’m at the pub and I’m talking to Joe Bloggs who’s there, like knocking his beers back and... you know? Like, he’s a tradie, and he goes home to his steak on the barbecue every night”. Here Jordan characterises vegaphobia as bound up with meat-centrism, alcohol, masculinity and – in referring to Joe Bloggs as a *tradie* (or, tradesman) – with class. Similarly, Oscar mentioned that a (male) tradesmen might find it especially difficult to go vegan because “masculinity can be like associated a lot more with like, kind of working-class kind of things.

For Jason, the feeling that veganism might be difficult for people working in certain industries was significantly informed by his experiences with his brother. For example, Jason told me how – when his brother was working in an abattoir – his brother would call him to “regale... [him] ...with the experience”:

... being on the phone on the receiving end of that, and having to listen to it knowing that the pure intent... the pure intent is to cause discomfort and upset, like... that’s upsetting... like that’s aggressive... that’s not... there’s no... there’s no need for that.

Jason linked this experience with the prevalence of toxic masculinity in his family: “they have this toxic masculinity and this want to take you down... take each other down a peg or two by emasculating each other and taking the piss out of each other and doing all of this stuff”. Thus, for Jason, class was also bound up with patriarchy, anthroparchy and vegaphobia. Notably, while veganism was often framed as an identity and practice that might be difficult in particular class positions, nobody spoke about how class shaped *who* worked in industries that were more closely entangled with animal agriculture.

One of the interviewees had firsthand experience working alongside people who viewed his veganism as problematic. Dan – who works in a blue-collar industry and was raised farming and hunting – described how colleagues sometimes viewed his veganism as emasculating: “...so some common words that I hear around site, if you’re happy with some derogatory

statements: um... pussies, a bunch of crying girls, soyboys”. Dan tried to treat these moments as opportunities to educate other people about veganism. However, this wasn’t always possible:

I’ve had one individual on site who just would not let it rest, and I was having a bad day. My nan had died like a day or two earlier, I’d come from some funeral arrangements and I’d gone to site. I probably wasn’t in the best emotional state... um... and this... this person just kept at it. And I literally dropped my tools, took my toolbelt off and said ‘right, you and I are going to fucking have it out. You’re gonna represent meat, and I’m going to represent veggies and I’m going to fucking flog you cunt. And one of us will be standing.’ And yeah, he pretty quickly apologised and walked off.

Dan wasn’t proud of this moment, and spoke at length about his struggles overcoming the instinctive violence trained into him by the military. However, his experience here speaks to the existence of a *master narrative* that values and respects violence over non-human and human animals. Ultimately, these experiences suggest an enmeshment of anthroparchy, patriarchy and *specifically* blue-collar capitalism.

3.3.3. Education

Almost everyone I interviewed framed their veganism as an educated position. That is, they claimed they went vegan *in response* to becoming aware about something that was previously unknown. Commonly – though not always – this took the form of watching documentaries, and indeed, several were referred to throughout the interviews. In contrast, non-vegans were characterised as less educated, as misunderstanding veganism, or as not wanting to think about the problematics of using animal products. For Phil, education was important because of an understanding that “nutrition is not a joke”. In contrast, he identified nonvegans as misunderstanding veganism because they hadn’t educated themselves:

Some people they don’t know what the difference is between veganism and vegetarianism, but... they tell like: ‘vegan diet is not healthy’, or ‘you’re soyboy’ or whatever. So you’re showing how little the public is educated about this topic.

In Josh’s experience, nonvegans often did not understand “that little part in the definition which is reducing as much harm as possible”. Josh mentioned feeling frustrated by common objections to his veganism based on the idea that “eating fruits and veg also produces harm”

– though he acknowledged that vegans may have contributed to the problem by advocating vegan philosophy as perfect.

For others, there was a feeling that most Australians just didn't want to think about it. Angus mentioned how he was sometimes prodded by his dad with comments like: "should I put a steak on for you?". When Angus responded by suggesting that they watch *Dominion* together – one of the most popular vegan documentaries – his dad quickly stopped prodding. Angus went on to explain his dad's response: "he knows on some level that what we do to animals is wrong". Therein, this lack of education was sometimes characterised as wilful.

Otherwise, education was related to problems that interviewees *didn't* experience. For example, while Stephen had observed gendered vegaphobia, he didn't observe it frequently in his everyday life. Stephen suggested that this was because he existed in a "university academic – kind of – sphere" where that sort of rhetoric was uncommon. Josh felt similarly and suggested that he didn't experience gender-based stigmatisation because everyone around him was "quite educated". I go on to explore this framing of veganism as an educated position further in Chapter 3.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the interlocking oppressions that constitute the Australian context. Borrowing on the work of Val Plumwood, I have argued that settler-colonialism has significantly shaped a *master identity* that stigmatises vegan men. I explored this *master identity* using M&LA's We Love Our Lamb campaign, and proposed meat/veg dualism to explain how the dominant positioning of meat is itself enmeshed with other dualisms or forms of oppression. For the interviewees, there was an overarching feeling that they were seen as a *problem*, or a *killjoy*. I unpacked these feelings in relation to major themes that emerged from the interviews: rurality, class, and education. The following chapter attends to how masculinity was felt, lived, and practiced by the interviewees.

4. Rationalising Hegemony: “a proud vegan guy”

Originally, I had assumed that most interviewees would refer to a tension between their veganism and their masculinity. However, this assumption was quickly challenged when Jordan – in my very first interview – suggested that his veganism was actually linked to his masculinity. He put it like this: “I feel like, masculinity is maybe linked with sports, whereas I’m not that. My masculinity feels like it’s linked with being vegan: ‘I am a proud vegan guy, look at me, uh... I’m going to highlight all the benefits’”.

Initially I found this comment confusing, and – as I recorded in my post-interview reflection – “FASCINATING”. My own lived experience of veganism and masculinity has always been one of tension. That is, I have always felt torn between liberatory philosophy which promises deliverance from hierarchies, and on the other hand, a gender identity which I was assigned arbitrarily at birth and according to which I was subsequently expected to embody all sorts of peculiar traits which – often – were *grounded* in or perpetuated hierarchies. Actually, I wasn’t alone in feeling this tension. Oscar saw “the main fundamentals of masculinity as inherently against veganism”. Nevertheless, as I continued to hold interviews, code transcripts, and reflect on the findings, I realised that this space between veganism and masculinity was often less distant than I had first assumed.

The previous chapter cursorily mapped out the Australian *master identity*, and demonstrated how vegan men in Australia are labelled as killjoys because they are perceived to challenge some of the hierarchies which constitute the *master identity*. However, rather than responding to this stigmatisation by challenging the overarching structure of the *master identity*, the interviews suggest that vegan men may challenge particular dualisms by capitulating to the hierarchies of other dualisms. Specifically, interviewees challenged meat/veg and human/nature dualism by appealing to the logic of reason/nature, reason/emotion, and male/female dualism. I term this practice ‘everyday heganism’ and argue that veganism is an ideal outlet for men who are socialised to value particular traits, like saviourism, because – unlike other social justice movements – vegan men can embody these traits without the risk of being held accountable for their activism by the people they are advocating for. This practice itself reflects the existing stigmatisation of vegan men in Australia, as well as how men are socialised. These findings concur with existing research which suggests that vegan men may practise hybrid masculinities wherein they fortify unequal power relations between men and women (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018).

4.1. Defining Masculinity

While responses to questions about veganism were often offered readily and with a high degree of fluency, most interviewees found it relatively difficult to talk about lived experiences of masculinity. Conversations that touched on lived experiences of masculinity were often stilted, interspersed with long pauses, and required more prompting questions where I asked for further elaboration or clarification. However, this difficulty was notably less evident when gender was discussed as a hierarchical structure. These conversations tended to flow much more smoothly, and interviewees regularly raised key concepts like patriarchy, toxic masculinity, and gender essentialism. This section explores how the interviewees defined masculinity. Owing to the distinction highlighted above, I have divided this section into two parts: *masculinity as a social construct* and *lived masculinity*.

4.1.1. Masculinity as a social construct

Interviewees were most comfortable when talking about masculinity as a hierarchical structure, and especially, a structure that they could distance themselves from by asserting their difference as a *vegan* man. Andy defined masculinity like this: “It’s a story that we’ve been told, and the story isn’t... it’s not the only story. It’s a... and it’s a story that also fails a lot of the time”. Andy went on to describe patriarchy as a cultural institution which has emerged from centuries of layering cultural norms. For Andy, patriarchy inculcated particular behaviours – like aggression and defensiveness – and attitudes, like beliefs about marriage and who should be the ‘breadwinner’. Andy’s description of masculinity and patriarchy were particularly eloquent – indeed he went on to quote bell hooks – though, several other interviewees offered similar descriptions. Isaac described how categories like ‘man’ and ‘woman’ were socially constructed, and how – in his view – it is important to use privileges granted by patriarchy to create spaces where everyone has “an equal opportunity and an equal voice”. Other interviewees described similar social phenomena, albeit sometimes using different language: for example, by referring to the damaging and unhealthy effects of *toxic masculinity*, *gender essentialism*, and *fragile masculinity*. Angus defined the latter like this: “Like it [masculinity] really needs to play a role, to pretend something to be... or do something, otherwise it [is] very fragile. ‘Glass’ masculinity might just shatter in pieces if you’re not doing something what’s expected from you.”

When describing masculinity as a social construct, interviewees almost always referred to negative qualities, or stereotypes like physical and mental toughness, self-sacrifice, and persistence. For Oscar, these normative expectations seemed to inhibit thinking about his own

lived experience of masculinity: “it’s hard to think about the positives. You can only really think about the negatives”. Indeed, he was not alone in describing these expectations as burdensome. Jason described how these expectations “lock you into... into being a certain way and stop you from actually being able to experience um... yourself in a more-free state”.

Finally, one interviewee offered a particularly compelling analysis of masculinity as a social construct. Nicholas defined masculinity – and femininity – as fluid and contextual. For Nicholas, masculinity expressed itself differently depending on the social context. He defined it like this:

I feel like we have these... these terms like masculinity and femininity and they have these... they have a whole bunch of characteristics, and then each one of those characteristics will have like... almost like a... a measure. You know?

Nicholas went on to describe that a characteristic like ‘fortitude’ might be expressed differently depending on a range of variables, such as the people you’re surrounded by or the behaviour you’re engaging in. A similar view was expressed by Jason, who viewed masculinity as “something that survives because of the way people... exist within social groups”. There was, however, significantly less uniformity of opinion when it came to discussing lived experiences of masculinity.

4.1.2. Lived masculinity

Lived experiences of masculinity were *difficult* to discuss. Indeed, several interviewees openly described masculinity as something that was unconscious, or that was hard to think about. Other interviewees didn’t like labelling themselves as masculine, and one participant felt that their ‘level’ of masculinity shifted and changed over time. A couple of interviewees mentioned that masculinity wasn’t something they wanted to question – it was *just right*: “I’ve never questioned it of myself as to what makes me feel masculine, I just know I am” and “I’ve never brought my own masculinity into question, and I don’t think I ever would”. Other interviewees viewed their masculinity as something they *needed* to keep questioning or deconstructing. For the interviewees that emphasised the importance of deconstructing their masculinity, there was often a high-level of reflexivity about their privilege under patriarchy. These interviewees repeatedly acknowledged that gender hierarchies were socially constructed and tried to practise a ‘detoxed’ masculinity that was well-removed from the problematic masculinities they observed in Australian society.

Interviewees would often raise what they felt masculinity *should* be about. For example, interviewees often spoke about the need to use their strength *wisely* – that is, by redirecting it to help people in need. Other interviewees spoke about how masculinity was about being confident or ‘chill’ in yourself. And others mentioned the importance of being understanding, patient and standing up for others. Sometimes these discussions necessitated conversation about what masculinity *shouldn't* be about: namely, trying to ‘prove’ masculinity was widely regarded as problematic and several interviewees mentioned the importance of ‘being true to yourself’ rather than dishonestly enacting certain behaviours or attitudes.

Finally, personal experiences of masculinity were sometimes linked to social roles. Josh mentioned that his understanding of masculinity was deeply related to his position as a father, brother, and son. Similarly, Phil linked his masculinity to the notion of provision and indicated that his understanding of masculinity significantly emerged out of watching how his father and brother practised non-hegemonic masculinities.

4.2. Valorising Reason

For Val Plumwood (1993) – who draws on the work of Nancy Hartsock (1990) – a reason/nature dualism underpins the key concepts of western culture and represents a perspective that is white, male, and Eurocentric. Plumwood calls this a ‘perspective of power’ and goes on to argue that “this perspective constructs these others by exclusion (or some degree of departure from the norm or centre) as some form of nature in contrast to the subject, the master, who claims for himself both full humanity and reason” (p. 44). This *perspective of power* significantly underpinned how the interviewees related to their veganism, as well as the *others* in their lives: throughout the majority of interviews, there was an overwhelming emphasis that vegans were *logically consistent* (in contrast to *logically inconsistent* nonvegans), *evidence-based* (in contrast to *uneducated* nonvegans), and *dissonance-free* (in contrast to *cognitively dissonant* nonvegans). While reason was widely valorised, emotion was sometimes problematised, speaking to the broader inferiorisation of emotion under reason/emotion dualism. Therefore, while the interviews contested meat/veg dualism, and sometimes human/nature dualism, they did not do so by challenging the broader structure of the *master identity*. Instead, they contested these dualisms by reaffirming their adherence to reason, which – according to Plumwood - significantly anchors human/nature and male/female dualism.

Foremost, this reaffirmation took the form of claiming the logical position, often in contrast to a purported illogical position. Dan put this succinctly: “I hold myself to a standard that I feel I must take every possible logical... available measure” and Nicholas described non-veganism as “plainly illogical”. Similarly, Isaac defined his veganism as about the “...the logical consist- like consistency... or inconsistency rather, of loving animals... saying that we [human-animals] love animals, but choosing to pay industries that slaughter animals for us”. Similar sentiments were echoed by other interviewees who viewed nonvegans as illogical or ignorant. Oscar simply labelled veganism as “correct” and described nonvegans as a departure from this correctness: “I think that they probably know that they’re wrong, whether it’s their subconscious or anything like that. I think that they just choose ignorance”. Similarly, Jason referred to how, at this point:

...everyone has been exposed to it [“what happens in farming environments”] in some way or another, big or small. But nobody wants to actually sit with it, and really take the time to really reflect on it and think about it.

Discussions also touched on veganism as an educated position that was rooted in science and evidence-based research. Actually, when I asked the interviewees why they agreed to participate in my study, a few of them responded by indicating a desire to facilitate the production of *more* vegan research. For Josh, research was important so that vegan men could “equip themselves with witty answers, educated statements, and compassion”, without which people would “see you as a target”. Josh told me that he’d “read like hundreds of publications” and “watched tonnes of documentaries”. Having done so, Josh now believed he was *armed* to answer an array of questions. Similarly, Jordan – who emphasised the importance of studies with good reliability and good validity – spoke to the importance of using evidence to “strengthen the argument for veganism”. In practice, Jordan indicated that he was very happy “to go through what the science says” as long as the respondent was open to having that conversation. Finally, this position of education was often contrasted with a position of ignorance or misinformation. For Phil, most people are “not checking the facts, not reading the studies, they’re just going with the flow” and with what media and social media are “feeding them with”.

Often discussion about logic or moral consistency coalesced around a particular term: *cognitive dissonance*. This term arose very frequently in the interviews. Coined by Leon Festinger (1957) the term is now widely used by vegan activists to highlight the hypocrisy of

claiming to love animals whilst simultaneously eating them (PETA, 2022). Isaac defined veganism as “profoundly about questioning your cognitive dissonance... and changing your behaviour in a way that – you know – reconciles your beliefs with your behaviour”.

Similarly, Phil mentioned how – though he didn’t necessarily discuss masculinity with his vegan male friends – they often were “discussing irrationality that uh... omnivores are trying to tell about veganism and like how they are destroying the environment, and torturing innocent animals...” By framing veganism as a practice that relieves cognitive dissonance, or irrationality, these interviewees thereby define themselves as morally consistent, and nonvegans – consequently – as inconsistent.

While vegan reason was often defined in relation to the logically inconsistent, uneducated, or dissonant position of nonvegans, vegan reason was *also* defined in relation to the positions of other vegans. For example, Oscar was clear to mention that he was not vocal about his veganism and Isaac suggested that, when people think of veganism, they’re likely to:

...think of groups like Extinction Rebellion or assume that it’s sort of this highly politicised, woke, socialist movement, rather than it actually being a... an ethical discussion about the logical consistency of claiming to... um... love animals, yet um... engaging in paying companies to murder animals for you.

Isaac highlighted the approach of Australian vegan activist-influencer James Aspey as unnecessarily aggressive. Indeed, several interviewees emphasised that they were not like those ‘militant’, ‘angry’ or ‘confrontational’ vegans. For example, while Jordan mentioned that it is important to make people “realise what they’re doing” he was careful to clarify that he did so “not in a militant ac- you know? Like... um... serious activism kind of way”.

Jordan went on to describe that while he was very angry 10 years ago, he no longer posted graphic images or attempted to shame and guilt people because “that put people off”. Josh – who used to attend street activism events – referred to a similar trajectory. For Josh “the first stage is obviously education and then pretty much straight away is militancy, which I think is mixed in with a lot of confusion, and guilt.”. When I asked Josh if there was anything else he’d like to discuss before we closed our interview, he emphasised that other vegan men should “practise compassion” because “militancy doesn’t work 99% of the time”. Finally, two interviewees mentioned wanting to distance themselves from other vegans whom they viewed as irrational. Oscar was pleased that an anti-mask protest during early 2021 was not reported as a vegan protest despite being widely attended by several members of Sydney’s

vegan community. Similarly, Angus distanced his own veganism from that of a distant relative, also a vegan man, who “became a huge anti-vax QAnon guy”. Overall, the interviewees seemed to deploy the same rhetoric that may have been used against them in an effort to differentiate their own vegan practice as reasonable, unlike the practice of other vegans. However, in doing so, their vegan practice depends on adherence to a dualism which values reason and inferiorises emotional displays of anger, militancy, and other vulnerabilities. It is possible that ‘reasonable male veganism’ thus represents a reformed vegan who used to be angry but is no longer.

Indeed, while reason was often central to discussions about veganism, so was emotion. Contrasted with reason, emotion was often viewed as problematic, though often for different reasons. Dan and Phil highlighted how empathy and caring were often regarded as feminine traits, speaking to the horizontally supporting nature of the reason/emotion and man/woman dualisms. For example, Dan highlighted how “it’s seen to be a rather effeminate position to hold to outwardly state that you care about animals enough to change your habits”. For Dan and Phil this essentialising of empathy and care complicated their everyday practice of veganism. When I spoke with Andy about his experience of being isolated by the other men in his community whilst he was volunteering for the Animal Justice Party, he mentioned “I was able to distance myself emotionally from all that stuff, so I didn’t really – you know – it was water off the proverbial duck’s back”. By disengaging emotionally, Andy was able to cope with a situation that may have otherwise been upsetting.

Otherwise, when I asked interviewees about how they would explain their veganism to other animals, four clarified that their veganism was not really informed by compassion towards other animals per se. For Angus – who used to study agriculture in high school – “cows and sheep are just disgusting, dirty animals that I don’t want to be near... so I don’t know if I wanna have a conversation with them”. Oscar expressed that while he does care for the animals in a way, he’s “not out there to go and like pat a sheep or whatever. I just wanna leave them alone. I want them to live their own lives”. Similar sentiments were expressed by Dan: “I don’t know you, I don’t love you, but I don’t need to love you to abstain from causing you harm, because you are a moral being who’s worthy of consideration”, and Phil who specified that veganism is “just doing something out of compassion for someone you never know, you will never know, and you perhaps don’t need to know”. These responses are reminiscent of the ongoing rationalisation of animal rights discourses whereby the fear of being seen as ‘an animal lover’ is producing a movement more defined by logic than a

feminist ethics of care (Seager, 2003). Indeed, by capitulating to reason in the hope of explaining veganism, vegan men can be said to shore up reason/nature dualism which supports the meat/veg and human/nature dualism, which they might be attempting to dismantle.

Andy also referred to the problematics of emotion in social media debates. While Andy tried his best to share well-referenced pieces of information, he felt that all an internet troll had to do was “elicit an emotional response and they’ve won”. This quote frames many of the ways that interviewees related to reason and emotion. If vegan men are framed by the *master identity* as emotional – and thereby not worthy of serious consideration – and vegan men try to contest this narrative by claiming that they’re actually very reasonable – and *not* emotional – then disproving this claim is as simple as eliciting a singular display of emotion.

4.3. Vegan Battlegrounds

Culture thus accumulates a store of such conceptual weapons, which can be mined, refined, and redeployed for new uses. So old oppressions stored as dualisms facilitate and break path for new ones

(Plumwood, 1993, p. 43)

Alongside discussions about veganism as a reasonable position, there ran tangential discussions about argumentation and tactics. Many interviewees discussed how to appropriately argue with nonvegans, and often alluded to logical fallacies or problematic arguments. There was also a focus on argumentation as vegan praxis, or as a way for vegans to methodically work through the logical inconsistencies of nonvegans. Further, interviewees suggested tactics that could either reframe vegans as masculine, nonvegans as not masculine, or leverage the inferior position of women under the man/woman dualism to advocate for veganism. In any case, this articulation of veganism as a battleground ran throughout the majority of the interviews. In exploring this battleground, I argue that vegan men are redeploying stores of “conceptual weapons”, as alluded to by Plumwood (1993) in this section’s epigraph. That is, they challenge particular dualisms associated with veganism and masculinity by reasserting their commitment to other dualisms and by leveraging their own privilege under said dualisms.

4.3.1. “strengthening the argument for veganism”

There was a strong emphasis throughout the interviews on learning how to argue with nonvegans. I have already mentioned the extensive discussions about cognitive dissonance,

however there were – often – parallel discussions about recognising other logical fallacies, or problematic arguments. For example, Isaac told me about how he transitioned to veganism after watching debates on YouTube:

I was able to sort of see... like, see in real time... like the arguments that get made by – you know – people who consume animal products, and just immediately see how, like, logically inconsistent all these arguments were and how easily they were rebuttal... like rebutted.

While watching these videos Isaac noted the prominence of *ad hominem arguments* - a style of argument where the person making the argument is attacked rather than the argument itself. Having noticed the problematic arguments made by the nonvegan debater, Isaac realised “none of these omnivores have any legitimate logically consistent arguments”. Several other interviewees referred to fallacious or problematic arguments. For example, Phil referred to *whataboutisms* – a deflective technique – and Andy referred to “cognitive biases”. For Andy, learning about these biases and the styles of argumentation was a “good way of defusing and isolating yourself from harmful uh... harmful communication”. For example, if someone made an *ad hominem* argument, that was a good sign to Andy that they weren’t “interested in engaging with the topic at all”.

There was also a focus on argumentation as vegan praxis, or as a way for vegans to methodically work through the logical inconsistencies of nonvegans. For example, over many years of activism Dan had developed a five-question Socratic questioning framework which he used in discussions with nonvegans. For Dan, this method was “the best way to cut through what somebody thinks, and then to be able to relate any further talking points back to their... sort of their main precepts of what they believe.” Each question demanded a yes or no response and could be itself broken down into several sub-questions, depending on the respondent. In some cases, these sub-questions could themselves be broken down further. For example, if someone answered negatively to question 4c - “are we able to meet all our vitamins and minerals without eating animals?” – Dan might ask: “where do animals get them?”. Isaac also spoke about argumentation as vegan praxis, and was a fan of YouTuber ‘Ask Yourself’. Isaac was excited to tell me about a type of argument that was invented by Ask Yourself – the ‘name the trait’ argument which Isaac described as “what is the trait, that if it was true of humans would make it um... like ethically acceptable... to kill them and eat them”. Learning how to effectively argue with nonvegans was also viewed as essential by

Josh, who suggested that vegans read Dale Carnegie's '*How to Win Friends and Influence People*' (1936). This focus on argumentation was pervasive and broadly represents a redeployment of reason as a means by which to contest nonvegan logic. While reason and argumentation were certainly tied to patriarchy, several interviewees referred to specific tactics which more overtly leveraged man/woman dualism. These tactics will be explored in the next section.

4.3.2. Tactics

Several interviewees referred to tactics that could be used to resituate vegans as masculine. For example, Jordan told me about conversations he had shared with nonvegan men about male sexual potency. Having watched the vegan documentary, *The Game Changers* (Psihoyos, 2018) – which suggested that a plant-based diet increased 'erection strength' – Jordan sometimes broached this subject with nonvegan men. Often, the response was dramatic: "Oh, wow! Oh! Wow! That's amazing! I'm – alright I'm going to look at it!". I asked Jordan how he felt this response compared to the responses he garnered when he spoke about ethics, which served as Jordan's primary motivation for being vegan. Jordan responded:

I feel like, you know... if you're talking about ethics: "oh, you [are] just, uh... *sighs* a 'care bear'..." you know? You just... you know? You just someone who cares too much about the world. And then you're dismissed... But if you talk about, perhaps, the... the... um... the physiological perks and benefits, *that* has a personal connection to them, you know? And I think because... like... as human beings we've got a sex drive, we've got a hunger drive, like... it's a biological drive. It's such a big thing for... for... for... men.

While virility is usually symbolically attached to meat, Jordan contests that notion by emphasising the penis-enhancing powers of a plant-based diet: vegan men can be virile – and accord with gender norms – too. Other interviewees shared similar discussions about protein. For example, Oscar mentioned that he sometimes looked at the protein contents of tofu with nonvegan men at the gym. Oscar contests the putative femininity of vegetables – in this case tofu, which is doubly laden with racist and misogynistic rhetoric about soybeans – by assigning them the muscle-strengthening powers usually associated with meat (Oleschuk, Johnston & Baumann, 2019). For Jordan and Josh, discussions about protein intertwined with the myth-busting potential of vegan body-builders. Indeed, Jordan viewed Nimai Delgado – a

vegan professional bodybuilder and lifestyle coach – as repudiating the myth that vegans are protein-deficient.

...he's one of those kind of people, who like... "you know all that bullshit about needing protein? Look at me. Like I certainly am not lacking protein"... Meanwhile, you would never argue or disagree with the guy because he's enormous.

Jordan explained how he tried to repudiate this myth himself via his own Instagram account:

I might go to the beach and take a bit of a selfie – you know – good light... really good angles, like... I look amazing. But it's all kind of like lights and shadows. And of course, I post those kind of pictures.

For Josh – who originally went vegan for health reasons – knowing about vegan body-builders encouraged him to try out veganism:

I was really inspired by Patrik Baboumian [a German-Armenian bodybuilder and, formerly, "German's Strongest Man"] because... I wanted to be strong, I wanted to be alpha, and I wanted to be able to push if someone pushed back. So, I would be looking for someone who embodied those physical attributes.

Josh and Jordan contest the well-trodden notion that men need to consume meat to affirm their masculinity. They do so by positioning vegan body-builders as legitimating veganism because body-builders repudiate common vegaphobic talking points. However, in doing so they capitulate to the man/woman dualism that values strength, power and – all in all – many of the same qualities that are associated with meat. Thus, by framing veganism as a way to enhance masculinity – whether that be through stronger erections, more protein or greater physical strength – vegan men can be said to appropriate the hierarchical power of one dualism in order to advocate for the dissolution of another.

As well as situating veganism as manly, several interviewees referred to tactics that could be used to resituate nonvegans as *not* manly. For example, Dan mentioned that if someone called him a *pussy* or a *soyboy* then he might respond: "only one of us here is still drinking breastmilk". For Dan, this was an intentional "disarming tactic". He put it like this:

if they've called me a pussy or a soyboy, you know, generally I can... I can pitch it that in their... their position on it is that it's... it's a feminine position to hold, and therefore I wish to speak to them about female hormones for example. So, I'll speak

to them about estrogen, and then once I've opened them up, then I'll take them through the full range of ethical conundrums that we find ourselves in when we exploit animals.

Here Dan appropriates the logic of a *master identity* which aligns vegans with women. In doing so, he redirects these accusations – not by asserting that they are vegaphobic or sexist, and not by asserting veganism is masculine, but – by suggesting that nonvegans are *more* like women than vegans. Though his goal is ultimately to discuss veganism as an ethical position, he tactically advances towards that position by recategorising nonvegan masculinities as subordinate. A similar logic was used by Jordan who suggested that, though Australian men were often stereotyped as fit and healthy, he perceived Australians as a “bunch of largely meat-eaters, who don't always look super healthy”. Considering that fitness and health were central to Jordan's life as a vegan man, this description illustrates a similar reverse subordination tactic whereby vegan men are framed as fit and healthy, and nonvegan men are framed as unhealthy.

Jordan also referred to another tactic:

I will talk about, um... key words that are very um... sort of emotionally-arousing. So say for example, within the meat-industry, cows are artificially-inseminated, um... that's rape. To me that is a black and white, that is a clear non-consensual rape act.

Here Jordan is attempting to generalise the negative associations attached to a word like 'rape' in order to advocate for veganism. To be clear, Jordan was careful to note that using emotionally-arousing words like 'rape' and 'murder' was controversial and sometimes off-putting. Indeed, he described the situations when he used these words as moments when he went “a bit harder” than intended. Nevertheless, by appropriating the trauma of sexual violence Jordan's advocacy mobilises the weight of a patriarchy under which he is significantly less likely to be affected by sexual violence (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020). Ultimately, doing so leverages the precarious position of women under patriarchy to advocate against anthroparchy.

Dan mobilised a similar strategy whereby he paralleled the experience of birthing a baby human to birthing a baby cow. In his activism he would ask nonvegan women to:

...cast back to when you first delivered your baby, you first got to hold him, her, them, whatever, you got to hold – imagine at that moment somebody came in and

ripped them from your arms and you were never to see them again. That is the action of dairy.

Dan went on to describe how he *loved* to speak “to the maternal instinct” which, ostensibly, he viewed as similar across species. Dan loved “to evoke emotion” whilst trying to stay “as rational as possible” himself. Indeed, both of these tactics invoked by Jordan and Dan are intended to invoke an emotional response that speaks to the positioning of women: either as victims of sexual violence, or as quintessential caregivers. The capacity for emotion to be used for social control has been long documented by feminists (Hemmings, 2005; Ahmed, 2010). However, its use here is particularly pernicious considering that these tactics are themselves reliant on the horizontal comparison of women and animals under the *master identity*. Ultimately, these tactics weaponise the man/woman dualism to advocate for the dissolution of the human/nature dualism.

4.3. ‘Voices for the Voiceless’

Oliver (2021) writes that veganism’s emphasis on voicelessness has manifested – partially – as a saviour complex (p. 8). Whilst Oliver’s description of saviourism was particularly visible in online performances of vegan masculinity, the interviews suggest that saviourism is *also* visible in everyday vegan masculinities.

About half of the interviewees mentioned the importance of being a vegan advocate. For example, Jordan and Isaac described feeling a need to be a ‘*voice for the voiceless*’. Dan – who has extensive experience as an activist – also felt a need to speak on behalf of other animals:

I also feel though that animals are probably some of the most vulnerable in all of the um... social issues, I guess, if you want to call it one of those. They’re literally unable to speak or fight for themselves. You know, so I... *sigh* it goes back to some of my army mindset, what initially caused me to join there, which was: the more someone needs your help, the more you should offer it. Or the more you should be able... willing to give it. Um... you know, the strong should help the weak essentially.

Dan links the precarious positioning of non-human animals to a need – inculcated by his army training – to help the weak. Actually, when Dan went vegan, he did so believing that veganism might literally reduce his lifespan, or break his bones. He did so anyway “because I was just in a place where I just couldn’t harm another, even if it’s for my own benefit... I just didn’t want to do it”. Of course, non-human animals are not *voiceless* and – has been

critiqued in recent work that calls for the *cripping* of animal ethics (Taylor, 2017) – an emphasis on voicelessness patronises non-human animals to such an extent that their capacity for agency is only recognised when they are spoken for by human animals.

While Dan’s characterisation of veganism as martyrdom or self-sacrifice was unique amongst the interviewees, beliefs about veganism as an identity which centralised the importance of saving other animals were widespread. For example, Jordan offered a similar response when I asked him how he would describe his veganism to other animals. Jordan was visibly upset as he answered this question but – though I offered that we stop the interview – he persisted:

I’m so embarrassed to be human sometimes. Like I’m so appalled at being associated with this system, you know? ...I would just let them know that I’m on their side. I’m trying to talk for them, um... I’m trying to sort of do my best in terms of – you know – speak for them... speak on behalf of them.

These characterisations of veganism were remarkably similar to how several interviewees defined masculinity. For Isaac, masculinity was about using strength and power to “help those in need and advocate for those who do not have that power”. Andy defined masculinity similarly and aligned it with defence, protection and standing up for others. While these definitions of masculinity were often offered *in contrast* to the qualities inculcated by patriarchy, they nevertheless illustrate a theorisation of veganism that is heavily embedded in gendered stereotypes about who should be the saviour and who should be saved. Vegan identity – when articulated thusly – can therefore be said to represent – what Plumwood (1993) terms – ‘denied dependency’ (p. 41) – whereby vegan identity is predicated on the inferiorisation of non-human animals under anthroparchy.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various ways vegan men challenge meat/veg dualism, and sometimes human/nature dualism, by appropriating the hierarchical power of other dualisms. In doing so, I have highlighted the problematics of legitimating veganism by appealing to the logic of a *master identity* which stigmatises it. Though not pursued maliciously, these problematics are nevertheless indicative of the need to reconsider aspects of how men identify with and practise veganism. While the identity and practices of the interviewees are not so *hypermasculine* as those of the *hegan* archetype delineated by Kathleen Pierce (2010), they nevertheless operate to make veganism “manly as well” (Wright, 2015, p. 126).

Therefore, vegan men who valorise reason, emphasise the importance of argumentation and

tactics, and whose identity is grounded in saviourism, can be said to perform *everyday heganism*. These findings align closely with the existing research on vegan men which suggest that they engage in *hybrid masculinities* which ultimately fortify unequal power relations between men and women (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018).

Though it is necessary to reconsider how vegan men practise everyday heganism, in some ways, the advent of everyday heganism is unsurprising. It makes sense that vegan men might valorise reason when men – disproportionately – are socialised to value reason, and especially considering vegaphobic rhetoric often labels vegans as unreasonable animal-lovers. It makes sense that vegan men might emphasise the importance of argumentation and tactics when you consider the vast array of “gotcha moments” (Giraud, 2021) they are often expected to respond to. Further, it makes sense that vegan men might articulate a veganism that is grounded in saviourism when you consider that many men are socialised to value providing or protecting. Therefore, while there is a pressing need to reconsider how men practise and identify with veganism, it is *also* necessary to acknowledge that everyday heganism has itself been cultivated by the logic of a *master identity* which more readily interfaces with vegan men that capitulate to its dualisms.

In a way, veganism represents a low bar. That is, unlike in other social movements – like feminism, where allyship might involve being held accountable by women – men can identify as vegans without having to engage substantively with the people they are advocating for. Veganism is, thus, the perfect outlet for men who are socialised to value traits that might make allying with a social justice movement attractive, but who are otherwise too defensive to engage with movements where their activism might be more readily called into question. Everyday heganism – I would argue – represents a significant problem and therefore, I concur with Oliver’s (2021) suggestion that vegans need to “embrace a feminist and intersectional veganism that is not dominated by whiteness and masculine ideals” (p.15). There were, however, glimpses of this ideal throughout the interviews: in discussions about patriarchy and toxic masculinity, and in conversations that moved past the ‘ends justify the means’ approach so common in vegan activism. I explore these possibilities in the following chapter.

5. Vegan Gateways

This chapter explores the process whereby men begin to engage with other social issues after going vegan. In some cases, this took the form of interviewees beginning to understand and identify with the motivations of other vegans, even if these motivations weren't originally something that the interviewee would have considered themselves. However, some interviewees also mentioned that their transition to veganism pushed them to consider other – seemingly disparate – social issues. I argue that this ‘vegan gateway’ is produced by a set of social factors which predispose men to engage with veganism, following which these men experience stigmatisation. Vegan men may then be more able to empathise with the experiences of other stigmatised or oppressed groups and may become disillusioned with the logic of a *master identity* that, before, was only unconscious.

5.1. “...one small segment”

While someone may be motivated to pursue veganism for any number of reasons, the interviewees often singled out one reason in particular. Classically vegans fall into one of three camps, and describe their veganism as motivated by either: ‘their health’, ‘the environment’, or ‘the animals’ (Oliver, 2021). However, the interviews suggest that while vegans may originally commit to veganism for one of these reasons, they may *also* go on to identify with the others. Indeed, while the majority of the interviewees adopted veganism as an ethical pursuit, several interviewees mentioned how they developed an interest in their health or in the environment after going vegan. For example, while Jordan went vegan for ethical reasons, he mentioned that shortly after doing so he developed an interest in his health:

...my... need or my drive to focus on my health started around the same time as I went vegan. I don't know why. But the timelines there are quite similar. So, I feel like... if I was not vegan, I feel like I would be in less-better shape than I am now.

Similarly, Jason and Dan – who went vegan ‘for the animals’ – subsequently developed a greater understanding of how veganism benefited the environment. For Jason, this understanding blossomed into a passion for sustainability.

Andy started cutting back on animal products after experiencing some health issues. As he increased his consumption of plant foods, and decreased his consumption of animal products, he noticed that “the improvements continued to go up!”. While Andy was not originally motivated by ethical concerns for animals, this process exposed him to discussions about

ethics and the various issues associated with industrialised animal agriculture. For Andy, this exposure was enough to push him to say: “there’s no way I can ever regress now”. Actually, *all* of the interviewees who went vegan for reasons other than animal ethics subsequently went on to identify ethics as a motivating factor for their veganism. Andy, like Dan and Jordan, was initially drawn to veganism for one reason and subsequently developed an appreciation for the others. Andy encapsulated this process very precisely: “it started off as one small segment and then encompassed the others”.

5.2. “you can’t be a vegan but also a Nazi”

However, veganism was *also* described as triggering consideration of other social issues. When I reflect on my own journey with veganism, this certainly seems to be the case. I went vegan in 2015 after being posed the following question: “if you care so much about animals, why do you eat them?”. As someone who had always identified as an animal *lover*, this question was simple but disturbingly revelatory. It nudged me to poke my head down into e-warrens of slaughterhouse footage, and having witnessed the bolt guns (Pachirat, 2011), the de-beaking (Williams, 2020) and the crushing (Pig Progress, n.d) – it quickly became apparent that nothing less than abstinence was morally acceptable. What I had not anticipated was that this conversation would turn me toward feminism. In hindsight, it is hard *not* to see a link between these two revelations, though, it is supremely uncomfortable to recognise that there might be one. Of course, correlation is not causation. Yet, the similar trajectories mentioned by the interviewees are suggestive of, at least, a link.

Phil described how going vegan precipitated a “huge avalanche” of reviewing his views. That is, veganism prompted him to be more tolerant about a range of different social issues – including by becoming more reflexive about hegemonic masculinity – and pushed him to try: “putting myself in a place of the specific minority or group”. Likewise, Dan remarked that “if you can advocate veganism to somebody you can wake them up to a whole range of empathy that they likely never had before”. Prior to going vegan, Dan mentioned that he was “definitely someone who would never have had empathy towards... uh... say the LGBT community or... would happily have dropped racist remarks not caring who they hurt...”. Veganism thus prompted a process similar to that described by Phil: “once I started having empathy for animals and not wanting to harm them, I started looking at many things in my life through that lens and sort of thinking: ‘well hold on, this is gonna cause harm!’”. Actually, for Dan it was “a slower process to come around to empathy for humans”.

Other interviewees commented on how their veganism necessarily interfaced with other social issues. Josh put this position succinctly: “you can’t be a vegan but also be a Nazi”. While I could write an entire thesis on this comment alone, here, it is simply worth noting that by alluding to the impossibility of a figurative ‘vegan Nazi’, Josh sought to highlight how believing in an ethic of harm reduction necessarily extends your philosophy beyond confines of species. Oscar agreed, and saw veganism as incompatible with transphobia and racism:

To me, like... saying you don’t eat... you won’t consume animals because of the um... the harm it will do to an animal, but then like... um... being part of like a transphobic movement or something like that, or being racist... just wouldn’t make sense.

Oscar saw veganism as inherently progressive and identified as an *intersectional vegan*. For Oscar, it was particularly important to consider consumption, and he would not – for example – purchase Israeli dates because they were produced using Palestinian slave labour on Palestinian land. Similar comments were made by Dan who sought “to go a little bit further” by researching whether products were ethically developed or manufactured before purchasing them. Andy referred to a “continuum of where we exploit other species” which “overlays with other forms of exploitation as well”. For Andy, speciesism *anchors* other forms of oppression: “it’s a pattern of behaviour that I think starts with what we put in our mouths, but spreads out quite a long way”. Here, Andy’s description of speciesism speaks to ecofeminist accounts of the intersection between various oppressions. Ultimately, these interviewees framed veganism as a life ethic that combatted a range of different oppressions, or as Isaac put it, the foundation of their “ethical framework”.

5.3. Why veganism?

However, it is unclear *why veganism* – and not, for example another social justice movement – in particular awakened this awareness of other oppressions. When I asked Phil this question, he suggested that veganism is linked with selflessness because vegans prioritise morals over personal taste. Phil went on to describe that, though his veganism sometimes caused tension in social settings, he learnt not to: “give any more fuck because... because you have a different point. You are not judging them, but their opinion and its gravity and its pressure is just dissolving.”. Here Phil describes a situation where the *gravity* and *pressure* exerted by those around him *dissolves*. In other words, by distancing himself from the

hegemony of the *master identity* and redefining his identity according to new ideals, Phil was forced to review attitudes that were previously only unconscious. Phil offered one final suggestion: that veganism provided a tangible personal *solution* to ending animal consumption. While trying to help stop global wars is difficult, and individual agency is relegated purely to donation: “when it comes to veganism... you can make a change right now with our meal, with your lifestyle”.

These are compelling reasons. However, it remains peculiar that veganism – as a movement often grounded in animal rights – serves as a gateway for men into other social justice issues. Human animals do not share a language, or even a species, with other animals, and therefore it is surprising that some men would advocate for animal rights before advocating for the rights of other human animals. However, I argue that it is precisely this *lack* of communication that creates ‘vegan gateways’ for many men. While men are often raised to value saviourism, they *also* may be too defensive to consider allying themselves with social movements where they might be held accountable for their activism by the people they are advocating for. Veganism thus represents a perfect opportunity for men who have been socialised to value saviourism but *not necessarily* the people they are hoping to save: in short, non-human animals can’t call you out for problematic activism. Paradoxically, men who go vegan may then be better able to empathise with oppressed groups because they themselves are immediately stigmatised and are quickly forced into situations where they require a greater degree of reflexivity. This stigmatisation manifests regularly in everyday situations where vegan men are made to feel like *the problem* and therefore – as suggested by Phil – may prompt disillusionment with the *master identity* and lead to vegan men educating themselves about a range of phenomena – like gender essentialism and ad hominem arguments – not necessarily vernacularised commonly in everyday conversation. In general however, these connections are tenuous and would benefit from future research.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored how veganism serves as a gateway for some men into thinking about issues they would never have previously considered. I observed these gateways in discussions about motivations for going and staying vegan, even if only one motivation was originally considered. Veganism also precipitated empathy for other human-animals and developed consideration of other social justice issues. In this latter context, veganism was sometimes viewed as an underlying ethical objection to *all* oppression. I posited that men are socialised to value certain traits – like saviourism – and veganism offers an effective avenue

through which they can practice these traits without being held accountable. These gateways then emerge because men experience stigmatisation, and are able to subsequently empathise with other oppress groups, and may distance themselves from the *master identity*.

6. Conclusion

Carol J. Adams opens *The Sexual Politics of Meat* with a memorial I have always found confronting:

In memory of

31.1 billion each year, 85.2 million each day

3.5 million each hour, 59,170 each minute

(Adams, 1990)

These numbers are horrifyingly intangible, all the more so considering that – by the time I first read *The Sexual Politics of Meat* – they had almost doubled. The 2018 edition of the text replaces 31.1 billion with 56 billion each year, 85.2 million with 153.4 million each day, 3.5 million with 6.4 million each hour, and 59, 170 with 106, 546 each minute. Of course, these numbers only account for animals slaughtered in factory farms. For Wadiwel (2009) – who takes time to acknowledge those who are subject to experimentation in research, those who suffer and die in human recreational pursuits, those whose habitats have been irrevocably and harmfully altered by human animals, and those who are ‘owned’, ‘domesticated’, or ‘euthanised’ – this domination constitutes a *war*. Veganism is oft-positioned as an answer to this war. Vegan practice, however, if uninterrogated, leaves itself open to using only incendiary weapons.

This thesis has explored the everyday experiences of vegan men in Australia. Cumulatively, the interviews point to stigmatisation that renders vegan men as *problems*, or *killjoys*. However, in responding to this stigmatisation – whether by valorising reason, emphasising the importance of argumentation, leveraging tactics that fortify patriarchy, or centralising the importance of saviourism – vegan men appear to be fighting *hierarchy with hierarchy*. Ecofeminism – and particularly Plumwood’s (1993) theorisation of a *master identity* – effectively illustrates the absurdity of this incendiary *everyday heganism*: if hierarchies are bound together in mutually-constitutive relationships, then counter narratives must be *absolutely* anti-hierarchical or they risk bolstering the forces they are struggling against.

These findings converge with the existing literature on veganism and masculinity which suggests that vegan men may engage in hybrid masculinities (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2019), defend their veganism using reason and logic (DeLessio-Parson, 2017; Mycek, 2018), and relate to non-human animals as saviours (Oliver, 2021). Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree

with Oliver's (2021) suggestion that veganism embrace a "feminist and intersectional veganism" (p. 15). However, it is worth recognising that many of my interviewees suggested that, without veganism, they never would have engaged with other social justice issues. Veganism, for these interviewees formed a gateway into reflexivity and – though the interviewees spoke at depth about the adverse effects of Australian vegaphobia – these gateways are perhaps indicative of the transformative effect veganism is already having on many Australians.

This was a complex topic to explore, and one which required careful treatment. Therefore, I implore future researchers to follow the directions suggested by this exploratory study. If we are going to build a feminist and intersectional vegan movement – which I think we should – then it will be crucial to understand the mechanics of *vegan gateways*. I have suggested that these gateways are produced via stigmatisation which then prompts disillusionment with the *master identity* and increased empathy for other stigmatised groups. However, having not set out to investigate this phenomenon, my analysis here was relatively sparse. It will also be very important to locate, describe and share vegan masculinities that offer alternatives to *everyday hegemony*. Finally, these findings will, inevitably, have been shaped by my own standpoint as a vegan man. Investigating these phenomena from range of standpoints will ultimately yield a more robust analysis. Ultimately, the possibilities and problematics I have highlighted in this thesis will only become more salient as veganism continues to grow in popularity.

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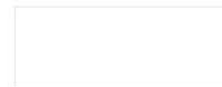
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8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1 – Macquarie University Ethics Approval

Arts Subcommittee
Macquarie University, North Ryde
NSW 2109, Australia



18/02/2022

Dear Dr Lloyd,

Reference No: 520221103036485

Project ID: 11030

Title: Investigating the links between Veganism and Masculinity

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical review. The Arts Subcommittee has considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Dr Justine Lloyd, and other personnel: Alexander Hill.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>.
2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.
3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.
4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the [Human Research Ethics Management System](#).

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website: <https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics>.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the [Faculty Ethics Officer](#).

The Arts Subcommittee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Arts Subcommittee

The Faculty Ethics Subcommittees at Macquarie University operate in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018), [Section 5.2.22].

8.2. Appendix 2 – Participant Information and Consent Forms

Appendix 2 of this thesis has been removed as it may contain sensitive/confidential content