

“THERE BETTER BE A NAKED CHEERLEADER UNDER YOUR BED”:

REPRESENTATIONS OF SOUTHERN, WORKING CLASS

MASCULINITY IN *KING OF THE HILL*

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“THERE BETTER BE A NAKED CHEERLEADER UNDER YOUR BED”:

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of masculinity has been referenced in cultures worldwide since the beginning of storytelling. In ancient Greece, Homer dealt with the concept while creating the *Odyssey*. The brave actions of Odysseus were chronicled and told throughout history. Odysseus' adventures were fodder for the minds of Greek men.

The model of masculinity has evolved over time in American culture, but what is considered masculine is evident in the characters and people portrayed in American mass media and popular culture. Be it John Wayne, who portrayed a tough, heroic cowboy or Tupac Shakur, the iconic, rap star with a criminal record for violence who was killed in a drive-by shooting in 1996, societal definitions of masculinity are often proposed and perpetuated by the mass media. American television programs are a solidifying voice for what it means to be masculine and have deep connections to the face and importance of masculinity.

Most definitions describe masculinity as “the quality or condition of being masculine” and that a masculine trait is “something traditionally considered to be characteristic of a male” (Masculinity). As defined in Giddens' glossary of sociology terms from his textbook, “hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity within the gender hierarchy. In most Western societies today, hegemonic



masculinity is associated with whiteness, heterosexuality, marriage, authority and physical toughness” (Giddens). Media researchers explore this process. Connell explained hegemonic masculinity as “not the idea of the male sex role,” but the “culturally idealized form of masculine character” (as cited in Lotz, 2007, p. 3). “It is the attempt to achieve consent for its (male) leadership through non-violent but still coercive means and the construction of a commonsense belief in the dominant group’s inherently superior position that defines the use of hegemony” (Carrington, 2008 Annual Meeting). Based on an evolved view of Marxist media theory, media researchers have been studying the mainstream concepts that are portrayed in American mass media. Marcuse (1964) saw the media working to instill a set of social rules which are socially wanted but at the same time, oppress those who are not fairly represented by the media. Hegemonic infers that it is the cultural standard that is put into place and is mostly represented in mass media.

According to Nick Trujillo masculinity is hegemonic when “power is defined in terms of physical force and control, through occupational achievement in an industrial capitalistic society, as patriarchy—the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general, as symbolized by the daring, romantic frontiersman of yesteryear and of the present-day outdoorsman,” and “when heterosexually defined” (as cited in Lotz, 2007, p.4). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out that “masculinity is defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations.”

Robert Hanke argues that because the concept of hegemony helped to make sense of both the diversity and the selectiveness of images in mass media, media researchers began mapping the relations between representations of different masculinities (as cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 833). It is this dominant form that is shown as the stereotypical version of masculinity in media.

For television audiences, the father and son relationship on *King of the Hill* between Hank and Bobby Hill is one that puts the issues of masculinity to the test. This is something that has happened throughout changes in society. “New definitions of masculinity and femininity emerge as the natural course of culture” (Tragos, 2009). In the series *King of the Hill*, the new definition is being formulated by Bobby Hill by using Hank Hill as his guide.

## CHAPTER II

### RATIONALE OF RESEARCH

*King of the Hill*, which earned two Emmy Awards and was nominated for seven others, is an animated series created by Mike Judge and Greg Daniels that was aired from January 12, 1997 to September 13, 2009 by Fox Broadcasting Company (Awards for *King of the Hill*). Fox cancelled the series with four remaining episodes in the 13<sup>th</sup> season and those episodes aired in syndication on local stations the first week of May 2010 and on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim from May 17 - 20, 2010. At the time of the cancellation, *King of the Hill* held the place of being the second longest running animated series behind *The Simpsons*. *King of the Hill* was on several lists of important American television shows, including Entertainment Weekly's Top 100 shows from 1983-2008 (*Entertainment Weekly*). It was not a flash-in-a-pan series and because of the amount of air time and societal influence the show has had, the effects of the storylines are important to examine.

## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis is one of only five academic research studies to date of *King of the Hill*. Thompson (2009) and Paler-Mehta (2006) look at the messages of masculinity in *King of the Hill*. However, Paler-Mehta looked exclusively at the first three seasons and Thompson briefly analyzed *King of the Hill* for his discussion of satire. Chaney (2004) examined representations posed in several animated series including *King of the Hill*. Walton (2007) studied aspects of *King of the Hill* to examine dominant ideologies in sport. Kissling (2002) analyzed *King of the Hill* from a critical, feminist perspective on the subject of menarche. Thompson (2009) summarized the relationship between Bobby Hill and Hank Hill. “In short, Bobby does not embrace the same markers of masculinity as Hank, which causes disruption, complication, and alleviation from episode to episode” (p. 44).

Hank Hill is the lead male character in the animated series, *King of the Hill*. He is a stereotypical Texan, a father figure who loves football, fixing his truck, drinking beer with his male friends and is supportive of conservative political and social issues. He is embarrassed by displays of affection, talking about sex and anything else that challenges what he thinks is manliness. “Hank comes to represent a white masculinity situated as distinct from and suggestively superior to regionally classed white others, who may

actually require nativist authenticity to pass” (Chaney, 2004, p. 172). Hank Hill’s love of sports is consistent with Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) premise that the engagement of sports in Western society helps to create hegemonic masculine models. “Perhaps no single institution in American culture has influenced our sense of masculinity more than sport” (Trujillo, 1991, p. 292).

Hank Hill is portrayed as a good person, even if he is naïve to some things in the world. Hank is “a man ruled by ‘common sense’ in a world that does not seem to have much” (Walton, 2007, p.716). He is emotionally detached from his family and rarely shows any emotion around the house. Hank Hill personifies Wald’s (1997) premise that middle-class masculinity is identified by the values of earnestness, effort, delayed gratification and domesticity (as cited in Smith & Beal, 2007, p. 108).

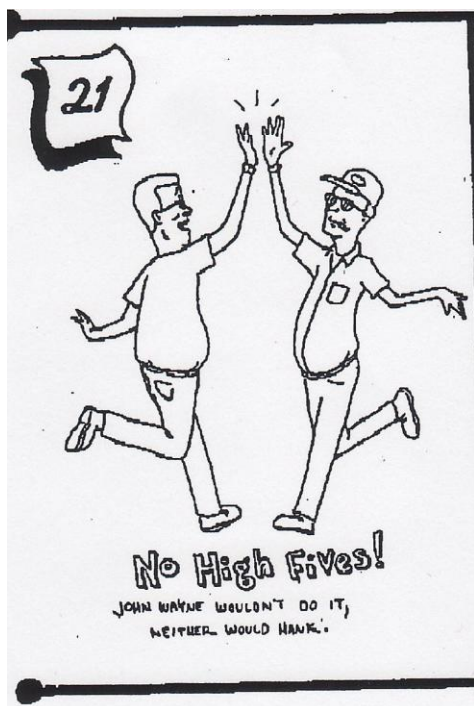
In *King of the Hill*, Hank Hill is a former high school football star who still lives in the same Texas town where he grew up to become the assistant manager at Strickland Propane. He sells propane and propane accessories, a job that to him oozes masculinity. In Hank’s mind and in the minds of most of the other male Texans on *King of the Hill*, barbecuing over a propane grill is the “ultimate” in masculine cooking, because it is raw meat and fire. As Chaney points out, Hank Hill has an “investment in a particular dream of Texas masculinity” (Chaney, 2004, p. 172). Rogers (2008) found that the eating of meat, especially meat that is cooked outdoors, is a key component of American masculinity. Hank Hill does not believe men should be the ones in the kitchen. “The private kitchen is a feminized space and female domain” (Swenson, 2009, p.39). Inness (2000) ascertains that cooking in a kitchen can only be considered masculine if it fits into the traditional masculine characteristics. Those characteristics include the foods

prepared, such as meat and the environment where the cooking takes place, usually outdoors.

Hank Hill's 13-year-old son, Bobby Hill, is almost the opposite of Hank. Bobby is a cultural sponge, who does not fall into the typical, working class, Southern category. Bobby is often portrayed as being a non-traditional male character. Portrayals of him include emotional outbursts, the fact that he is not good at most sports and that he gravitates toward comedy and being an entertainer. He enjoys what he enjoys, meaning whatever Bobby finds fun is what Bobby is going to do. He does not fall in line with what his father believes is the "right" thing to do. Hank usually comments about his son and says, "That boy ain't right." By not being "right," Hank Hill is saying that Bobby Hill does not hold the same masculine ideals as he does.

The relationship between Hank Hill and Bobby Hill is a ballet between Hank trying to provide Bobby with his own version of masculine ideals and Bobby dismissing them. Bobby does not dismiss his father's notions because they are masculine ideals, but because they do not fit into what Bobby feels he needs in his life. As Palmer-Mehta points out about Bobby Hill, "With each new program he continues to act on his own desires and ambitions, as his folly opens a space in which audiences are consistently reminded of the arbitrariness of the gender order. The animation aesthetic is uniquely situated to deliver this critique because it enables masculine normatively to be in perpetual question" (Palmer-Mehta, 2006, p. 194).

The Wittliff Collections on the campus of Texas State University house the archives of the *King of the Hill* series that span from 1995 to 2006. Within the collection are the rules of the characters that creators Mike Judge and Greg Daniels constructed. Rules about the characters were put in place, because different writers worked on different episodes at the same time. The rules helped in keeping the characters consistent as the writing teams changed. In rule 21 of the production notes, Hank Hill is compared to John Wayne, a movie star with the qualities that Hank Hill finds masculine. Hank Hill is not allowed to show much emotion. In other rules from the archive, there is a long list of characteristics that are supposed to define Hank Hill. Among those rules is that Hank



is the resident expert in his neighborhood on power tools, lawn care, vehicle maintenance, and “just about any other subject you can name that doesn’t principally involve women.” Hank Hill reinforces a traditional American ideal of masculinity and what it means to be male.

**Figure 1. No High Fives!** From the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University-San Marcos.

He's the kind of guy who would make a citizen's arrest if called for.

He speaks with great authority even when he doesn't know what he's talking about.

He's the resident expert in his neighborhood on power tools, lawn care, vehicle maintenance, and just about any other subject you can name that doesn't principally involve women.

He knows next to nothing about women.

Hank enjoys the pleasures of conjugal love with Peggy, but the sight of more than a few centimeters of anyone else's naked flesh (especially that of his niece Luanne) causes him acute embarrassment.

Hank doesn't suffer fools, but as he sees it, he is surrounded by them. (They're out there lurking, at the bank, at the Mega Lo Mart, wherever people wear tags that say "Hello, my name is ... ")

Hank has a short fuse but usually directs his anger at indifferent customer service personnel and other inanimate objects.

His bark is worse than his bite.

He likes beer, which is about the same as saying he likes to breathe.

Like his father, Hank wishes his son would be more like him.

About once a day, some pissant thing makes his temples pound and his neck bulge. He takes a B.C. Powder<sup>2</sup> for relief.

He likes to hunt and fish and barbecue the things he's shot and caught.

He loves football, especially the world champion Dallas Cowboys. (See beer and breathing note above.)

Willie Nelson is first chair in Hank's pantheon of Texas heroes. (Tom Landry, Bob Wills, Red Adair, A.J. Foyt, Mickey Mantle, Roger Staubach, Lee "Super Mex" Trevino, Jim Bowie and Sam Houston are others.)

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<sup>2</sup>A powdered aspirin you mix with water. Sold at truckstops in the South, advertised on The Nashville Network (TNN). Tagline: "You take a B.C. Powder and you come back strong."

**Figure 2. Hank Hill Description Notes.** From the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University-San Marcos.



Masculinity is a topic of diverse and myriad academic studies relevant to this study. As pointed out by Eccles, Jacobs and Harold (1990), “parents encourage their sons and daughters to participate in sex-typed activities, including doll playing and engaging in housekeeping activities for girls and playing with trucks and engaging in sports activities for boys” (as cited in Witt, 1997, p. 255). As Bryson (1987) notes, “sport is a powerful institution through which male hegemony is constructed and reconstructed” (p. 349).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) found that an exhibit of a skilled level of athletic ability enforces a higher level of masculinity in children. “This is a key way that heterosexuality and masculinity become linked in Western culture, with prestige often conferred on boys with heterosexual partners and sexual learning imagined as exploration and conquest” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851). Embrick, Walther and Wickens (2007) found that working-class men believe that in order to be considered a “real man, one must be heterosexual” (p. 764).

Frank Pittman argues that “masculinity is different in each generation” in that each generation hears a different “invisible male chorus of all other guys, who hiss or cheer as he attempts to approximate the masculine ideal” (as cited in Tragos, 2009, p. 544). Bobby Hill does not hear, or does not let the hiss or the cheer of others, deter him. Bobby only listens to his own inner voice deciding what is best for him. The decision may be based on the “fun” factor, but that is what is best for Bobby. In that sense, Bobby Hill can be seen as a role model for children learning to become adults. He is not contained by stereotypes that prevent him from exploring who he is. For those old

enough to have fallen into predetermined categories, he is also a clever reminder that people can question who they are and refuse to be labeled.

This thesis will examine stereotypes of masculinity as presented by *King of the Hill*. Stereotypes are commonly held public beliefs about types of individuals that are conceptions based on prior assumptions. Stereotypes are often key points of reference in the minds of people as they navigate through culture. Rasmussen, Esgate and Turner (2005) believe that “stereotyping is based on a simplified interpretation of incomplete information using heuristics and biases rooted in faulty intuitive statistics” (p. 434). Studies conducted by Fagot, Leinbach and O’Boyle (1992) and Cowan and Hoffman (1986) found that children as young as 28 months of age often “use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world and are likely to generalize gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects and occupations” (as cited in Witt, 1997, p. 254). Stereotypes are learned within social group structures, but also through information presented by the mass media. “The media are part of larger social processes that construct and encourage some meanings (generally those of dominant social groups) over others (generally social subordinate groups)” (Ibroscheva & Ramaprasad, 2007, p. 4).

Hoppenstand ‘s (2004) discussion of television contends that television is a metaphor for living in the real world and that it has become a mirror of society either reflecting a real image or a perceived image (p. 562-63). For some, television is seen as societal teaching tool. Gerbner (1998) believes that viewers who watch television frequently accept representations of society as being legitimate. Lee, Bichard, Irey, Walt and Carlson propose that “individual reality is in part constructed by the surrounding social world, with the media being one part of that social reality” (Lee, Bichard, Irey,

Walt & Carlson, 2009, p. 98) It is the stereotypical images and concepts presented by television media that help form ideas and beliefs in the viewing audience.

Gabriel (1998), among others, contend that white men have been the majority of the decision makers in the media world and the language of media is constructed around white ideas and politics. As Asante states, “What we have today in every sector: art, education, economics, law, medicine—is the legacy of five hundred years of Western promotion of this ideology of white European supremacy” (Asante, 1998).

The portrayals of men on television have been a rollercoaster of representations. White men in the 1950s were family men in television programming. They went to work every day and provided for their family. They were also the compass for morality in many shows, such as *Father Knows Best*. In shows that were not family driven, the male role was still one of success. In television programming in the 1960s and 1970s, some shows had a male role without a wife. In those instances, the man was usually a widower and not single because of divorce. Andy Griffith’s character in *The Andy Griffith Show* is a perfect example of this single father syndrome.

Over the course of the last 60 years, strong, successful men have dominated dramatic television programming. However, in comedic roles in and in some dramodies the male role has gone from Father Knows Best to Father Knows Nothing. Butsch contends that “the working class is not only underrepresented; the few men who are portrayed are buffoons” (Butsch, 2003, p. 576). In the 1970s, Archie Bunker from *All in the Family* was a blue collar worker who was racist and sexist. Decades later this is still a popular TV characterization. *The Simpsons*, in its 21<sup>st</sup> season, stars the bumbling oaf, Homer Simpson. While the characters of Archie Bunker and Homer Simpson are

comedic, they continue to perpetuate the stereotype of the working-class man and his inability to function as one notion of masculinity. Butsch's description of *King of the Hill* echoes the same issue that is "caricatures Southern working-class men as beer drinking, gun toting, pickup truck driving, narrow-minded, and uncommunicative" (Butsch, 2003, p. 582).

Some television programs in 2011 such as the drama, *24*, in which character, Jack Bauer depicts a strong version of hegemonic masculinity have changed the depiction of masculinity with a restructured version of the "new man" whose "ubiquitous presence in popular culture has many men searching for a familiar and comfortable idea for what it means to be a man" (Tragos, p. 546). In *Rescue Me*, Dennis Leary's character, Tommy Gavin, is a good example of the "new man" on television as a firefighter who battles emotional trials and demons. One major clue to the change of the masculine man to the "new man" is that Gavin is single due to divorce. This is a definite change from the widower single man on fictional television. In the show, the character, Gavin, "struggles [to reconcile] who he is with the father and the husband he wants and others need him to be" (Lotz, p. 16). Even though he is a firefighter, the epitome of masculinity for many based on strength and courage, he still is searching to find his own definition of being a man.

There are versions of the "new man" in other television shows such as *Scrubs*, which currently airs on ABC. *Scrubs* features the roles of young doctors struggling to fit in to their work and to society. In the past and in some current television programs, the physician role has been one of hegemonic masculinity, but *Scrubs* has a version of the "new man" that is looking for answers. While there are other shows, such as *The Big*

*Bang Theory* on CBS and *Entourage* on HBO, that focus on characters being “new men” and their struggles to find their own meaning of masculinity, *King of the Hill*, has unintentionally created a social commentary on what it means to be masculine.

Many roles between father and son play off the research and knowledge about the father son relationship. As shown by research from Lauer and Lauer (1994), Santrock (1994) and Kaplan (1991), “a child’s earliest exposure to what it means to be male or female comes from parents” (as cited in Witt, 1997, p. 253).

The fictional television relationships between fathers and sons have evolved since the 1950s, but the issues of masculinity have stayed consistent. For men as characters in fictional television, their definitions often include them as husbands and fathers. The research from Lotz (2007) found that television shows that focused on male characters as fathers such as, *Father Knows Best* and *The Cosby Show*, portrayed the father’s professional life as their main identity. The father is to provide for the family and teach the role of being the breadwinner to his male children. In *The Cosby Show*, there is a well-known scene in which the father, Cliff Huxtable, must teach his son, Theo, how money and the “real world” coexist. Aired in 1984, “Theo’s Economic Lesson” was the first episode of the first season. It was a stereotypical depiction of the father and son relationship in which, the father must teach his son the importance of education, so his son can get a job as an adult and provide for his future family. Theo learned an important lesson in what it takes to be a man and his father handed over masculine ideals.

This thesis will be an in-depth analysis of the issue of Southern, working class masculinity as demonstrated between the relationship of father, Hank Hill and son, Bobby Hill.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Hank Hill's character reinforce Southern, working class masculine qualities in his son, Bobby Hill on *King of the Hill*?
2. How does Bobby Hill work within the mold of masculine ideals that his father has set on *King of the Hill*?

## CHAPTER V

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Conversations between the father in *King of the Hill*, Hank Hill, and his son, Bobby Hill hold the key to analyzing the Southern, working class masculinity stereotype developed on the show. All 13 seasons of *King of the Hill*, including 259 episodes were analyzed by the author for conversations between Hank Hill and Bobby Hill related to masculinity. Seasons one through six were watched on DVD. The remaining seasons, seven through 13, were streamed through Netflix. Conversations on *King of the Hill* dealing with the study's objectives and research questions were collected and documented by series number and year.

The findings of this study were evaluated through the precepts of Critical Cultural Theory that suggests the media supports and justifies the status quo at the expense of ordinary people. This theory was selected because television programming is “an instrument of social conformity, law and order, authority figures, and the family” (Kellner, 1981, p. 31). In a discussion of critical theory and television, Nelson notes that many see television as “a primary mediator of Western culture, function[ing] as social ritual, articulating and celebrating the central concerns of the society (culture) for whom its messages are intended” (Nelson, 1986, p. 59). The characters of Hank and Bobby Hill

are portrayed as ordinary Texans who get involved in the same cultural challenges as real people.

This research is a qualitative, content analysis. A definition of working class, Southern masculinity based on a detailed literature review was created for the study.

Conversations between Bobby Hill and Hank Hill that explore the topic of masculinity include the following areas analyzed:

1. Sports and being athletically driven is important to the masculine identity. This includes joining a team and participating in athletic endeavors.
2. Working and participating in household tasks is important, but a man does not do “woman’s work.” A man will do masculine work that involves tools such as woodwork, auto care and some outdoor work. Barbequing is the only version of cooking that is acceptable. As Hank Hill states in “Blood and Sauce” on Season 10, “It’s not cooking Bobby. It’s barbeque.”
3. The concept of heterosexuality as constantly reinforced by Hank Hill. Men date and pursue women. Men do not act in effeminate or “homosexual ways” which include, according to Hank Hill, dressing in women’s clothing, having a relationship with someone of the same sex and subscribing to the culture of homosexuality in a person’s identity.



## CHAPTER VI

### RESULTS

To discuss the *King of the Hill* in terms of the definition of Southern, working class masculinity, each piece of the definition is supported by events and conversations from individual episodes. The final episode of the entire series, “To Sirloin with Love,” is discussed outside of the definitions, as it ties the three parts of the definition together in the one and final episode.

#### *Sports and Team Participation*

There are 20 *King of the Hill* episodes that specifically touch upon the determined definition of sports, team participation and athletic ability. These episodes revolve around conversations between Bobby Hill and Hank Hill.

#### *Baseball.*

The “Pilot” episode which aired Jan. 12, 1997 is the first time America was introduced to the Hill family and all their quirks. It was written by Mike Judge and Greg Daniels and directed by Wes Archer. The episode centers on Bobby’s lack of enthusiasm around playing baseball. Bobby does not really “get” the game and would rather be playing his Nintendo Game Boy or listening to the comedy of the Jerky Boys. Hank Hill

tries to inspire Bobby to get ready for his baseball game by saying, “You ready to kick some Wildcat butt?”

Bobby responds with a less than enthusiastic, “Okay.”

Bobby is an average baseball player for his age, but does not show the same athletic ability that Hank showed as a boy. It is in the pilot episode that the differences between Hank and Bobby are introduced. Bobby understands that he is not living up to the ideals of his father. However, there is a glimmer of Hank’s outgoing love for Bobby, which rarely is seen from this tough Texan. At the end of the episode, Bobby asks Hank, “I’m not just a big disappointment to you?” Hank responds, “No! You make me proud. You’re my boy!”

The second episode, “Square Peg,” written by Joe Stillman and directed by Gary McCarver, aired Jan. 19, 1997. It should be noted Bobby plays baseball again and does well at the sport. This is one of the few times that Bobby has true success playing a team athletic sport.

One interesting note about Season 12 episode, “Doggone Crazy,” written by Dave Schiff and directed by Michael Loya, it is although Bobby plays baseball, it seems he has no idea what to do. He does not know if he is right or left handed. In the first season, Bobby played baseball and was terrible at it. Hank is relieved when Bobby ends up not having to play the game due to rain.

Once again Bobby shows in ineptitude on the baseball field in the Season 13 episode, “Bad News Bill,” written by Dave Schiff and directed by Ronald Rubio. Rather than harp on Bobby’s athletic inabilities, Hank tells Bobby, who wants to be a comedian and not a baseball player, “You should be proud of your comedy.”

*Football*

Hank becomes a volunteer fire fighter in “A Firefighting We Will Go” aired on Jan. 12, 1999 as part of Season Three. It was written by Alan Cohen and Alan Freedland and was directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland. Hank drives the fire truck by Bobby who is playing football with friends on a muddy field and announces through the speaker, “In the first round, the Dallas Cowboys select Bobby Hill, left tackle.” It is Hank Hill’s dream for Bobby to be a professional football player and he wants everyone to hear it.

Two episodes later in the third season, Hank learns that Bobby is no good at football. In “Three Coaches and a Bobby,” written by Johnny Hardwick and directed by Chris Moeller, first aired on Jan. 24, 1999, it is discovered that Bobby would rather play soccer than football.

HANK: Bobby, I never thought I'd need to tell you this, but I would be a bad parent if I didn't. Soccer was invented by European ladies to keep them busy while their husbands did the cooking.

BOBBY: Why do you have to hate what you don't understand?

HANK: I don't hate you, Bobby.

BOBBY: I meant soccer.

HANK: Oh. Oh, yeah, I hate soccer. Yes.

Bobby joins a soccer team and brings some of the other young football players along with him, including Joseph, his friend, classmate and neighbor, who is also the football team’s quarterback. Bobby slowly gets fed up with soccer, however, and returns to football, even if it is only to sit at the end of the bench and cheer.

BOBBY: I'd rather be on a losing football team than a winning soccer team any day.

HANK: That was good strategy, bringing Joseph back. Stick with it and you could make a good coach someday.

BOBBY: I'd still want to wear my uniform.

HANK: Uh, yeah, okay.

BOBBY: And a cape.

Even with what is considered a masculine activity by his father, Bobby wants to add some of his flair to the occasion.

In the Season Three episode, "Hank's Cowboy Movie," which first aired on April 4, 1999, Bobby and Hank go to the Texas city of Wichita Falls for Dallas Cowboys training camp. The episode was written by Jim Dauterive and directed by Shaun Cashman. Bobby is excited about going. He and Hank get to the field and Hank reenacts a Cowboys' moment where he pretends he is former Dallas Cowboys star quarterback, Troy Aikman, and Bobby is former Dallas Cowboys star wide receiver, Michael Irvin. Bobby has no clue what is going on and Hank has to tell him to run into the end zone. In pure Bobby Hill form, Bobby drops the touchdown pass and is unaffected by the botched play. Hank calls a penalty and says the Cowboys maintained possession. Bobby interrupts by saying, "And they run out the clock."

Hank fudges the math and Dallas wins Hank's fantasy Super Bowl. Hank wants to share sporting experiences with his son, but Bobby does not gravitate toward them. Hank gets so wrapped up in the idea that he initiates a proposal to have the Dallas

Cowboys move their training camp to his town of Arlen. This idea excites him so much that he expresses his love for his son in a rare moment.

BOBBY: Do you really think the Cowboys would move to Arlen?

HANK: I sure do, son. Just imagine what it'll be like. We'll go get autographs, and Troy Aikman will toss the ball around with you. I wish I had Dandy Don Meredith or Roger Staubach throwing me passes when I was your age. Even Craig Morton would have been okay. I love you, Bobby.

BOBBY: What?!

HANK: Uh... nothing. Hey, look, a bird!

Bobby and Hank reenact the same fantasy football sequence again, but this time it is Bobby who throws the touchdown pass to Hank. There is a touching moment where Hank understands that Bobby is growing up, but not exactly the way he envisioned.

HANK: So I guess this means you'll be leaving us when you grow up.

BOBBY: Yeah, I'll probably leave. But it's not for a while, Dad. I'm only 12. We've still got plenty of time together.

HANK: Yeah. And even after you leave, Wichita Falls is only six hours away.

BOBBY: I can't be a prop comic in Wichita Falls. I'm moving to New York City, or Hollywood. Maybe Vegas.

It is Season Five where Bobby turns 13, but he still has not hit puberty. He struggles through the season as his friend, Joseph, handles the trials of early manhood. In the episode "What Makes Bobby, Run?," written by Alex Gregory and Peter Huyck and

directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, Bobby wants to become the Landry Longhorn, the official mascot of his middle school. Hank catches him practicing in the garage and gets upset until he learns what Bobby is doing dressed in the costume. Hank says to Bobby, “You're going out for the Longhorn? So you're not prancing around the garage. You're training.”

As long as Bobby's actions fall under the sports terminology of training, Hank is fine with the decision. Hank even builds Bobby a prop for his audition and is proud that Bobby wants to be the mascot. Bobby wins the job and he and his dad are so happy that they are both part of the Arlen football tradition. Hank is just as pleased telling Bobby that being the mascot is still a level better than the placekicker on the team. It may not be exactly what Hank envisioned how his son would be participating in football, but it is still a step in the right direction.

Once again, Bobby tries out for the football team in the Season Seven episode, “The Son Also Roses,” written by Dan Sterling and directed by Dominic Polcino. It first aired on Dec. 8, 2002. Bobby is not athletic enough to play so he becomes the towel boy. This works out great for Bobby, because he loves towels. Hank is just excited that his son made a team. As the episode progresses, Bobby gets interested in growing roses as a hobby and Hank only finally accepts the idea in terms of competition. Hank addresses Bobby, “Bobby, I've got some good news for you, but I want you to promise me you're not gonna squeal like a girl. I've decided to let you grow your roses.” In pure Bobby fashion, he squeals.

Bobby is proud of the roses he grows in his bedroom closet under a grow light, but Hank is not sure about the project. He tells Bobby, “You better stay in the closet until

you win. Then you can plant them in the front yard and if anyone gives you any guff, you can show them your trophy.” The reference of coming out of the closet with Bobby is interesting double entendre. The “coming out of the closet” adage is a figure of speech for disclosing sexual orientation. Hank and Bobby end up submitting a rose that Bobby grew in his closet to a major competition, but Hank’s overly competitive nature takes its toll.

BOBBY: This one's pretty.

HANK: Not if we go by the book. According to the checklist, *this* one's perfect.

BOBBY: But I like how mine's a little off-center. It's got Wahbi-Sabi.

HANK: You can't win an argument by making up words.

BOBBY: Wahbi-Sabi is an Eastern tradition, Dad. It's celebrating the beauty in what's flawed. Like the crack in the Liberty Bell or the mole on Cindy Crawford's face.

HANK: The Liberty Bell is great. But come on, if it was in a competition with a bunch of other bells without cracks, it would lose.

BOBBY: But sometimes it's the imperfections that make you love something even more. So what if this rose is a little short, a little wide? It's got more personality than those other ones.

HANK: Uh-huh. But we're out to win.

Bobby is speaking more about himself than the rose. Hank ignores Bobby’s words and they lose the rose growing competition. However, Hank starts to understand his son and tells him, “Son, you've got a lot of Wahbi-Sabi.”

Aired on March 13, 2005, “Care-takin’ Care of Business,” written by Dan McGrath and directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, Bobby and Hank have two interesting interactions. First, Bobby placates Hank’s love of football. Hank says to Bobby, “Friday night, the big test: season opener against Rushford.” Bobby responds emphatically, “Crush Rushford!” Hank is pleased, “That's the spirit, Bobby.” Bobby retorts, “I can't take sole credit. They taught it to us all week at school.”

Later in the episode, Hank rewards Bobby with something that is out of the ordinary for Hank and he does so with only slight enthusiasm. Hank reluctantly says, “Bobby, looks like I'm free this Friday if you want to see that Hilary Duff movie.” Bobby excitedly replies, “*The Princess and the Poor Girl?* All right!”

In the first episode of Season 12, “Suite Smell of Excess,” written by Dave Schiff and directed by Michael Loya, Bobby gets extremely interested in football. There is no explanation for the new interest. This episode first aired on Sept. 23, 2007. Hank feels he needs to nurture his son’s growing interest and takes Bobby to a Big XII championship football game. Hank, Bobby and the neighbors are all University of Texas fans at the Nebraska vs. Texas game.

#### *Guns and Hunting.*

In “How to Fire a Rifle without Really Trying,” written by Paul Lieberstein and directed by Adam Kuhlman, Hank discovers that while Bobby may not be able to throw a ball, he definitely has a gift for shooting a rifle. The episode originally aired Sept. 21, 1997. Hank is extremely proud of Bobby’s newly discovered talent and takes him to Mega-Lo-Mart to purchase a rifle. Bobby loves to shoot and asks Hank if he can put a



gun rack on his bicycle. Hank responds nearly in tears, “Do you know how long I’ve been waiting for you to ask me that?”

Hank gives Bobby the feeling of pure acceptance and they soon enter a father and son shooting contest. While Bobby continues to shine as a target shooter, Hank struggles terribly due to being mentally abused by his own father. Hank is the weak link in the competition, which drives him crazy. While being able to shoot a rifle well is a highly desired masculine trait for Hank, Bobby sees the experience as something else. Bobby is participating in the sport because it is fun, not because it becomes a representation of who he is as a man. As the episode comes to a close Bobby says to Hank, “We did it, Dad! Second place in a real father-son tournament! Can I put it on my wall? We were so good out there. We should always be shooting. This is the best day ever. You're the best dad ever. I'm the best son ever.”

Bobby’s gift of shooting and hunting is explored again in the Season Three episode “Good Hill Hunting,” written by Joe Stillman and directed by Klay Hall. Hunting has a strong connection to masculinity in the blue collar South. “The seemingly timeless relationship provides scholars with a compelling ‘first cause’ for a number of historical and cultural developments, from anthropology’s ‘Man-the-Hunter’ theory, which locates the origins of human culture in the hunting practices of prehistoric men, to historical analyses of masculinity which claim that primitive hunting established the most enduring characteristics of maleness” (Smalley, 2005, p. 184). Fine (2000) found that hunting is part of the white, working class establishment and helps create the masculine identity. “Because hunting was traditionally done by rural people, hunting's initial popularity either continued or evoked the rural roots” (Fine, 2000).

The episode first aired Dec. 6, 1998. Hank wants to take Bobby hunting, but is hesitant to do so, because he rarely understands what is going on with his son, Bobby. Hank believes that killing an animal is part of the path toward manhood and Bobby is excited to go hunting with his dad. He has a dream where Hank finally says, "Bobby, I just want to say you are perfect and a man."

However, Hank does not get a deer license in time and is forced to take Bobby to a hunting resort. Bobby understands the importance of killing an animal as the next step in moving toward his father's version of manhood. He has learned this from his father and Bobby knows some things get left behind on this journey. Bobby tells Hank, "I know I'm about to be a man, Dad, so I wanted to take this last chance to tell you, I love you."

Bobby and Hank do not end up killing a deer at the resort, because the sport of the hunt has been watered down by feeding stations. As they leave the resort, Bobby accepts the decision and says to Hank, "This gives me an extra year to learn from the man I'd most like to be like when I finally become a man."

Hank makes a decision then to let Bobby drive his truck on the way back home.

HANK: You know, there's plenty of worse things than getting to hold on to your boyhood for another year. And by "holding on to your boyhood" I don't mean --

BOBBY: I know, Dad.

HANK: I'm going to skip you ahead one whole milestone. Gonna let you drive my truck!

Bobby is extremely excited as he drives down the road and says, "I'm drivin' the hell out of this truck, aren't I, Dad?" Suddenly, Bobby hits a deer in the road, killing it. Bobby becomes concerned, "Oh, my God! I hit a deer with your truck! Oh, God!" A calm Hank sees the fortune in the accident and counters, "Yeah, you did... uh... and it's a good clean kill. A good kill."

*School Related Athletic Endeavors.*

Bobby joins the wrestling team at his school in "Bobby Slam," written by Gina Fattore and directed by Chris Moeller. Airing on Dec. 14, 1997, this Season Two episode finds Hank floored by Bobby's decision.

BOBBY: Dad, guess what? I joined a team!

HANK: A sports team?

BOBBY: Uh-huh. Wrestling. It's the best sport ever, Dad! There's no running!

HANK: Way to go, boy! Wrestling's a damn fine sport. Hell, it's an Olympic sport! And this is offered through the school, isn't it? Not some guy in a van with a camcorder?

Like an ancient king handing a sword over to his son, Hank gives Bobby an athletic supporter to wear as they both joke and laugh about it. Trouble is brewing, though, as relates to Hank's concerns about Bobby's masculinity. Bobby's classmate, friend and neighbor, Connie, also makes the wrestling team and Bobby is pitted against her. Bobby does not know what to do and says to Hank, "Dad, what am I gonna do? I'm danged here, I'm royally danged!"

To psyche Bobby up, Hank tells him, "Son, I know everyone's been filling your head with crazy stuff, but I just want you to know this: Connie killed your frog."

Bobby and Connie end up wrestling, but do so in the style of World Wrestling Entertainment and not Olympic wrestling. It is more about entertainment for Bobby and Connie and not about true athletic prowess. Hank is still pleased with his son. The episode ends with Bobby spinning Connie in the air.

In the Season Nine episode, "Bobby on Track," written by Aron Abrams and Gregory Thompson and directed by Tricia Garcia, Bobby volunteers to run a 5K race. Hank does not believe Bobby.

BOBBY: I'm running a 5K.

HANK: What!? Wait, is "running a 5K" some kind of rap thing?

BOBBY: No, Dad. It's a bunch of kids running to raise money for the school.

HANK: That's great. And when you cross that finish line, I'll be right there with the video camera. Even though it brings out certain instincts in you.

Hank is proud of his son for taking the initiative, but Bobby does not finish the race. Hank picks Bobby up in his truck and takes him home. Handing Bobby a pedometer, Hank tells Bobby he has all day to run or walk the 5K. In reference to the "Talking Shop" episode of Season Eight, Bobby says, "You know what I'd love to do? Learn how to fix a car!" Hank tells Bobby to "Get moving!" Bobby ends up joining the track and field team at school and competes. Hank is amazed and responds to the good news, "You competed while another guy sat on the bench? There's a bottle of sport drink I've been saving. Let's open it!"

*Miscellaneous Sport Themes.*

In the episode, “Hank’s Got the Willies” written by Johnny Hardwick and directed by Monte Young, Hank decides his son needs a hero. Airing on Feb. 9, 1997, Hank takes Bobby golfing and Bobby turns out to be a decent golfer. However, Hank belittles Bobby by helping him with his golf swing while saying, “That’s okay, Bobby, you can do it. Just choke up on it. And swing less like a girl.” Toward the end of the episode, the audience learns that Hank is Bobby’s hero. This makes for greater understanding that even though the two are so different; they really do care about each other.

In the third season episode “Love Hurts and So Does Art,” written by John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky and directed by Adam Kuhlman, Bobby uses the excuse of going to play at a local sports field as a way to go to a New York deli in a local mall instead. Hank thinks Bobby has gotten athletically active, but Bobby gets gout from eating at the deli so often. Hank takes Bobby to the family doctor convinced that Bobby has some sort of athletic injury.

Hank decides to get Bobby involved with the rodeo in “Rodeo Days,” written by Jon Vitti and directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, from Season Four. The episode aired on Jan. 16, 2000. In pure Bobby fashion, Bobby goes from being a cowboy to becoming a rodeo clown. Hank is so disappointed that Bobby went from the top of the rodeo hierarchy to what he considers the bottom.

HANK: A circus clown is just a carnie who's too stupid to flip a ride switch on and off. Now, you take a circus clown, roll him on the barn floor, kick him

in the head a couple hundred times, and what have you got?

BOBBY: Your son!

In the episode, Bobby ends up saving the day, but gets a concussion in the process. Hank sees the concussion as a badge of masculine honor. He uses the injury as a way of trying to brainwash Bobby into thinking he is something he is not.

HANK: Your first concussion. Now, don't fall asleep, son, both because you could die and because I want to tell you how proud I am. I mean, look at you, the bruises, the dirty clothes, the smell -- you're all right. Is there anything I can get you?

BOBBY: The blonde girl who lives here said I like fruit pies.

HANK: No you don't. A tough guy like you? You like sports!

In another example of sports masking the entertainment qualities of Bobby, the episode, "Now Who's the Dummy," written by Johnny Hardwick and directed by Dominic Polcino, Bobby acquires a ventriloquist dummy called Chip Block. This episode first aired Feb. 18, 2001. Hank is at first mortified that Bobby is "playing with dolls," but Bobby tailors Chip Block's jokes to be about sports and Hank approves. Hank even rewards Bobby by letting him to sit on the couch to watch sports with him and his friends and he begins to treat Chip Block better than he treats Bobby. Bobby complains, "Dad, I think I'm starting to get a ventriloquist's tan." Hank quickly responds, "Nobody likes a whiner, Bobby. Right, Chip?"

Chip Block ends up getting destroyed and Hank makes Bobby a new ventriloquist dummy. At first, Hank wants to make the new Chip Block look like a football player, but

he decides to have it look like Bobby. This changes the comedy and the jokes are no longer about sports. Hank accepts the new situation and his son.

DUMMY BOBBY: Hey, isn't *Iron Chef* on?

BOBBY: Yeah! Let's go watch *Iron Chef*!

HANK: You know, the Rangers are playing the Yankees right now, and --

DUMMY BOBBY: *Iron Chef! Iron Chef!*

BOBBY: *Iron Chef! Iron Chef!* Sorry, Dad, it's two against one.

HANK: Yeah, I guess you're right.

Bobby tries to use the sports excuse to get out of going to a Church function in the Season Eight episode "Reborn to Be Wild," written by Tony Gama-Lobo and Rebecca May and Dominic Polcino. The episode aired on Nov. 9, 2003. Bobby tries the excuse, "But Dad...it's after school! What if I want to join a sports team?" Hank ends the conversation, "Nice try!"

*Woman's Work*

There were 19 *King of the Hill* episodes that explored Bobby's gravitation toward household tasks. These tasks usually did not fall under the masculine umbrella of work as defined by his father.

*Cooking.*

In "Life in the Fast Lane, Bobby's Saga," written by John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky and directed by Adam Kuhlman from Season Two, Hank gives permission for Bobby to attend cooking school under one pretense. Hank tells him, "Bobby, I know we've never talked about this, but someday I'm going to die. And when that happens, then you can go to cooking school."

Airing on Dec. 20, 1998, the Season Three episode, "Pretty, Pretty Dresses," written by Paul Lieberstein and directed by Dominic Polcino, found Bobby serving Hank and Peggy breakfast much to Hank's horror. With Bobby in the room, Hank asks Peggy, his wife and Bobby's mother, "Shouldn't you be doing this?"

Bobby is caught in the kitchen again by Hank in "Take Me Out of the Ball Game," written by Alan Cohen and Alan Freeland and directed by Chris Moeller, which aired on May 9, 1999 as part of Season Three. Hank eats a cookie that he thinks Peggy has made.



HANK: What?

BOBBY: I used double the butter. Aren't they great? Better than the Arrow Girls!

HANK: Oh God! You didn't join the Arrow Girls, did you?

BOBBY: No and I never will. But I will sell more cookies than Troop number 159!

HANK: Just don't wear the apron out of the house, please!

Hank seems to just be glad that Bobby did not join the Arrow Girls and ignores that he is baking good cookies.

In the final episode of Season Five, "Kidney Boy and Hamster Girl: A Love Story," written by Garland Testa and directed by Gary McCarver, Bobby has his bicycle stolen by high school bullies. Hank makes him go get his bicycle and Bobby responds to Hank, "Fine, I'll go get the bike. Just make sure you videotape my chef programs while I'm in the coma."

Airing on March 18, 2007, the episode, "Blood and Sauce," written by Dan McGrath and directed by Tricia Garcia, centers again on Bobby in the kitchen. It begins with Bobby baking a cake in the Hill kitchen.

BOBBY: I did it! (He flexes) URRGGGG!!!! I can bake! YEAH!!!

HANK: (walks in) Bobby? Are those oven mitts?

PEGGY: Hank this is not what it looks like!

BOBBY: Dad, I'm just gonna come right out and say it...I've baked a cake!

HANK: (disappointed) What? No!

BOBBY: I think cooking is something I could be good at. It's just like shop. When you're done, you get to lick the tools.

HANK: (Hank takes the oven mitts off Bobby's hands.) Shop is nothing like baking. You can't live inside a cake you've built. You can't cut your finger off with a pastry bag.

This one interaction plays off the shop issue from Season Eight's episode, "Talking Shop." It also examines the idea that Bobby could be homosexual. He teases Hank and the audience, "I'm just gonna come right out and say it." Bobby does not reveal anything out of the ordinary though and Hank allows Bobby to cook as long as he is barbequing telling Bobby that "it's not cooking, Bobby. It's barbeque." Bobby is super excited and creates his own sauce.

#### *Housework.*

The Season Three episode, "Sleight of Hank," written by Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger and directed by Jeff Myers, aired on Feb. 14, 1999. Hank is happy that Bobby wants to do some chores and paint his room. However, it is not what Hank wants in his son's room and says, "You painted clouds?" Not understanding his father's frustration, Bobby answers, "White puffy clouds!" Hank's frustration shows through as he answers back, "This is a boy's room no a daycare center! A boy's room should be blue. I'm painting it back!"

Hank gives Bobby a whet stone in the Season Seven episode, "An Officer and a Gentle Boy," written by Dan Sterling and directed by Gary McCarver. The title is a reference to the 1982 film, *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

HANK: (Giving Bobby the whet stone) Son, you're a teenager now, on your way to becoming a man. This will help you on the journey.

BOBBY: Wow! I've always wanted one of these! (Bobby thinks it is a pumice stone for his feet)

Hank explains to Bobby it is for sharpening lawnmower blades and he believes Bobby can now handle the responsibility of mowing the lawn. This is extremely important for Hank because it is his way of handing down a masculine legacy. Bobby does not care about the gift. He sets the whet stone aside and it accidentally breaks. Hank becomes furious about the broken gift and Bobby's nonchalant attitude.

In the Season Twelve episode, "It Came From the Garage," written by Blake McCormick and directed by Robin Brigstocke, Bobby and Hank work together in Hank's garage and bond over building a boat for a competition.

*School Coursework.*

From the episode, "Little Horrors of Shop," written by Kit Boss directed by Adam Kuhlman from Season Four, Bobby signs up for shop class in school. Hank is thrilled that Bobby is taking shop class and tells Bobby, "From now on when I ask how was your day; I mean...how was shop?" Up to this point in the series, shop class is the most masculine class to take in school, besides sports, according to Hank.

It was in Season Seven that Bobby signs up for a home economics course in the episode "Goodbye Normal Jeans," written by Kit Boss and directed by Boowhan Lim and Kyounghee Lim. The title of the episode is a reference to the film, *Goodbye Norma Jean*, about the life of Marilyn Monroe.

The episode begins with Bobby holding up a stained female cheerleader's uniform in his room. It is a take home, extra credit assignment to help his failing grade in home economics. Hank comes into the room and his response to the uniform is typical Hank Hill, "There better be a naked cheerleader under your bed!" Bobby tries to explain that he is failing home economics and Hank responds, "Well, of course you're failing Home Ec! You're a guy."

Bobby begins to find his way in home economics and ends up making his father a pair of jeans. Hank is actually happy with the jeans and finds out that Bobby will be cooking in his home economics class, as well. At one point, Hank tells Bobby, "Well, just make sure when you're done playing, your mother has her kitchen back!"

To the surprise of Hank, Bobby is a good cook.

Hank labels his son's cooking as homework and not as cooking. Once again, the father re-labels his son's activities to fall more in line with his own ideals. Hank and Bobby begin to bond throughout the episode as Bobby makes Hank a circular saw cozie, but Hank renames it a circular saw buddy. The word buddy is much more masculine than cozie. Bobby's cooking skills also increase the bond between father and son. The two of them hang out, watch television, eat breakfast in bed and talk about things. Hanks says they are "really, really talking."

Hank lets Bobby cook the Thanksgiving dinner and it upsets Peggy so he ends up asking Bobby to help. Hank has to do two non-masculine things to help fix Thanksgiving. He says, "Bobby, I need you to do two things that I pray you'll never have to do again. Tape the Cowboys game. And give me an apron."

In the Season Eight episode, “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Alamo,” written by Christy Stratton and directed by Brian Sheesley, there is an interesting scene with Hank and Bobby. It is another example of Bobby being a cultural sponge and someone who does not make decisions based on labels. Bobby needs a book cover for his new Texas History textbook.

HANK: (After learning that Bobby is taking a Texas History class) Today you are officially a Texan.

*Bobby starts to cover the book with aluminum foil.*

HANK: You can’t cover a book that important with aluminum foil.

BOBBY: (pulls out a bag that looks like a Victoria Secret bag) This one’s pretty!

HANK: Uhhhh...NO! I’ve got a brown paper bag in the garage.

This is great example of Hank’s Southern pride, as well. Being a proud Texan, Hank kept his old Texas history book from high school. He keeps it on the bookshelf next to books he considers important, the *Bible*, *The Firm*, *The Guinness Book of World Records* and *Shogunate*.

In the last episode of Season Eight, “Talking Shop,” written by Garland Testa and directed by Anthony Lioi, Bobby wants to take a peer counseling course in middle school, but Hank wants him to take auto shop. Bobby wants to be part of the peer counseling class, because that is the class all the girls are taking. Bobby is trying to outthink his father on this one. Hank does not understand his motives.

HANK: Bobby, no good ever came from kids talking to other kids about their problems. Sweet Lord, they've got auto shop in middle school...done deal!!!

BOBBY: But Dad, I want to meet girls! I don't think there are girls in auto shop.

HANK: You've got to think long term, Bobby. Auto shop is where boys become the men that girls will want when they become women. It worked for me.

Bobby lies to his dad about taking auto shop and takes peer counseling instead. Hank is fooled and buys Bobby an old, rundown car to work on at home. Hank tells Bobby, "I didn't know if you were a Ford man or a Chevy man. It was the happiest problem, I've ever faced."

*Comedy and Entertainment.*

In the Season Four episode, "Meet the Propaniacs," written by Kit Boss and directed by Shaun Cashman, Hank thinks he is catching Bobby reading a gentlemen's magazine, but it is the New York Times magazine. Hank questions Bobby, "The *New York Times* Magazine? Published by the *New York Times* Newspaper? Oh, Bobby!" Bobby tries to backpedal, "I wasn't reading the articles!"

Bobby finds a comedy camp in the Catskills he wants to attend, but instead, Hank signs Bobby up to work at his employer, Strickland Propane. Hank tries to teach Bobby about the propane business, but Bobby does not show the same enthusiasm as his dad does. Bobby ends up doing a comedic dance in the propane store to save Hank from a business bind and then convinces Hank to form a comedic group that does material on

propane. Hank lets Bobby run the troupe and both father and son bond through the experience. Bobby finally gets approval and praise from Hank about his comedy and his ability to entertain.

Bobby catches his dad playing with dolls in the episode “Racist Dawg,” written by Kit Boss and directed by Michael DiMartino, which aired on May 4, 2003 as part of the seventh season. The dolls are part of Hank’s therapy, after he received a diagnosis of being a racist, because his dog barked at a plumber who is African American.

BOBBY: If you found those dolls in my room, I swear I've never seen them before.

PEGGY: It's okay, Bobby, they're your father's.

BOBBY: Dad plays with dolls?

HANK: No. I'm not playing with dolls. I'm interacting with them.

BOBBY: Oh. Can I interact with the dolls too?

HANK: Sure, son, let's interact together.

BOBBY (*as the white doll*): Hewwo. Have you seen a big fwuffy kitty wunning awound here?

HANK (*as the black doll*): What's your kitten's name?

BOBBY (*as the white doll*): We call her Whiskers, but she'll answer to Kiki. Here, Ki-ki-ki-ki-ki!

Hank is incredibly uncomfortable with this interaction, but he “interacts” with Bobby.

*Miscellaneous.*

In “The Wedding of Bobby Hill,” written by Jonathan Collier and directed by Jack Dyer from Season Three, Peggy makes a comment about Bobby drinking a beer. Bobby responds to her and Hank by saying, “I didn’t even like it.” Hank gets upset and says, “Well, now you’re just trying to make me mad!” Bobby is 12 years old at this point and Hank is more upset about Bobby not liking the beer he drank than the fact he was too young to legally drink it.

It should be noted that two seasons later in the Season Five episode, “Twas the Nut Before Christmas,” written by John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky and directed by Jeff Myers, Bobby tries beer again, gets drunk and tells Hank that he likes beer now.

Alcohol consumption has been linked to masculinity through several studies. Lemle and Mishkind (1989) found that men establish their masculinity through the act of drinking alcohol. Capraro (2000) observed that alcohol consumption by men may be linked to feelings of power and powerlessness. Drinking creates a sensation of power and may help a man navigate through his emotional vulnerability. “Whether or not a man engages in particular health-related social behaviors such as alcohol consumption therefore has implications for his masculine identity. As a result, young men’s definitions of drinking as masculine, and the importance to them of being considered to be masculine may influence their drinking behavior” (Devisser and Smith, 2007, p. 597).

It should be noted that in the final episode of Season Seven, “The Witches of East Arlen,” written by Silvert Glarum and Michael Jamin and directed by Matt Engstrom, Bobby is still trying to find his “thing.” He is still in search of where he fits into the world and what gift he has to share.



### *Heterosexuality*

There were 23 *King of the Hill* episodes that show Hank Hill reinforcing heterosexuality in Bobby.

It is the fifth episode of Season One, “Luanne’s Saga,” written by Paul Lieberstein and directed by Patty Shinagawa, where we see that Bobby makes decisions based on if an activity is fun rather than if the activity defines him. It is Bobby’s curiosity and his being a cultural sponge that is shown in this brief encounter. Hank comes home to find Bobby doing aerobics with Luanne, Bobby’s cousin and Peggy, his mother as they watch an aerobics tape on television. Hank yells “Bobby, stop dancing now!” Later in the episode Hank sees Bobby doing aerobics with Peggy, but does not say anything about it.

It is the final episode of Season One, “Plastic White Female,” written by David Zuckerman and directed by Jeff Myers, where Bobby adds another dimension to the rift between Hank’s ideals of masculinity and what Bobby feels. In this episode, Bobby is invited to a boy-girl party by his best friend and neighbor, Joseph, who is the same age but maturing physically at a faster rate. Bobby is labeled as a “late bloomer” by his mother and does not want to go to the party because there will be girls there. Bobby tells everyone he does not like girls. Bobby plainly says, “It’s just a dumb party.” Hank responds, “A dumb party with girls.” Bobby gives his reasoning, “I don’t like girls!” and Hank stressfully reacts, “Peg, honey, close the screen door.”

Bobby is convinced to go to the party. He is a scared, so he starts practicing his first kiss on a mannequin head that Luanne uses for her cosmetology classes. Hank finds out and is mortified.

HANK: Just so you know, most states won't let you marry a plastic head.

BOBBY: I don't want to marry it! I just needed to practice my first kiss so I don't look like an idiot.

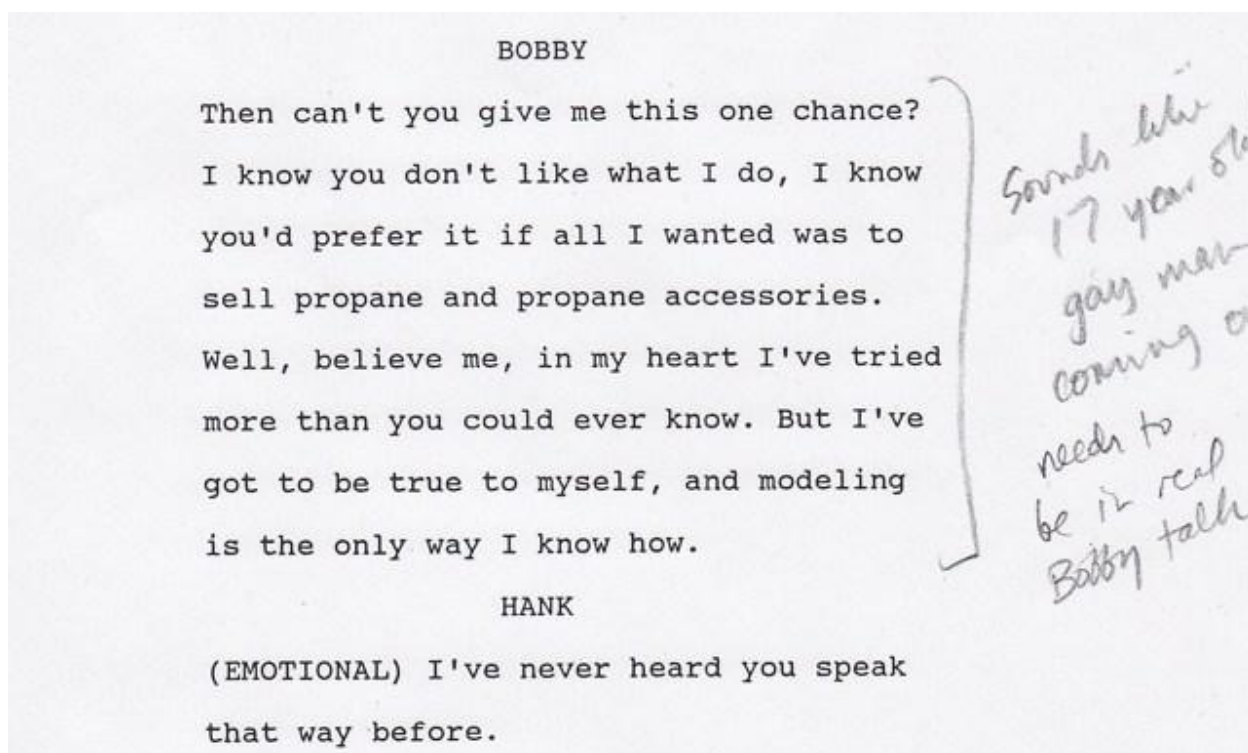
HANK: You're kissing a plastic head, and you're afraid of looking like an idiot?

Airing on Nov. 9, 1997, as part of Season Two, "Husky Bobby" was written by Jonathan Collier and directed by Martin Archer. In the episode, Bobby is selected to be a husky sized child fashion model. Bobby loves the idea that he can have photos taken of him and he gets paid for the work. Bobby tells Hank, "I got my picture taken, I made 40 dollars, and they let me keep the underwear. I'm still wearing it, Dad!" He uses his new paycheck to pay others to do his household chores. Hank tells Bobby he can no longer model and bans him from participating in a fashion show that takes place in the mall. Bobby disobeys Hank and runs off to be in the show. Hank finds Bobby at the mall and stops him from participating. Bobby's response to Hank is the first time the viewer sees him question his father over his insistence on his son being a particular person.

BOBBY: Why are you always trying to turn me into you? Why can't you accept me for who I am?

HANK: Yeah, yeah, we both saw that after-school special, but I'm not an alcoholic and you're not an ice skater.

The viewer may assume that Bobby is talking about being a homosexual. However, the original lines of the response of Bobby were reworded.



**Figure 3. “Husky Bobby” script.** From the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University-San Marcos.

In a handwritten note on the “Husky Bobby” script of Greg Daniels, Executive Producer, Co-Creator and writer of *King of the Hill*, he remarks that the original monologue sounded “like a 17 year old gay man coming out...it needs to be in real Bobby talk.” This note shows that Bobby is not presented as a homosexual, but only trying new things out. The writers did not want him to be misrepresented by his own words. While the implication is still there with the final script, there is still room to believe Bobby is heterosexual.

The Season Two episode, “The Man Who Shot Cane Skretteburg,” written by Johnny Hardwick and directed by Monte Young, shows Bobby telling Hank about a local band and its lead singer. Bobby tries to explain to Hank, “He's so cool. He told me I could be the Stubborn Stains's groupie.” Hank tries to correct Bobby, “The word is “roadie,” Bobby, he meant “roadie.” At least I hope to God.” Hank is questioning the

nature of the word *groupie*, which is used most often for describing women who are followers of a band. *Roadie* is a term used for people who work for a band.

In the Season Two episode, "I Remember Mono," written by Paul Lieberstein and directed by Wes Archer, Hank finds a Valentine's Day Card Bobby is about to send out.

HANK: What's this Bobby? Have a girlfriend? (Reads the Valentine's Day Card out loud)

*Happy Valentine's Day, Joseph. Love Bobby. Hey Hot Stuff!?* Bobby, you can't give this to Joseph!

BOBBY: Why not? He is hot stuff! You should see him skateboard.

HANK: Bobby, if you give a Valentine to a sixth-grade boy, girls are gonna think you're sensitive. And something like that can follow you the rest of your life.

Once again, Bobby sees nothing wrong with saying what he thinks and sees. There is nothing sexual in nature with the Valentine Day card. Hank sees a bigger picture and does not understand the naivety of his son. While there are homosexual undertones to the card, later in the episode the viewer learns that Bobby has a crush on Olympic gymnast, Kerri Strug. That would be a normal heterosexual trait that Hank would agree with, if he ever knew about the crush.

Mentioned earlier, "Life in the Fast Lane, Bobby's Saga," written by John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky and directed by Adam Kuhlman, had an interesting combination of the definitions put in place. The episode revolves around car racing and NASCAR, masculine traditions to many blue collar workers like Hank Hill. Bobby

makes a comment about Jeff Gordon, a real life race car driver. He tells Hank, "I like Jeff Gordon. He's handsome." Hank reacts, "Ahhh...Bobby, you joke around like that in public, people are going to think you ain't right."

While Bobby does not see an issue with what he just said, Hank is once again concerned with possible homosexual overtones. Later in the episode, Hank becomes proud of Bobby and says to him, "Bobby, if you weren't my son, I'd hug you."

In the first episode of Season Three, "Death of a Propane Salesman," written by Alan Cohen and Alan Freedland and directed by Lauren MacMullan, Bobby is concerned about death and Hank is concerned with Bobby's distaste for girls. Hank lectures Bobby, "A boy your age should be worrying about getting dates, and making a team, and, well, getting dates. My death should be at the bottom of the list."

In the second episode of Season Three, "And They Call It Bobby Love," written by Norm Hiscock and directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, Bobby takes Hank's advice and sets out to get a girlfriend. Hank cannot believe it and addresses the situation, "Bobby has a girlfriend? Well, all right, son! She's real, right? I mean, she's not imaginary or on a cereal box?"

This is a welcomed question considering Hank had recently caught Bobby making out with a mannequin head. Bobby's relationship with the older girl, who is also a vegetarian, does not work out in the end and Bobby is heartbroken. Hank understands how the brokenhearted Bobby feels and he takes Bobby and Peggy to dinner at a steak restaurant. Bobby's ex-girlfriend is at the same restaurant and Bobby tries to show her up by eating a 72-ounce steak, but only after Hank gives him a pep talk. Bobby cries to

Hank, “Dad, I want to go home!” Hank counters, “You can’t let her get to you, son. If you leave, she wins. And dating is all about who wins and loses.”

Even in times of heartbreak, Hank finds solace in a sports analogy and knowing that his son is still on the right path of masculinity by eating steak to replace an emotional void.

The episode “To Spank, With Love,” written by David Zucker and directed by Adam Kuhlman aired on Jan. 17, 1999 as part of Season Three. Throughout the episode, Bobby makes a few comments to the chagrin of Hank. As Bobby suns himself he comments, “I’m getting some nice color.” Hank can only grunt, “Ugh!!”

Later in the same episode, Bobby makes a reference, “It’s like the book they took out of the school library...I’ve got two dads!” Hank emphatically responds, “No you don’t!”

Both comments from Bobby do not coincide with what Hank believes is normal, Southern, working class masculinity.

In the Season Four episode, “Cotton’s Plot,” written by Jonathon Aibel and Glenn Berger and directed by Anthony Lioi, Hank catches Bobby dipping his hands into wet cement in one of the only father-son scenes of the episode. Hank disapproves with an “ugh” after Bobby says, “I’m Sophia Loren.” He is imagining himself as the Hollywood actress in front of Grauman’s Chinese Theatre.

The writers play with homosexual undertones with Bobby in the Season Four episode, “A Beer Can Named Desire,” written by Jim Dauterive and directed by Chuck Austen and Chris Moeller. Bobby, his family and their neighbor, Bill, travel to Louisiana for a football game and to visit Bill’s relatives. Bobby meets Bill’s cousin, Gilbert, who is the epitome of the Southern, effeminate gentleman. The name, Gilbert, is said with the

French-Cajun pronunciation. There is a middle ground between a masculine, Southern man and a Southern “dandy.” This difference is portrayed between the characters of Hank and Gilbert. Bobby falls into the middle of this spectrum. “Because the traditional Southern matriarch is charged with simultaneously raising children and cooking, the young boy may spend significant time at his mother's apron in the kitchen. Although the boy is supposed to grow out of the kitchen into a harder, less domesticated man, it is easy to see why many do not” (Smith, 2004, p. 191). In this episode, Hank watches Bobby start to lean toward the “dandy” side of the spectrum.

Gilbert dresses Bobby up as a “dandy” and Hank is outraged. Hank will not even let Bobby sit next to Gilbert at dinner and Bobby begins to speak in the same Southern, effeminate drawl as Gilbert, each time getting a reaction from Hank. In the Southern, effeminate drawl, Bobby announces, “I need a window seat because this flower is wilted.” Out of frustration and lack of understanding, Hank can only respond, “Oh Lord!”

Bobby references himself as a “dandy”, but it is not until the end of the episode when Hank has had enough. When Bobby says, “I do believe I’ll give room service a jangle and have them send up some etouffee,” in the same drawl, Hank takes all of Bobby’s “dandy” clothes and throws them off the balcony. Hank has had enough and rather than address the issue, he throws the problem out the window.

Airing on Dec. 12, 1999 as part of Season Four, “To Kill a Ladybird” was written by Norm Hiscock and was directed by Wes Archer. In this episode, Hank and Bobby discuss getting another pet, once their current dog, Ladybird, finally passes away from old age. Bobby does not gravitate towards the same pet choices that his dad would love.

HANK: Say, Bobby, I know this won't be for a while, but when Ladybird dies, how about if I let you pick our next pet?

BOBBY: Really? Okay. I'm gonna get a possum.

HANK: No. No possums.

BOBBY: An ostrich, then?

HANK: I was thinking more of a traditional pet, like another dog.

BOBBY: Okay. Can I get a poodle?

HANK: No.

From Season Five, "Chasing Bobby," written by Garland Testa and directed by Anthony Lioi, shows Bobby with a stuffed animal and Connie. Bobby loudly announces, "And they said nobody beats the claw machine!" Hank tells Bobby, "That's great, son. Now give it to Connie." Bobby responds, "No! She won it for me!" Hank just shakes his head in disgust as a masculinity role reversal is revealed once again in relation to his son.

In another episode from Season Five, "Hank's Back Story," written by Alan Cohen and Alan Freedland and directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, Hank catches Bobby using another workout video. He yells at Bobby, "Bobby, that's a lady's tape! What are you doing?" Bobby responds that he is working on firming up his buttocks. Hank turns the television off.

The episode, "Boxing Luanne," written by Dean Young and directed by Michael DiMartino from Season Seven, has a brief encounter with Hank and Bobby. As with not allowing Bobby to watch a workout video that is marketed towards women, Hank will not let Bobby dance or do Tae Bo.



The first episode of Season Six, “Bobby Goes Nuts,” written by Norm Hiscock and directed by Tricia Garcia, has Hank telling Bobby he has to start fighting his own battles. Hank suggests going to the YMCA to take boxing lessons. The boxing classes are full, so Bobby signs up for women’s self-defense. He ends up getting into fights at school and wins by kicking boys in the testicles as he screams, “Give me back my purse!” Bobby tells his dad that he beat up a bully at school and Hank rewards him with a PG-13 movie. The reward is funny because Bobby is already 13 years old. Hank and Peggy are then called into the middle school principal’s office because of Bobby kicking boys in their testicles. Hank is livid.

HANK: This, Bobby, is the belt-line. You never, ever hit below that. Always above. Never below. Cassius Clay never hit below the belt.

BOBBY: But, Dad, if I’m in a fight with someone who wants me to literally eat dirt, you’re telling me I shouldn’t do the one thing that’s gonna save me.

HANK: You learned the move in a women’s self-defense class. You are not a woman.

BOBBY: But it works!

It was Hank’s idea to go to the YMCA in the first place, but it did not fulfill the masculine ideals that he expected Bobby to learn. This is the same sort of masculine, working class identity struggle that happens in the movie *Billy Elliot*, where a boy decides to dance in the ballet class instead of box at the local community center (Daldry, 2000).

The episode “I’m With Cupid,” written by John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky and directed by Cyndi Tang-Loveland, finds that Bobby and his neighbor and classmate Connie are no longer dating. Bobby gets flowers during Valentine’s Day from several other girls in school. Hank calls him a stud. However, Hank cannot teach Bobby how to be good with relationships and he asks his neighbor, Boomhauer, known for being a “ladies’ man,” to teach Bobby the ways of the world. Bobby figures it out on his own, however, to the surprise of everyone.

Bobby already has an understanding of what is not acceptable in the household. In “Reborn to Be Wild,” written by Tony Gama-Lobo and Rebecca May and directed by Dominic Polcino from Season Eight, Bobby says to Hank, “I know you got a rule about wigs.”

In the Season Eight episode, “The Incredible Hank,” written by Dan Sterling and directed by Wes Archer, Bobby is failing gym because he refuses to take a shower. He tells Hank it is because he does not have any energy. Hank takes Bobby to the doctor to get testosterone treatments. To the disappointment of Hank, the doctor tells Hank that Bobby is perfectly healthy. Hank has to have a chat with Bobby.

HANK: No one wants to take a shower after gym. It’s not fun. It’s not pleasant and usually not very sanitary. But you do it anyway!

BOBBY: Why?

HANK: Because a big part of being a man is doing things you don’t want to do.

This same lesson is reiterated again in the episode when Hank is afraid to run with the bulls in a local event. He explains to Bobby that just because he is scared, it does not mean he is not going to do it. “A man does what he has to do.”

The Season Six episode, “The Substitute Spanish Prisoner,” written by Etan Cohen and directed by Boowhan Lim and Kyounghee Lim, first aired on March 3, 2002. In this episode, Hank delivers the mail and gives Bobby his magazines, *People* and *Teen People*.

The Season Eight episode, “Stressed for Success,” written by Tony Gama-Lobo and Rebecca May and directed by Tricia Garcia, shows Bobby competing on a Quiz Bowl team for his school. He is the pop culture genius of the team. Hank is dismayed and wishes that Bobby’s magazines had a car or fish picture on them. This is in reference to “The Substitute Spanish Prisoner” episode.

There is a twist to Hank’s request for Bobby not to dress up in women’s clothing in “The Powder Puff Boys” episode written by Christy Stratton and directed by Ronald Rubio. This episode from Season 12 has Bobby having to dress up as a girl cheerleader for a Powder Puff Girls football game. In this traditional game, the girls who are cheerleaders play football and the boys are dressed as girl cheerleaders. It is a complete gender swap. Invited to be part of the cheerleading squad by the football team because of his comedic skills, Bobby reluctantly joins. Bobby does not find cross-dressing funny and is more into observational humor. Bobby wants to get out of participating, but Hank is happy. Hank sees this as being an honor for Bobby that is reserved for football players only. In Hank’s mind, Bobby made “a team” and now he is part of football tradition. Bobby has been part of football tradition before as a mascot, but he questions his dad,

“So you want me to dress like a girl and run around with pompoms?” Hank responds with a resounding, “Yes!”

Bobby tries to explain comedy to Hank. Bobby sees it as being subjective and sees his participation in Power Puff girls as nothing more than a performance. It does not mean he is part of any team. It is only a performance he must take part in, which he definitely does not want any part of. Bobby finally says, “Men in drag, well, I’m sorry Dad, but it just isn’t my thing!” Hank responds, “It is NOW, because you’re gonna be a cheerleader. Let’s go find you a dress!” Hank takes Bobby shopping for women’s clothes, because Bobby refuses to wear his mom’s clothes.

Bobby tries to quit, but evolves into the comedy coach for the cross-dressing cheerleaders. He ends up making people laugh and thanking his dad. However, Hank makes sure that this is the only time he will permit Bobby to dress like a girl. Bobby tells Hank, “Thanks for making me dress up like a girl, Dad!” Hank then reiterates, “You know that after this is over, you can’t do this anymore, right?” Bobby answers back, “Oh, I know!”

Airing on Sept. 13, 2009 as part of the thirteenth season, the episode, “The Boy Can’t Help It,” written by Dan McGrath and directed by Jeff Myers, finds Bobby thinking he is dating three girls from school. Hank is surprised asking how it even happened. Hank watches how Bobby interacts with the girls and is floored. When Bobby sits behind one of the girls on her bicycle, he yells at Bobby, “Don’t sit back there!” Once again, the signs from Bobby make Hank question his son’s sexuality. The girls do not treat Bobby like a boyfriend and Bobby loses his self respect to be with the three. He sits at home next to the phone waiting for the girls to call him. Hank gets upset

with Bobby and says, “Just call them! That’s what men do. We call. Men call! And women get called.”

When the girls do finally call, Bobby starts screaming, “I’m a mess! I have to do my hair!”

Bobby is planning to go to the dance with all three girls, but Hank grounds him from the dance. Hank gives Bobby his reasoning, “You’re not going anywhere near these girls until you start acting like a boy.” “How am I supposed to do that,” Bobby asks. Hank responds with frustration, “You’re just supposed to know!”

Bobby ends up going out with the girls. They all go to a football game and go under the bleachers where all the bad students hang out. Bobby figures out he is being used by the girls and begins to walk away just as Hank finds him. Bobby sees the girls getting harassed by some older boys and walks back over to defend them. He has his self respect back in that one instance. As Hank and Bobby walk away, Hank tries to cheer up his son, “Well, I know these girls don’t appreciate you, but one day there’ll be a girl who will.” Bobby maturely says, “I hope she doesn’t keep me waiting too long.”

From the Season 13 episode, “Bill Gathers Moss,” written by Aron Abrams and Gregory Thompson and directed by Michael Loya, Hank catches Bobby wearing something he deems inappropriate and asks, “Why are you wearing a girl’s purse?” Bobby responds, “It’s a Louis Vuitton backpack and it’s unisex!”

*“To Sirloin With Love”*

The last episode of the series aired on Sept. 13, 2009 on FOX and was titled “To Sirloin With Love.” It was written by Jim Dauterive, Tony Gama-Lobo, Rebecca May and Christy Stratton and was directed by Kyounghee Lim. Within the final episode, all three definitions of masculinity proposed in this study are touched upon.

Bobby and Hank go to dinner at a steak restaurant. Hank is concerned about the dinner because he has no clue how to talk to Bobby. Hank ends up learning that Bobby really knows his “way around a steak.” A man at a table close by offers Bobby a spot on the Heimlich County College meat judging team. Bobby is so excited.

BOBBY: Dad, why didn’t you tell me about any of this?

HANK: Because you’re never interested in anything good.

BOBBY: Can I, Dad? Can I join the team?

HANK: (with a big smile) I have been waiting 13 years for you to ask that! Absolutely!

This is funny sentiment because Bobby is 13 years old, but it is also a reference to King of the Hill being in its 13<sup>th</sup> season. The comment may be more of a tongue-in-cheek comment from Mike Judge and the writers than from Hank Hill.

Bobby ends up joining a meat judging team, making Hank extremely happy that Bobby is once again on a team. There is a flashback sequence where Hank is shown teaching Bobby all about meat when Bobby was an infant. Bobby and Hank bond over Bobby’s involvement with the team. They watch a documentary called *Slaughterhouse* together.

Bobby discovers that his teammates are a bunch of “weirdos” and he does not want to be on the team anymore. Hank thinks Bobby is just as weird. Hank lectures Bobby, “A boy who has a unicorn ranch in his bedroom shouldn’t call other people weird. Yeah, that’s right, we know about Rancho Unicorn.”

Bobby wants to quit the meat judging team just before the state competition. Hank loses his cool and says, “WHAT? NO! We were so close. Why would you pass up the chance to compete at the state level, especially when that state is TEXAS?”

The emphasis that “we” were close and that the accomplishment is not only about Bobby makes Bobby feel that Hank is only thinking about a state championship. It may also be based in the fact that Hank lost the state football title in high school and is reliving his fantasy through Bobby.

Bobby quits the team. He then learns that Hank bought him his own grill, because Hank wanted them to grill together. For Hank, it was not about winning state, but it was about finally being able to bond with his son.

Through the typical *King of the Hill* twists and quirks, Bobby helps the meat judging team win the state title. The series ends with Hank and Bobby barbequing side by side, each with their own grill, bonding over something they both love...meat.

Bobby: Well, Dad, it looks like this is the last one. (Gesturing towards the last steak on the grill)

Hank: Oh, you're just getting started, Bobby. You'll be grilling your whole life.

Bobby: Just like you.

Hank: Yep.

Bobby: Yep.



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Cultural Critical Theory states that the media supports and justifies the status quo at the expense of ordinary people. “Television has the ability to be the message giver to a wide population. Because audiences select the shows they are attracted to, television probably reinforces pre-existing dispositions, although that it is so pervasive and ubiquitous indicates it is increasingly shaping basic attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior“(Kellner, 1981, p. 45).

Television and the content on television can have a tremendous effect on those who consume the information. “The spirit of a society is realized, transmitted, and perceived through the cultural objects which it bestows upon itself and in the midst of which it lives. It is there that the deposit of its practical categories is built up, and these categories in turn suggest a way of being and thinking to men” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 131).

While the everyday events that take place in the *King of the Hill* series may not be entirely realistic, the conversations that take place between Hank and Bobby Hill on *King of the Hill* are built on Hank Hill’s ideals of masculinity in a Southern, working class household. Animated or not, the discussions between father and son on how to be a man and how fathers expect their sons to act are derived from society as interpreted by Hank

Hill. Pope and Englar-Carlson (2001) have labeled this effect a gender straightjacket. The interactions between Hank and Bobby Hill portray three primary elements often deemed necessary if an American man is to take a masculine role in society. The findings of this study demonstrate how this social construct is being portrayed by a popular program in a mass medium.

Bobby Hill is increasingly pressured into finding his role in an athletic or team based activity because in his father's mind, the sporting world continues to be the pinnacle of masculinity. As stated earlier, Trujillo wrote, "Perhaps no single institution in American culture has influenced our sense of masculinity more than sport" (Trujillo, 1991, p. 292).

The adolescent Bobby competes and works hard at the things into which he fits, but he does not succeed in football or baseball like his father hopes. Bobby does find himself on a number of successful teams, however, and he also has sports talents that his father does not possess such as rifle target shooting.

Bobby also has a unique talent for cooking, which is considered a masculine trait by his father if done outside on a grill. However, Hank would rather not have Bobby cook using appliances in a kitchen. Bobby's ability to be successful at what Hank Hill considers "woman's work" does not meet his masculine expectations of his son.

Like any young teenager, Bobby struggles with his place in the world of girls and dating. Even though Bobby dates girls and has relationships throughout the series, Hank is worried about his son's tendencies, his word choices and his life choices. Bobby, on the other hand, has no issue with how he sees or labels the world and the people around him.

Hank Hill wants what is best for his son and what is best for Bobby is what was best for Hank, according to Hank. Throughout the series, Bobby Hill gravitates toward the things that his father does not understand. However, Hank is always trying, and struggling, to find a way to understand Bobby. He may grow frustrated by some of Bobby's choices, but he is never disappointed in Bobby as long as he tries, which is a masculine trait in Hank's mind. Hank slowly learns throughout the series that what Bobby Hill does in his life does not label Bobby as a person. Additionally, it does not label Hank as a father.

The conversations and characters in *King of the Hill* represent one interpretation of Southern, working class culture and defines the ideals of the culture through the storylines. With content that centers around the Southern, working class masculine ideal, the writers and creators made this interpretation of Southern working class culture an important element of the storyline to explore and highlight in the series.

Kellner (1979) wrote that comedy programming has the ability to critique society and show the true colors in a culture. There is sly criticism of the Southern, working class masculinity ideal in the writing of *King of the Hill* that puts a mirror up to the issues. The writers take this known ideal and use Bobby to shake up the concept. Hank represents the traditional society trying to make sense of a new generation. While the social norms of the Southern, working-class culture are represented, they are not always the correct path to solve episodic dilemmas. Media has a way of not only strengthening pre-determined ideals, but can be used to challenge the audience's ideals. This series does more to break apart the ideal, than it does to enforce it. The representation created is one of being open-minded and free to choose what is best for each individual.

Kellner (1981) states that because of the diversity of America's population, television has the ability to represent the transformations of certain factions to other factions that have not had the chance to interact. "Integrated in increasingly various parts of everyday life, the electronic media play a significant role in contributing to making sense of children's experiences in life and being a tool for the individual construction of new frames of reference" (Aasebø, 2005, p. 186).

The study of masculinity and its representations in cultural forms helps in determining the position of male representation in society and adds to the growing literature in men's studies. *King of the Hill* houses other relationships that hold other keys to male representation. In the future, a look at the complicated relationship between Hank Hill and his father, Cotton Hill, would add to this thesis discussion.

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