

Perceived masculinity of vegans. Role of traditional masculinity ideology.

In recent years, veg*nism (vegetarianism and veganism) has become a topic of interest for researchers not only in the field of the psychology of food choices but also in social psychology. Vegetarians and vegans, because of their eating practices, form a specific, distinct social group with certain views and beliefs. This group is a minority group in relation to meat-eaters and thus may experience a form of exclusion. Vegetarian and vegan men are particularly vulnerable to negative public perception - studies show that they are considered less masculine and less attractive than omnivorous men. As a result, men are in the minority among veg*ans, in part because they fear being perceived as unmanly. Researchers see an explanation for this phenomenon in the metaphorical connection between meat and masculinity. The decision to give up eating meat goes beyond a simple change in diet and becomes a decision with a social dimension that translates into perceptions in the eyes of the people around. This is a phenomenon that empirical studies have confirmed - the social perception of male vegetarians is different from that of female vegetarians. Recent research, however, shows that perceptions of vegetarians in terms of their masculinity are not as clear as they might seem, and research in this area does not allow clear conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which being a veg*n lowers perceptions of masculinity. One explanation for the inconclusiveness of the research may be that the pattern of masculinity varies across cultures, and the pattern of masculinity itself has changed in recent years. A consequence of this may be the growing rejection of the modern traditional pattern of masculinity. This, in turn, may explain why, for some women, a vegan is not a "real man," while for others (with less traditional perceptions of masculinity), veganism may not affect perceptions of a man, and may even increase his attractiveness. The research project will be dedicated to understanding how the concept of masculinity is changing and how this change affects the association of meat with masculinity, and consequently the perception of male vegans.

The research project will consist of three phases: 1) Construction of tools to study the model of modern masculinity. In this stage, a set of tools will be constructed to measure the traditional and new concepts of masculinity in order to determine the extent to which those in the meat-eating majority perceive masculinity in the way that the metaphorical connection between masculinity and meat is based. 2) Determining how much a meat reduction diet is specific or generic in terms of social perception. This part of the project will answer the question is whether vegetarians and vegans are really perceived as a specific minority, or rather whether the fact of differences in their perception is due to being a group of people with different behaviors. 3) Exploring the impact of vegan diet information on men's perceptions in three social contexts (related to interpersonal relationships –dating, related to physical strength–hiring a worker; and related to power and competence–voting for a politician). In this part, three experimental studies will be conducted, set in three different contexts in which a person's perception of his masculinity is relevant: (a) seeking a short-term or long-term relationship partner; (b) areas where physical strength is required; and (c) power and competence (political). Participants will be asked to rate people on a vegan and meat diet and then rate their masculinity and willingness to have a relationship/activity with the person (depending on the condition). For these experiments, attitudes toward masculinity will be controlled using the tools developed in the first phase of the study.

Although some attention is being given to the relevance of gender in the psychology of veg*nism, it is often treated as a controlled variable, and research on social perceptions of veg*ns is often based on previously unverified theoretical assumptions that can lead to erroneous conclusions and interpretations of their results. Such studies are also often qualitative, or conducted on small samples, thus, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions about the mechanisms underlying the differences in the social perceptions of people on vegan and meat-based diets. The research project combines theoretical considerations and research in the areas of the psychology of eating behavior, the psychology of stereotypes and intergroup relations, and the psychology of men and masculinity. Bringing these areas together will make it possible to understand the increasingly widespread dietary change in society and its negative consequences for those on a vegan diet.