

Six Post-9/11 American War Films:  
Towards an Evolution of Nontraditional Masculine Constructs

by

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## ABSTRACT

Scholars argue that masculinity and war are united because masculinity is best observed through male-dominated arenas, such as the military. Moreover, film can serve as a medium to not only establish what is socially acceptable, but play an active role in the creation of one's identity. Filmmakers past and present have employed the motif of masculinity in their war films, which put it at the center of the social structure and creates an overall acceptable cultural ideology. These filmmakers have established the overall rules, themes, and methods used as part of the war film genre. These rules, themes, and methods served well for pre-1970 American war cinema, when women were not allowed in the military as soldiers. However, as of 2003, female soldiers have grown to comprise twenty percent of the active soldiers and officers in the military. Studies on masculinity construction are well documented in World War II, Vietnam, and Gulf War-era combat films; however, little has been studied on post-9/11 American war films involving the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Using literature on masculinity constructs, both inside and outside of film, as well as social construction theory, identity theory, genre theory, and auteur theory, this dissertation textually examines masculinity construction in six post-9/11 American war films. This dissertation finds that the contemporary war genre continues to construct masculinity similar to past eras of war film. Comradery, the warrior image, not showing emotion, having a violent demeanor, and the demonization of women and cowardice were all prevalent in one or more of the films analyzed in this study. However, there were many nontraditional masculine ideals that were implemented, such as women being present and taking an active role as soldiers, as well as women being portrayed in the warrior image. The films analyzed demonstrate that the war film

genre is still depicting and therefore socially constructing masculinity in a way that was prevalent in pre-1970 war films. However, the genre is evolving and nontraditional masculinity constructs are starting to present themselves.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

Scholars argue that masculinity and war are united because masculinity is best observed through “male-dominated environments,” and the military is traditionally a male-dominated institution (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 101). Filmmakers past and present have employed the motif of masculinity in their war films, “which locates masculinity and manliness at the center of a social structure based on male hegemony, which on a broader scale, serves to create an American cultural ideology” (p. 101).

According to the fiscal year 2008 report on Population Representation in the Military Services by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness (2008), the military has been a male-dominated institution for most of the twentieth century, but that changed in 1970. That year the military was switched to volunteer based and women were allowed to enlist, with one percent of enlisted soldiers being women. By 1980, that number had risen to 8.5 percent and 15 percent in 2003 (p. 18). In recent years, that number has risen to 18 percent of all officers and infantry being women (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018).

The ideology of masculinity has been well documented in studies on World War II, Vietnam, and Gulf War combat films; however, there is minimal literature on post-9/11 war films, particularly films set during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

#### **Statement of Problem**

This study seeks to build upon a pilot study that I conducted for a conference paper examining both techniques and characteristics of masculinity employed in post-

9/11 American war films (Bowen 2018). The study found that similar techniques and characteristics of masculinity were being used in post-9/11 American war films (Bowen 2018). This dissertation intends to expound beyond the pilot study in order to examine the ways in which masculinity is being *constructed* in these post-9/11 American war films. Social constructionism theory can explain why masculinity constructs by cultural artifacts such as war films is worth investigating.

According to Marecek, Crawford & Popp (2004), social constructionism is a theory of knowledge, and this knowledge is a consensus of what reality is determined by a group of “knowers” (pp. 192-216). Additionally, social constructionism articulates human nature elaborated everywhere in “historical, cultural traditions through the concrete interactions that occur between people” (Locke and Strong, 2010, p. 346). These powerful interactions which the site of is called “providence.” Providence plays a large part in the “civilizing process,” where “restructurings of subjectivity are brought about through the changing demands made upon individuals as to how to conduct themselves when local presuppositions are challenged by the increasing distances that concrete interactions bring into the conduct of everyday life: a challenge met by an incorporation of unordinary otherness into individual conduct” (p. 346). Additionally, social constructionism argues that natural human development is socially created, and various types of cultural symbolism play a large role in “constituting the characteristics of thinking, speaking and acting” (p. 346). The creation of one’s self is affected by both social and cultural factors woven within the biological process of human development (p. 346).

According to Locke and Strong (2010), there is an established rationale between one's self and society. One's self is created as one internalizes generalized attitudes of the other and become part of the "me." The authors argue that "This phase of the self, therefore, can be thought of as a means of social control, because 'society' is effectively re-creating its new members as psychologically active individuals in its own forms." (p. 129). This idea of self is created by general classes that one belongs to. The first type of group is those who one can directly interact. Then there is the other classes and subgroups which one is either related directly and or are interconnected in a giant web that creates a giant unified whole (pp. 129-130). By having separate social groups all interconnected, it creates a social balance because of sources of social conflict (differing opinions, etc.). These sources of conflict can create social reconstruction and reconstruction of one's self because "these sources of conflict can lead to new resolutions, new forms of consensus. Enemies can become allies. And because the self is a social product, a reconstruction of society will lead to a reconstruction of the self...then different possibilities for selves emerge out of different social organizations" (p. 130).

Locke and Strong further argue that one follows certain guidelines that are dictated by society. If one wants to live in a world where everything works smoothly, they have to consider their actions and how they fit within such guidelines. According to Locke and Strong, "Our actions are structured by our internalized symbolic grasp of our society's generalized attitudes – our unreflective common sense of how to deal with the world. This gives us the basis for an unproblematic, unreflective life, provided the world does not chuck any surprises at us" (p. 132). Moreover, language plays a key role

in understanding reality and “what makes things socially real is our ability to articulate and enact them in the language and social practices we share with others” (p. 347).

Language helps one relate with reality and it creates an effective way of doing so (p. 348).

In social constructionism, knowledge equals reality; however, reality is constructed by a group of “knowers.” So, what is socially acceptable is predetermined by this knowledge. Language is then used to articulate this knowledge and it is through social interactions that one understands how to conduct themselves individually. Additionally, a system of cultural symbolism is used to construct how one should speak, think, and act. The creation of one’s self is affected by social and cultural factors and one’s self is created by internalizing the generalized attitudes determined by society. One follows a predetermined set of guidelines that is socially acceptable and one’s internalized self is constructed by these guidelines. Self is created within the group they interact, and one is connected with other subgroups either directly or indirectly. This collection of many subgroups are woven into a larger group, which makes up society. As social reconstruction happens, the reconstruction of self occurs as well.

When looking at the cultural concepts of such phenomena as masculinity and other forms of identity, it is easy to see how they are socially constructed. The knowledge that one internalizes as they pass through natural human development is constructed on the guidelines of what is socially acceptable. These cultural and social guidelines affect the creation of one’s identity. If the rules of what is means to

masculine are being determined by the cultural artifact of war films, then they are going to have a large effect on how the spectators internalize and act on these them.

As will be argued in chapter two, the type of masculinity that is the standard for the war film genre, was started during World War II. That is more than 70 years in the past and society and the military have since changed. Identity is further created by the groups with which one interacts and are all interconnected either indirectly or directly through subgroups that form a collective society. As society changes so does the individual. If society and the military have made a change than individual reconstruction should be happening as well towards masculinity. However, the problem is, has the war film genre made the same change?

## **Background**

The new wave of American war films emerges from the post-9/11 era, predominately focusing on wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The war in Afghanistan was born out of the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda that killed more than 3,000 people from 90 countries (Collins, 2013, p. 45). The U.S. government asked the Taliban to hand over Osama Bin Laden, but they refused as they had done in 1998. Because of this, President George W. Bush asked Congress for support to attack the Taliban, with Congress issuing the following statement:

To use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, [46] committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons (pp. 45-46).

The U.S. began air attacks on October 7, 2001 (Collins, p. 46). The operation in Afghanistan, named Enduring Freedom, was carried out in two phases. The first phase

occurred from October 2001 to March 2002, and was mainly conventional fighting, and the second phase turned into an insurgency (p. 47). The operations were successful overall, but were far from decisive. The Taliban field force had been defeated, but the leadership, including bin Laden, and 1,000 fighters escaped to neighboring countries. This led to the prevailing viewpoint that the U.S. had now become occupiers of Islamic lands (p. 49).

In 2002, with little appetite to become nation builders and occupy a country, the U.S. helped the government create the Afghan National Army, with the goal of 70,000 troops. The U.S. armed forces were limited to 8,000 troops and 4,000 non-U.S. soldiers (Collins, p. 51). North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) took over much of the area's command by 2006 (p. 64).

Between 2002 and 2005, the Taliban rebuilt their influence and raised much needed money. By May 2003, the Taliban declared that they were rebuilt and ready to drive out the U.S. forces from their country. The Taliban had divided the country into five military zones to help with their operation (Baldauf and Tohid, 2003). By 2005, the Taliban was able to create a "shadow" control of many district and province governments (Collins, p. 72). In 2005, the Taliban started a new offensive to spread their influence, with a nine-fold increase in security incidents and a forty-fold increase in suicide bombings between 2004-2009 (p. 72). During this time, the Taliban learned from their counterparts in Iraq use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The IED became their tactic of choice, increasing from 300 attacks in 2004 to more than 4,000 in 2009 (p. 73). During this time, many of the Taliban forces were comprised of angry Afghans who

detested the civilian deaths and unlawful imprisonment of their fellow citizens (Rhode, 2009).

By the end of 2008, security and optimism had ebbed and confidence in the U.S. and its allies was drastically reduced. Accordingly, the Obama administration sought a renewed focus on the war in Afghanistan (Collins, pp. 79-80), with Obama developing new goals to help end the war with a counterinsurgency program. His goals were to defeat al Qaeda by denying it a safe haven, strengthening the Afghan government, and stopping the Taliban from overtaking the country (pp. 81-83). By the end of 2010, there were more than 100,000 U.S. troops, 41,000 allied forces, 144,000 ANA soldiers and 117,000 Afghan National Police (p. 84). President Obama had made it clear that he wanted the war to not be endless and become another Vietnam (p. 85).

In January 2017, the Afghan National Army expressed a desire to rebuild after an exhausting 2016 fighting Taliban militants across the country. At that time, there were 407 districts across 34 provinces with 258 under government control. Additionally, there were 33 districts across 16 provinces that were controlled by insurgents and another 120 districts that were “contested” (Snow, 2017).

Currently, the U.S. would like the Afghan government and its neighboring states to agree upon a political settlement with the insurgents. The Obama administration recommended requiring insurgent leaders to agree to the following: “(1) cease fighting, (2) accept the Afghan constitution, and (3) sever any ties to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups” (Collins, pp. 3-4). President Trump is in agreement with this strategy, but has yet to elaborate on a plan (p. 4). In April 2018, there were signs of hope with a three-day

cease fire between the Taliban and the ANA, in which they socialized, prayed together, and visited controlled areas by the other (p. 4).

Meanwhile, the war in Iraq is called Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and was launched on March 20, 2003. It was a U.S. military operation with the goal of removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power and to obliterate its ability to create “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) and do so for terrorists (Dale, 2009, p. 1). The long-term goal of OIF was to help the Iraqis build a free and prosperous country of their own. In 2002, Congress gave President George W. Bush the power to use force against Iraq because they posed a threat to U.S. national security, and there were outstanding U.N. security council resolutions against them (p. 1).

OIF was born out of the Gulf War and after. Before the war, there was major concern of Iraq using WMDs. The Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s demonstrated Hussein’s willingness to use WMDs against neighboring countries. After the war, the U.N. conducted various weapons inspections, finding and destroying large quantities of WMDs in Iraq. In 1998, Iraq withdrew from the weapons inspections carried out by the U.N. In December 1998, the U.S. and U.K. launched Operation Desert Fox with the sole purpose of limiting Iraq’s ability to create and employ WMDs. Additionally, in 1998, Congress passed the Iraqi Liberation Act, which offered support to Iraqi opposition groups (Dale, p. 29).

The attacks of September 11, 2001 were the catalyst for policy makers’ fears of terrorist groups using WMDs against the U.S. In 2002, the Bush administration’s policy for such attacks was to be anticipatory, even without solid evidence of time and place. During 2002, Bush was aggressive towards Iraq to comply with U.N. weapon

inspections, threatening that if compliance wasn't meant, force would be unavoidable. Bush articulated the conditions for Iraq to avoid an U.S. intervention: "give up or destroy all WMD and long-range missiles; end all support to terrorism; cease persecution of its civilian population; account for all missing Gulf War personnel and accept liability for losses; and end all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food program" (Dale, p. 30).

The Iraqi government responded to the threats with a barrage of written materials; however, the Bush administration decided it was inadequate. Bush made his intent clear on March 17, 2003 that he intended to take military action, giving Hussein an ultimatum. He said Saddam Hussein and his sons had 48 hours to leave the country or it would result in military action (Dale, p. 30). The formal strategic military objectives of OIF were stated as follows:

Destabilize, isolate, and overthrow the Iraqi regime and provide support to a new, broad-based government; destroy Iraqi WMD capability and infrastructure; protect allies and supporters from Iraqi threats and attacks; destroy terrorist networks in Iraq, gather intelligence on global terrorism, detain terrorists and war criminals, and free individuals unjustly detained under the Iraqi regime; and support international efforts to set conditions for long-term stability in Iraq and the region (p. 31).

After the initial operations ceased, the focus moved from the removal of Saddam Hussein to a mission of "helping an emerging new Iraqi leadership improve security, establish a system of governance, and foster economic development" (p. 2). As the war went on, the new Iraqi leadership faced many, obstacles including insurgency and foreign fighters, with violence reaching a pinnacle in February 2006 (p. 2).

In January 2007, President Bush responded to the violence with a new strategic approach, which included additional U.S. forces and civilian experts. The forces focused on counterinsurgency across the board. The new operation prioritized population security

by supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, helping the Iraqi government grow a wider capacity to govern, and creating economic development (Dale, p. 2). By August 2008, there had been palpable gains in security across the board.

In February 2009, President Obama announced his strategy to end the war by transitioning it to full Iraqi responsibility. Obama's policy called for a full U.S. withdrawal by August 31, 2010 (Dale, p. 4). At the time, there were more than 140,000 U.S. troops deployed in Iraq. According to a Pentagon report, there were 109,032 violent deaths between 2004-2009 in Iraq. The deaths are broken out as follows: 66,081 were civilians, 23,984 were enemy, 15,196 were ISF soldiers, and 3,771 were allied soldiers. Many deaths were attributed to IEDs (Leigh, 2010). In February 2017, Robert Gates, U.S. secretary of defense at the time, announced the change of the war effort from "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to "Operation New Dawn" ("Exclusive: War in Iraq to Be Given New Name," 2010). In August 2010, the U.S. withdrew all of its ground forces to Kuwait, while leaving 50,000 personnel in the country to help support the ISF. According to an agreement between the U.S. and Iraqi governments, the 50,000 remaining troops were required to leave by the end of 2011 ("Last US combat brigade leaves Iraq," 2010). On December 15, 2011, an American military ceremony in Baghdad was held to formally end the U.S. war in Iraq ("US lowers flag to end Iraq war," 2011).

Hollywood is now interested in cinematically examining the unresolved issues emerging from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many scholars have examined the post-9/11 American war film and have tackled it from many angles. Pandey (2011) conducted a study focusing on how consent is manufactured through film specifically looking at how post-9/11 American war films represent the people, place, and culture of the Arabs

and Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. How linguistics and visual semiotics were used in these films to stereotype these people as the enemy and also the other. Finally, how these ideological effects portrayed through the films affect the audience's points of view toward these peoples (pp. 12-13). Rehm (2015) conducted a study that focused on the evolution of the American warrior hero in post-9/11 American war films. The study focused on how the new era of war films portrayed the realities of war and the war hero as human. Boughn (2016) studied two post-9/11 American war films and focused on how violent the films were. The study found that one film had good hearted soldiers in a violent world and another film had a soldier who was "committed to violence wherever that leads him, but has a moral sense of duty with integrity, independence, self-reliance, and a sense of duty" (p. 72). Jones and Smith (2016) conducted a study on both TV and film depictions of the "War on Terror" and found that the depictions were both capitalistic and imperialist, but also the moral gray area of fighting such a war (p. 1). Henson (2017) conducted a genre study on post-9/11 American war films and found that the study was a balance between the epic hero tales of WWII and the anti-war films of the Vietnam era. Blackmore (2012) studied the box office failure of many post-9/11 American war films and attributed it to Hollywood not being willing to create propagandistic type films to help the overall population support the war effort (p. 319). Gosline (2008) conducted a study on the failure of the post-9/11 American war film at the box office. The study found that many of the films were similar to documentaries, trying to portray the real soldier experience with many seeing the "veteran-as-lost-soul" as a major theme (p. 90). Horne (2013) studied how the war film typically exemplifies patriotism through an American mission to give the audience a sense that their country is

exceptional and favored in the eyes of God. The war genre typically illustrates this through a mission of exceptional Americans as heroes. However, in the post-9/11 American war films, many anti-war films are “focused specifically on the nature of heroism in that conflict in order to deny that war the legitimacy that heroism can bestow” (p. 41). For example, two films dealt with soldiers losing their humanity while fighting at war and another film, “reduced heroism to an adrenaline addiction” (p. 41). Wilz (2009) examined two documentaries and two fictional films set during the war in Iraq. The study found that these films characterized the enemies and heroes as characters with families and human traits (flaws and histories) giving the audience a different perspective on the “other.” Soltysik Monnet (2018) conducted a study on one post-9/11 American war film and found that it followed the average commercial war film in that it portrayed a “hero-protagonist as not only surviving but more mature and somehow better for his encounter with death and violence” (p. 1377). As with other commercial war films, the post-9/11 American war film portrayed “combat and military service as appealing” (p. 1377). Westwell (2011) studied the overall narrative of post-9/11 America and found that in the beginning the overall narrative both in the media and popular culture was that of vengeance and good vs. evil. The study found that ten years later, the narrative had started to change from “revenge and xenophobic constructions of otherness” to more of a reflection of the connection or in between of the two (p. 831). Peebles (2014) studied various post-9/11 American war films and found that “digital vérité,” or an up close and personal perspective on the war experience through films within films was evident (p. 134). Barker (2011) conducted a genre study on the war in Iraq film. The study found that the genre was “toxic” in that it did not do well at the Box Office. The genre depicted the

following: experience of the soldiers, the construction of the American soldier, the overall anti-war film, the returning home of the soldier, and Latinos as victim-heroes. Although many studies have been conducted on various aspects of the post-9/11 American war film, an examination of masculinity constructions have yet to be examined. Masculinity is a major aspect of the war genre and because its constructions have been neglected thus far in the scholarly record, it is worthy and in need of its own scholarly critique.

### **Research Questions**

Various questions will be called upon to guide this cinematic textual analysis focusing on Hollywood's construction of masculinity in a new wave of films set during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. R1: How is masculinity constructed in post-9/11 American war films, and what cinematic techniques are being employed in its construction? This question is important to ask and answer because there is a need to examine how masculinity has evolved in the war genre, if at all, since women now make up one-fifth of all soldiers and officers (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). R2: In post-9/11 American war films that have a strong female lead, or the filmmaker or screenwriter is female, how is masculinity constructed, and what cinematic techniques are being employed in its construction? This question is important to examine because traditional masculine constructs place the feminine in contrast to the masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 70), and three of the films being examined feature a female director, two were written by female screenwriters, and one has a female lead as the main soldier. R3: How are women portrayed in post-9/11 American war films, and what cinematic techniques are being employed in their portrayal? This question is important

to explore because women now make up one-fifth of the military (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018) and traditional masculinity puts masculinity and femininity in contrast (Connell, 2005, p. 70), making it interesting to see if the war genre will change how they typically portray females.

## **Methodology**

According to McKee (2011), a textual analysis is employed in order to find out how human beings understand the world around them. It is a data-gathering methodology with the purpose of seeing how human beings in cultures and subcultures understand who they are and how they fit within their world or reality. When conducting a textual analysis, researchers utilize relevant theoretical frameworks to interpret the meanings of the text, and how humans would understand them. Examples of cultural texts capable of being interpreted for their meanings include: films, TV shows, magazines, graffiti, dance, books, and advertisement. Researchers analyze these texts with the purpose of understanding how human beings, in a particular culture at a particular time, understand or interpret the world around them. More importantly, they are analyzed to learn the variety of ways in which reality can be interpreted (p. 2).

When conducting a textual analysis, there are three types of perspectives to consider: realist, structuralist, and post-structuralist. The realist perspective is most common among researchers in media studies. The researcher takes one text as the ultimate example of truth/reality, and then comparing all other texts to it to measure whether they are true or not. Meanwhile, a structuralist perspective examines the underlying or unseen structures of a text, and the researcher has special training to be able to recognize them. Finally, a post-structuralist perspective compares all texts equally,

without distinguishing whether one is closer to the truth than the others (McKee, 2011, p. 9). For this study, the researcher will be applying a post-structuralist type of approach. McKee (2011) also asserts that genres are important components containing techniques, themes, styles, rules, and character types that help to inform the interpretation process (p. 98).

There are multiple methodologies that fall under textual analysis such as “genre analysis, mise-en-scène analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, structural analysis, poststructural analysis, or postmodern textual analysis” (Given, 2008, p. 866). All texts have unique narrative and persuasive structures to transmit an intended meaning. There is no correct interpretation, only possible interpretations—texts have “multiple and varied meanings” (p. 866). Meaning is obtained “from the codes, conventions, and genre of the text and its social, cultural, historical, and ideological context—which can work together to convey a preferred reading of the text” (p. 866). Questions asked while conducting a textual analysis look at its rhetorical context, its specific characteristics, and its wider context (p. 866).

Another form of textual analysis involves the close reading analysis of a text. According to Newsom (2011), a close-reading analysis examines specific parts of the film, instead of the whole film itself, all with the purpose of obtaining an accurate depiction of what the spectator experiences. Researchers use observation as a tool, specifically focusing on what they hear, see, and feel. The researcher gets a conscious/objective view into what the spectator is experiencing unconsciously by watching the film (p. 27).

When conducting cinematic textual analysis, intertextuality can assist in the interpretation of a text by comparing it between other texts. According to Dunne (2001), there are three examples of intertextuality when doing cinematic textual analysis: books, genres, and self-advertisement. Because many films are adapted for the screen from books, this is an effective way to compare texts to other texts since there is a benchmark of what the original author intended. All films fall within various genres, which are intertextual because genres have various themes, techniques, styles, unspoken rules, and characters. All of these elements work together to compare various texts of the same genre to see if they fit, because the genre is what has created the reality of that specific film (Dunne, 2001).

More precisely, this dissertation will textually examine the aesthetic of cinematography (angle, distance, etc.), acting (facial expressions, emotions, etc.), sound (dialogue, sound effects, and music), and *mise-en-scène* as a vehicle for interrogating the process of masculinity construction in the six films set during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Mise-en-scène* is French for “putting into the scene” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2013, p. 113). It was first used by directors of plays, but was later applied to cinema in which scholars employed the phrase to film directors and their ability to control what happens in frame. *Mise-en-scène* includes the following aspects of film: setting, lighting, costume and makeup, and staging. The director’s goal in using *mise-en-scène* is to enact realism through the creation of authentic settings or allow actors to perform naturally (p. 113).

*Mise-en-scène* allows the director control over setting, costumes, makeup, lighting, and staging. Setting can play a major role in films, either serving as a “container

for human events” or it “can dynamically enter the narrative action” (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 115). Directors have used both authentic settings that are already built and “purpose-built” settings as well. Setting can play a major or small cinematic role; however, the “overall design of a setting can shape how we understand story action” (p. 115). Directors can use props (that is, property) to help create an authentic setting as well (p. 117).

Just as the setting can play a major role creating the overall aesthetic of a film, so can what the actors are wearing. Costumes can serve a wide array of functions in creating the overall form of a film: “Costumes can play causal roles in film plots...costumes can become motifs, enhancing characterization and tracing changes in attitude...Costumes can be used for their purely graphic qualities” (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 119). Costumes are typically coordinated with the setting, and the filmmaker generally wants the actors to stand out, so the setting background will typically be neutral. Color helps to create this as well (p. 119).

The actors’ makeup is closely related to costumes and are typically coordinated with both the setting and costumes (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 121). Makeup is generally used to help accentuate “expressive qualities of the actor’s face” (p. 122).

Actors rely heavily on makeup to help in their overall character and expression:

Film actors rely on their eyes to a very great extent and makeup artists can often enhance eye behavior. Eyeliner and mascara can draw attention to the eyes and emphasize the direction of the glance. Nearly every actor will also have expressively shaped eyebrows. Lengthened eyebrows can enlarge the face, while shorter brows make it seem more compact. Eyebrows plucked in a slight rising curve add gaiety to the face, while slightly sloping one’s hint at sadness. Thick, straight brows...reinforce the impression of a hard, serious gaze. In such ways eye makeup can assist the actor’s performance (p. 122).

Like setting, costumes, and makeup, lighting plays an important role in the overall creation of *mise-en-scène*. Lighting can help to draw attention to the action in the film, as well as help create the “overall composition of each shot and guide our attention to certain objects and actions” (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 125). Additionally, it can “articulate textures: the curve of a face, the grain of a piece of wood, the tracery of spider’s web, the sparkle of a gem” (p. 125).

Acting consists of two components: visual elements (appearance, gestures, facial expressions) and sound (voice, effects) (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 131). As is with *mise-en-scène*, actors strive for realism in their roles, which is a performance “close to natural behavior” (p. 133). However, not all filmmakers strive for realism, so it is important to understand what the filmmaker is trying to achieve and then analyze the acting based on that (p. 133). Overall, “a performance, realistic or not, should be examined according to its function in the film’s overall formal design” (p. 136). A performance has two dimensions: individualized and stylized, both of which should be in mind when analyzing acting (p. 136).

Traditionally, actors have strived for an “expressive naturalness,” where they speak with more emotion and clarity, which can be augmented by physical action (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 137). Actors are traditionally compelled to express emotion, which occurs in many ways: “Some are intense and burst out violently... (others, such as) jealousy and suspicion are covered (masked) by excessive politeness. Emotional expression is broad and sweeping, almost operatic” (p. 138). Acting can be stylized and blend into the other filming techniques. It also can blend into the graphic elements of the

setting. In some films, the acting may seem inexpressive, but the actor's facial expressions and demeanor are appropriate to the character (p. 139).

Often an acting performance is almost created entirely in postproduction, which is because different shots of a film are recorded at different times. The editor then blends them together, and selecting the best "gestures and expressions and (creating) a composite performance better than any sustained performance is likely to be" (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 139). This can convince the audience in many ways, for example, "the director may simply tell an actor to stare offscreen, wide-eyed. If the next shot shows a hand with a gun, we are likely to think the actor is depicting fear effectively" (p. 139).

Camera techniques affect the way the actor must behave. For instance, the distance the of the camera from the actor affects context of the acting, so if the camera is filming close-up, the actors' subtle eye movements will be evident. If the camera is shooting at a distance, then the actors will have to use broad gestures to be able to be seen as action (p. 140). The camera centers on the following of the actor to best capture the performance:

Often a shot will concentrate on either the actor's facial expressions or on bodily movement. In most close shots, the face will be emphasized, and so the actor will have to control eyes, brows, and mouth quite precisely. But if the camera is farther back, or the actor is turned away from us, gestures and body language become the center of attention. In all, both the staging of the action and the camera's distance from the action control how we understand the performances (p. 140).

Acting creates a wide variety of elements to analyze, but it must be viewed within the entire form of the film (p. 140).

Although dialogue and speaking it in a way that convinces the audience may be very important for the overall performance, acting is part of the overall visual design of the film. Many scenes depict little or no dialogue, but the actor must remain in character throughout the entirety of the film. The film is shaped pictorially by the acting and directing (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 134).

Actors have many tools at their disposal, but their faces are used most often, especially with films using close-ups enlarging the actors' faces. The mouth, eyebrows, and eyes exhibit expression in the face and work together to show "how the character is responding to the dramatic situation" (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 134). The eyes are very important in film because "crucial story information is conveyed by the direction of a character's glance, the use of the eyelids, and the shape of the eyebrows" (p. 134).

Actors have to stare directly at each other while limiting their blinking because looking away and blinking conveys a different message to the spectator: "If an actor glances away from the partner in the conversation, it suggests distraction or evasion. If an actor blinks, it suggests a reaction to what is happening in the scene (surprise, or anxiety)" (p. 134).

How actors move their bodies implies even more about their characters: "How a character walks, stands or sits conveys a great deal about the personality and attitude" (p. 135).

Michael Chekhov's acting theory discusses what is known as the "actor's nature," which involves the actor's body and its sensitivity to the soul. Their soul is where they draw their power from and connects them to the earth and sky, which extends the "kinesthetic body beyond the physical" (Dixon, 2013, p. 205). Chekhov discusses five concepts that connect to this concept: kinesthesia, atmosphere, gesture, psychological

gesture, and spontaneous groupings. Kinesthesia is a feeling that actors use to urge their fellow actors to respond in a similar way. Atmosphere is created by the directors and is generated between the actors and the environment. The atmosphere is not only created between actors, but is emanated towards the audience. Gesture is generated based on actor's inner lives and implied meaning is communicated within the gesture.

Psychological gesture refers to the "inner representation of the entirety of a character's psychological acts" and possesses the entire body, psychology, and soul (p. 207).

Spontaneous groupings refers to a group of actors and a "magnified awareness of bodily listening and responding" (p. 207).

Meanwhile, cinematography captures the *mise-en-scène* by framing the shot, which has many implications on what is seen or not seen. Size and shape of the frame is important because the frame determines the space onscreen and offscreen. Framing creates the distance, angle, and height of the vantage point (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 182). The frame creates an image boundary focusing on a limited slice of the visual pie. Framing "shapes our experience, calling attention to what the filmmaker wants us to see. Every act of framing...creates relationships among the things we can see" (p. 186). The frame focuses on certain points of the visual plane, which "means that filmmakers can creatively exploit the space offscreen, the areas not shown inside the frame" (p. 187).

Framing determines the distance, angle, and height of the vantage point. The frame puts the spectator at some angle looking at the subject. There are roughly three angles that the filmmaker can use to present the subject: "a straight-on angle, a high angle, or the low angle" (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 189). The frame can use the level as well, which is being "parallel to the horizon" (p. 189). Height is another choice the

filmmaker needs to make when framing a shot. Height is related to angle because many angles require camera positions that are higher or lower than the subject (p. 190).

Camera distance is how the framed image places the spectator closer or further away from the subject. The distances are calculated and are determined by the human bodies in the framed shot. The following are the types of shots utilized by filmmakers:

- Extreme long shot: figures are small or lost. This type of shot is reserved for landscapes, bird's-eye views of cities, and other vistas.
- Long shot: figures are visible; however, the background dominates
- Medium long shot: figures are framed from the knees up and are common because of their balance between background and the human.
- Medium shot: figures are framed from the waist up and allow for gesture and expression to be present.
- Medium close-up: figures are framed from the chest up.
- Close-up: shows solely the head, hands, feet, or object. This type of frame highlights facial expression and details of significant objects and gestures.
- Extreme close-up: focuses on a small portion of the face or of an object (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 190).

Specific types of frames do not necessarily carry specific types of meanings, and it should be understood that “meaning and effect always stem from the film’s overall form and the immediate context” (p. 191).

Camera placement also can play an important role in visual storytelling by focusing on important narrative detail and by demonstrating of how the characters interact (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 192). Framing adds visual interest to the story as

well. Close-ups on feet and hands can give them more significance, than through dialogue and facial expression. Additionally, long shots allow the viewer to explore the surrounding areas (p. 193).

Overall, cinematography works with movement and time to create reality (Deren, 1960, pp. 166-167). It has taken over for photography and creates more than a record of reality. It serves to create an overall experience. It has helped take film from basic narratives into the future by evolving its techniques and has enriched culture in an artistic manner (p. 167).

Meanwhile, sound is a major part of the overall film construction, encompassing aspects such as music, dialogue, and sound effects. The soundtrack is created separately from filming and it is very flexible and wide-ranging, making it arguably the hardest aspect of film to study (Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 266-267). To the spectator, the sound track is secondary to the visual aspects of the film. However, sound helps to create an overall feel to the film: “We may see merely an anxious face against a cloudy sky, but we may hear a fierce wind, a police siren, and a child’s cry, and suddenly we conjure up a situation of danger” (p. 267).

Sound is a powerful tool for filmmakers because it engages part of the human senses. When people see an image accompanied with sound, the subconscious perceives it as one moment, instead of two separate moments. Sound is often seen as secondary, “but we need to recognize that it can actively shape how we understand them (images)” (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 268). Sound draws attention to certain parts of the image and it employs silence well. For example, “A quiet passage in a film can create almost

unbearable tension, forcing the viewer to concentrate on the screen. An abrupt silence can jolt us and arrest our attention” (p. 268).

Filmmakers have many decisions when it comes to sound, specifically with loudness and pitch. Filmmakers often deal with a blend of speech, music, and noise in their sound track, which can dictate their decisions on loudness and pitch. Sound is created by vibrations and the amplitude of those vibrations create loudness and volume. The volume is regularly manipulated in film. Film sound can have a variety of desired outcomes when using volume. For example, “A lengthy passage of high-amplitude sound may not sound as loud as a lower burst of sound after a stretch of silence...As with mise-en-scène and the tonal qualities of the image, the soundtrack seizes our attention through contrast” (Bordwell and Thompson, p. 270). The loudness of the sound can be used to create distance in a film as well. Typically, the louder the sound, the closer it is (p. 270).

The pitch—highness or lowness of the sound—is affected by the “frequency of sound vibrations” (p. 270). Pitch is essential in films to create distinct sounds. It can help to differentiate between music, dialogue, and noises. It can further help to differentiate between objects, such as thumps signifying hollow objects and higher-pitched sounds signifying denser objects (p. 271).

Timbre— “harmonic components of sound give it a certain color or tone quality”—can play a role in film sound. It helps to characterize the “feel” of the sound. Additionally, it helps in the awareness of a familiar sound (p. 272). Timbre helps to distinguish musical instruments. Loudness, pitch, and timbre work in conjunction to create sound texture and help to ensure that certain sounds do not get drowned out.

Sound plays a major role in the cinematic spectator's overall experience, and it is used to draw the spectator's attention. The sound track is mixed to emphasize the important material. For instance, great attention to detail is paid to dialogue to create the best quality because it is the vehicle for important story information. Dialogue tends to be most important, often prioritized over music, sound effects, and background noise. However, during actions scenes, sound effects dominate, and music dominates in "dance scenes, transitional sequences, or emotion-laden moments without dialogue" (p. 274). Overall, sound guides the spectator to what is happening in the action of the film.

For example, Michael Haneke used sound and music to disorient, disturb, or alienate the spectator (Coulthard, 2012, p. 1). His sound is "characterized by an avoidance of non-diegetic music, a restriction of dialogue and an elevation of sound effects and noises," Haneke's sound "works to disrupt, reorient or alter habitual or unconscious modes of cinematic audiovision" (p. 1). Haneke's soundtracks include: "extremes in dynamic range, tonality and volume, extended scenes of silence, an abrasive presence of the technological, banal noise of quotidian life and frequent shocks of sharp acoustic contrasts" (p. 1).

Film music can influence the spectator's "attitudes toward characters and objects shown on the screen, especially when the onscreen images are neutral, ambiguous, or open-ended" (Tan, Spackman, and Bezdek; 2007, p. 135). Music when interacting with visuals can affect the spectator when they are focused on a character. For example, if the character is doing something ambiguous and the soundtrack is a "crime" soundtrack, the spectator is more likely to associate that character with being involved in crime (p. 135).

These methods, themes, and techniques will draw from those cited in chapter two, as they are evident in past war films. This will be conducted through a close-reading analysis, focusing on smaller parts of the film where these methods, themes, and techniques are evident or not. Intertextuality and genre theory will be called upon to better inform the study of past methods, themes, and techniques used in past war films. Masculinity theory and cinematic constructs of masculinity and identity will be employed as well. I have obtained scripts for two of the films, using those as part of the intertextuality analysis. Copious notes will be taken electronically while viewing the films, and these notes will be called upon in the textual analysis.

### **Selection of Post-9/11 American War Films (Synopses)**

For the original pilot study, a sample of *three* feature films from the post-9/11 era was selected, based on their Oscar nominations and box office numbers (Bowen 2018). The films were examined for masculinity methods, themes, and techniques. For this dissertation, however, the sample has been expanded to *six* feature films, representing a broader sample of box office and critically acclaimed films. This modification ensures that a broader sample can accommodate general assumptions or conclusions about masculinity methods, themes, and techniques being used to construct masculinity in this new wave of war films.

The films to be textually analyzed for this dissertation were chosen first by ranking them on a combination of their total awards, the prestige of their awards (e.g., Oscar wins and nominations), and their overall audience reach at the box office into a top 10. They were then pared down to six by eliminating them by similar characteristics to other films in the top ten films. *American Sniper* (2014), directed by

Clint Eastwood, was chosen because it had a high ranking at the box office and in the Oscars, which is why the *The Hurt Locker* (2009), directed by Kathryn Bigelow, was chosen as well. Additionally, Clint Eastwood (Director) is well known for his masculine portrayals as an actor. *Stop-Loss* (2008), directed by Kimberly Peirce, and *Megan Leavey* (2017), directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, were chosen because they were written and directed by women, while others were directed by men (*The Hurt Locker* is also directed by a woman). *Lions for Lambs* (2007), directed by Robert Redford, has a strong female lead, while others did not, as well as for its numbers at the box office. *Green Zone* (2010), directed by Paul Greengrass, was chosen for its portrayal of being behind enemy lines, over *Lone Survivor* (2013), which is similar. These films were selected from the 21 available post-9/11 American war film dramas. All of the information about awards and box office numbers came from IMDB.com.

The following are synopses of the films to be analyzed:

*American Sniper* (2014):

“Chris Kyle was nothing more than a Texan man who dreamed of becoming a cowboy, but in his thirties he found out that maybe his life needed something different, something where he could express his real talent, something that could help America in its fight against terrorism. So he joined the SEALs in order to become a sniper. After marrying, Kyle and the other members of the team are called for their first tour of Iraq. Kyle's struggle isn't with his missions, but about his relationship with the reality of the war and, once returned at

home, how he manages to handle it with his urban life, his wife and kids”

(Martirano, 2014).

*Stop-Loss* (2008):

“Decorated Iraq war hero Sgt. Brandon King makes a celebrated return to his small Texas hometown following his tour of duty. He tries to resume the life he left behind. Then, against Brandon's will, the Army orders him back to duty in Iraq, which upends his world. The conflict tests everything he believes in: the bond of family, the loyalty of friendship, the limits of love and the value of honor” (“*Stop-Loss: Plot*,” 2008).

*Megan Leavey* (2017):

“Based on the true life story of a young Marine corporal whose unique discipline and bond with her military combat dog saved many lives during their deployment in Iraq” (“*Megan Leavey: Plot*,” 2017).

*Lions for Lambs* (2007):

“*Lions for Lambs* begins after two determined students at a West Coast University, Arian and Ernest, follow the inspiration of their idealistic professor, Dr. Malley, and attempt to do something important with their lives. But when the two make the bold decision to join the battle in Afghanistan, Malley is both moved and distraught. Now, as Arian and Ernest fight for survival in the field, they become the string that binds together two disparate stories on opposite sides of America. In California, an anguished Dr. Malley attempts to reach a privileged but disaffected student who is the very opposite of Arian and Ernest.

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C. the charismatic Presidential hopeful, Senator Jasper Irving, is about to give a bombshell story to a probing TV journalist that may affect Arian and Ernest's fates" ("Lions for Lambs: Plot," 2007).

*Green Zone* (2010):

"Following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 Chief Warrant Officer Roy Miller and his men are charged with finding the so-called weapons of mass destruction, whose existence justified American involvement, according to the Pentagon and their man in Baghdad, Poundstone. Veteran CIA operative Marty tells Miller that there are no weapons, it is a deception to allow the Americans to take over the country and install a puppet leader. Also suspicious of Poundstone is Wall Street Journal reporter Lawrie Dayne, who lets slip to Miller that Poundstone told her he had secret talks in Jordan with an important Iraqi, code-named Magellan, who told him about the weapons, though it now seems likely Magellan's true information was to the contrary. So begins a hunt for the truth. Who's playing whom?" (Minifie, 2010).

*The Hurt Locker* (2009)

"An intense portrayal of elite soldiers who have one of the most dangerous jobs in the world: disarming bombs in the heat of combat. When a new sergeant, James, takes over a highly trained bomb disposal team amidst violent conflict, he surprises his two subordinates, Sanborn and Eldridge, by recklessly plunging them into a deadly game of urban combat, behaving as if he's indifferent to death. As the men struggle to control their wild new leader, the city explodes

into chaos, and James' true character reveals itself in a way that will change each man forever” (“The Hurt Locker: Plot,” 2008).

## **Significance**

In broad terms, the focus of this dissertation is to determine how various filmmaking aesthetics are constructing masculinity in six post-9/11 American war films. The pilot study found that similar techniques and characteristics of masculinity were being used in three post-9/11 American war films (Bowen 2018). Through an exhaustive textual examination of this era of war films, this dissertation will expand beyond the pilot study to determine the ways in which masculinity is being constructed in the filmmakers' use of cinematography, dialogue, acting, sound, music, and production design.

This dissertation intends to break important scholarly ground by shedding light on the consequences of employing and exhibiting such constructs of masculinity, whether these constructs are still taking place or are new constructs all together. For example, the military is one-fifth women in both officers and infantry (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018), and if a film is constructed in a way in which women are only portrayed as wives and not soldiers, then there are ideological implications on one's perception of masculinity, and therefore women in the military.

Film and TV can be very powerful in the construction of meaning, identity, and truth. Lukinbeal (2004) argues that film and TV are the maps for social/cultural realities for everyday life. According to Lukinbeal, “visual media are today's cognitive maps or social cartography of meaning creation and identity formation” (p. 247). Film and TV construct and contest social and cultural meanings and “these meanings inform,

produce, reify, and mythologize class, gender and racial identities, relations and differences” (p. 248).

Film has had a major role in how Native Americans are portrayed in popular culture. In their study, Coleman (2005) discusses how cinema has framed Native Americans in a timeless and one-dimensional way. The western film genre is most prominent in framing Native Americans in a one-dimensional way. The portrayal characterizes the overall group as “vicious, indolent, stupid, and savage” (p. 275). This has created a lopsided Hollywood image of the Native American. Coleman argues that “When filmic images continue to portray Indians in the Old West mold of a dying race (e.g., *Dances with Wolves*), modern Indian images fuse with stereotypes from the frontier” (p. 287). In popular culture today, Native Americans continue to be perceived as “mythical, mystical, and irrational caricatures” (p. 287). Coleman notes that “the white man's Indian is a creation of the imagination” and is all based on the construction of the other through characteristics that have been imagined (p. 288).

Film can affect identity and reinforce what is socially acceptable in regard to gender and identity. In their study of Jane Austen films, Wooden (2002) argues that the portrayal of food and eating behaviors carry out an ideal of female development through film narratives that reinforce “feminine maturation, decorum, and self-control, and creating a feminine ideal which is nearly pathologically self-disciplined” (p. 222). This in turn has a powerful effect on the female spectator. The spectator experiences a simultaneous effect of “observing, one of internalizing and identifying, and one of judging and disciplining; the symbolic function of food in the films replicates the energies that propel anorexia and tacitly endorses modern cultural forces that produce

peculiarly female eating disorders” (p. 222). Wooden argues that the film reinforces cultural element of femininity of having self-control around food. Wooden concludes that the Austen films go beyond femininity in popular culture and reinforce a masculine ideal of thinking of how women should look and act (p. 232).

TV has had an effect on how people record their personal lives, having an effect on future memories. Van Dijck (2008) discusses the power of the camcorder and how family videos have created a sense of identity for a future self. The power of the family video footage is prompted by current television shows, reality TV and celebrity interviews, where it is used to create an identity of said contestant or celebrity. Van Dijck argues, “The camcorder constructs family life at the same time and by the same means as it constructs our memory of it; whereas the camcorder registers private lives, these images may help shape (future) public identity” (p. 71).

Films are both shaped by society’s expectations and can shape society’s view of war. Propaganda was used during World War II to help shape the African-American society’s view of the war. African-Americans during the war identified more with the Japanese, and that government social scientists argued that the only way to “increase both black support for the war and enlistment in the armed forces, representations of blacks in U.S. cinema would have to change, starting most importantly with the figure of the black soldier” (Reich, 1986, p. 5). Five films were later released between 1943-1945 featuring African-American men as “dignified, powerful and armed American patriots,” and later, three government propaganda films were created to celebrate African-American soldiers and calm anxieties about war by using a “black soldier to deliver a pro-war message and redress the absence of black representation in nationalist narratives” (p. 5).

Additionally, propaganda in war films can illustrate how films are shaped by society's expectations. Propagandistic elements were used heavily during WWII to help shape society's view of war; however, they fell out of style when society's sentiments towards the Vietnam War began to sour. Films went from dehumanizing the enemy, as they did in WWII films, to portraying them as dedicated and respected (Woodman, 2003, p. 44). Additionally, "Vietnam Syndrome," the overall societal anti-war sentiment towards the Vietnam War, changed how war films until the 1990s would be portrayed (Morgan, 1992, p. 35).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Genres create a standard for what to expect in a film and the war film genre is no different. This can create a problem especially since past masculinity constructs and portrayals of women were established during WWII and Vietnam War when women did not serve in the military. Now, the post-9/11 era of war has twenty percent women serving. Film genre has had major effects on how spectators view the world. Stanley Cavell (1979) wrote extensively about its power and influence over how spectators perceive the world, arguing that we as viewers of film “involve the movies in us.” (p. 154). They are embodied in our lives and the events that happen to us, becoming part of our memory. They become like childhood memories, of “unspeakable importance” to each person individually (p. 154). Films are relatable to everyone “because we have all had similar experiences in our memories” (p. 154).

Cavell argues that spectators want to view the world itself, and filmmakers can help in that aspect. Filmmakers want to connect the viewer to the “natural mode of perception,” which is to see and feel the unseen (p. 102). He notes that we do not look at the world, but out at it from behind our own self, with filmmakers helping us perceive the world through their lens (p. 102). Filmmakers accomplish this by convincing the viewer that movies are seen as reality, which is carried out by the filmmaker doing the fantasizing for them. According to Cavell, “Movies convince us of the world’s reality in the only way we have to be convinced, without learning to bring the world closer to the heart’s desire: by taking views of it” (p. 102). The filmmakers’ reproduction of the world

is part of what is called automatism, which is to do things free of conscious. Reproducing the world is part of automatism, which typically follows specific genres, which, in turn, involves the filmmaker following certain rules, methods, and themes in that creation of reality (pp. 103-105).

Automatism can lead to films being created without specific thought, following the themes, methods, and rules that are employed in certain genres. This can have lasting effects from the reality portrayed by the filmmakers, which then becomes part of the memory and view of reality of the spectator. For example, in this study, watching a war film could lead the spectator to believe that women do not serve in the military and are expected to be at home cooking, cleaning, and rearing children. Additionally, the type of masculinity constructed in past war films that is not socially acceptable in today's society could still be constructed in post-9/11 American war films.

In this chapter, a review of genre theory, auteur theory, and construction of masculinity both inside and outside of film, will be examined to better understand how each plays its part in the overall scope of this dissertation study.

## **Genre Theory**

Genre can trace its roots to the Renaissance, with McConnell (1977) noting that categories were rediscovered during the Enlightenment (p. 9). McConnell adds:

A genre, or type, of writing, of storytelling, of presentation, is assumed to preexist the individual work in some sort of Platonic limbo of possibilities; and what we look for, in judging the particular work of art, is the way in which individual talent wrestles with tradition, the way the artist uses—i.e. rearranges and decomposes—the ‘rules’ of the form he has selected (pp. 9-10).

Genre theory suggests that genres are not just a set of rules, but include recognizable cultural elements. Tudor (1977) exemplifies this through a discussion of the “Western”

genre, observing how it tries “to appeal to common set of meaning in our culture” (p. 19). He notes that average Americans, from a young age, have created a picture in their heads of how a Western should be visually depicted, further deepening the idea that genre is not just a set of rules, but something that “would be universally recognized as such in our culture...In other words, the crucial factors which distinguish a genre are not only characteristics inherent to the films themselves; they also depend on the particular culture within which we are operating” (p. 19).

Grodal (1999) demonstrates how genres are created, noting that the genre exists in various ways: the fictional work may have “general schemata” serving as a model; the distributor may choose to market it under a specific label; critics may place the fictional work into a category; viewers may use “genre schemata” during their viewing; and researchers may use “genre-categories” to organize the group of media (p. 163). He suggests that these modes interact to help place a fictional work into a genre. “Genre-categories” are created in different ways, with Grodal arguing that “they can be based on time (historical films); time and place (Westerns); types of action and themes (detective fiction, war films, love-stories); addresser-intention (avant-garde films, art films); and they can be constructed with a large time-horizon (claiming to map all films or all types of fiction), or a small one (‘screwball’ comedy)” (p. 162).

The war genre is like any genre of film in that it exists within the rules of genre. Grotkopp and Kappelhoff (2012) discuss the war film genre and how it answers the complicated question of: “Why do we fight?”, noting that the war movie includes more content than just war: “It includes the presence and memories of stocks of images on the one hand and the attachment to a set of values, the mythology of sacrifice and guilt on the

other” (p. 34). The typical war film includes facts and information, but is also an emotional experience: “It is on these ground—that the war film performs its function, modulating the emotional experience of the audience and so shaping the process of living memory and compassionate relation” (p. 34).

Grotkopp and Kappelhoff (2012) compare the war genre to that of horror films, with an “imminent threat to the integrity of the individual body” (p. 35). They illustrate that war films use claustrophobia to create this threat through a physical experience. Claustrophobia is created, “be it in the stomach of a submarine, a transport ship or the interior of the Humvee: every armor is a prison, every order can bring death” (p. 35). The war film uses “symbolic ideas of community, society, and values” as part of each film to produce an “audiovisual orchestration of emotions and perceptions as encounters between cultural pool of aesthetic modes and the documents; “it is ‘something recognized and understood from prior experience,’ real or unreal” (p. 37).

Solomon (1976) notes that “frequently, the main point of a war film is the impact on civilian life of a war being fought at a distance, or of a soldier on leave, or a society living under an enemy occupation” (p. 242). Because of this, he observes that the war genre is hard to define:

The formlessness of the genre derives from the fact that the subject incorporates attitudes toward war, responses, preparations, results, aftermaths, and so on; the narrative representation of war frequently does not dwell on the most overt visual aspect, warfare itself, but on the conceptual materials that really give character to the genre. For this reason, the battle film, though numerically the dominant category of the genre, is among its least distinguished manifestations (242).

According to Solomon, war films can only be seen as a genre through the atmosphere:

“the source of atmosphere lies in an oppressive sense of impending disaster on a grand

scale (for instance, an invasion, a massive loss of life, or a more generalized loss of liberty), a concern that is usually not made explicit except in those films that take place within a combat area” (p. 244).

The core of the genre does not come from the disaster itself, but rather from the attitudes of the characters facing the disaster. “The attitude manifests itself in a generalized opposition to the spiritual force represented by the enemy—that is, the heroes are motivated to defend their side against an oppressive or totalitarian enemy, usually depicted only from the heroes’ point of view, if depicted at all, as a source of abstract evil” (p. 244).

The battlefield situation films are the largest category of war films. This type of film depicts the pressures on soldiers, including their relationships, fears, hopes, and values, all while being immersed in continual violence and imminent perils. According to Solomon, “The very act of delineating a group under battle conditions tends to create sympathy for their hardships and respect for their procedures of survival” (p. 247). The battlefield situation genre glorifies war through the completion of a successful strategy (p. 247).

The antiwar film is a recognized genre as well. Solomon notes that just as the “glamorized” war film is propagandistic, so is the antiwar movie. He states that although war can be romanticized by “illusions about valor, liberty, and righteousness,” the realities of war are “death and desolation” (p. 250). The antiwar film is seen favorably, Solomon argues, because it is not charged with an agenda. “In other words, we generally comprehend the idea ‘war is hell’ merely as a statement of the obvious—though always worth restating—and we evaluate it only to be the extent that the film sets forth

interesting evidence to document the truism” (p. 251). Solomon notes that the antiwar film “operates mainly in a realistic mode that serves to deglamorize the romantic elements associated with fighting for a cause, for freedom, or for the attainment of noble or heroic ends” (p. 252).

### **Auteur Theory**

Auteur theory is a cinematic theory in which the director is seen as the major creative contributor to the motion picture. It came to fruition in France in the 1940s and was coined by Andrew Sarris and emerged from the theoretical work of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc. The director-as-author emerged out during the French New Wave film movement and was advanced by François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard. Auteur theory mainly derives from the concept of the “camera-pen,” which “holds that the director, who oversees all audio and visual elements of the motion picture, is more to be considered the ‘author’ of the movie than is the writer of the screenplay” (“Auteur Theory,” 2018). From this theoretical perspective, foundational visual elements such as staging, cinematography, lighting, and scene length, rather than dialogue, convey the film message. Additionally, auteur theory suggests that each director has his or her own personal stamp or artistic signature that they put on every film they direct (“Auteur Theory,” 2018).

Prior to the 1950s, films were considered a collective work that need an array of different people to be able to carry them out instead of a sole creative force behind them. When Bazin’s journal *Cahiers du cinéma* was created by the likes of Truffaut and Godard, the idea was that “authorship that was the single most important factor in determining a film's aesthetic value, particularly of a film produced within the Hollywood

industrial system” (Cowbill & Cowbill, 2011, p. 2). Cinema was not literature or a production by money, but was written in images. The directors were the authors of the film because they had the most influence over the film’s mise-en-scène and its overall visual meaning. Truffaut and Godard further argued that the directors had specific nuances and an “identifiable style and vision that could be noted and traced” amongst their films (p. 2). The “Americanized” version of the theory, focuses on such directors as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, and Howard Hawks, “who occupy a pivotal place both in the history of the medium and in the texts themselves as generators of meaning” (Diffrient, 2014, p. 95).

Critics became the vessel for which authorship would be celebrated by American cinema allowing them to point out the “complex nature of a director's hidden artistry when and where it existed” (Cowbill & Cowbill, 2011, p. 3). Cowbill and Cowbill cite Andrew Sarris from his 1962 article, that “anyone with a talented crew of technicians could make a film...only an auteur demonstrated, in film after film, consummate technical mastery” (p. 3). Moreover, Sarris made “supreme technical competence of the director” as the first criterion of value for the theory (p. 3). The second value criterion was the “director's distinguishable personality” (p. 3), and the third value criterion was “interior meaning,” which is the place “where the director's artistic personality was in tension with the material” (p. 3).

In 1968, Roland Barthes’ essay “The Death of the Author” argued that auteur theory had died along with history and grand narratives. However, Diffrient (2014) argues that the theory, with some post-structuralist modifications, continues to be evident in American, British, and French scholarship as a way to discuss “a single person’s

significance to textual hermeneutics – someone who is individualized, yet situated as a locus of converging social and industrial forces” (p. 96).

## **Masculinity**

Masculinity theory has its basis in the modern era, at least in the way society defines masculinity. It is apparent that all cultures have some account of gender, but as Connell (2005) points out, “not all have the concept of ‘masculinity’” (p. 67). He notes that the term, in modern times, “assumes that one’s behavior results from the type of person one is...an unmasculine person would behave differently: being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest and so forth” (p. 67). Masculinity theory is developed by the idea of individuality and “personal agency,” which was created “in early-modern Europe with the growth of colonial empires and capitalist economic relations” (p. 68). The concept of masculinity is also relational in that it cannot exist without femininity, and masculinity is specifically created in a culturally specific way (p. 68).

Masculinity has been defined in various ways and through various strategies focusing on the characterization of the type of person. The *Essentialist* approach uses a defining feature as the core of what is masculine, and “hang an account of men’s lives on that...Author’s attempts to capture an essence of masculinity have been colorfully varied: risk-taking, responsibility, irresponsibility, aggression, Zeus energy” (Connell, 2005, p. 68). The *Positivist* social-science approach focuses on finding facts, defining men for what they “actually are” (p. 69). The *Normative* approach tries to set a standard as in “masculinity is what men ought to be” (p. 70). This definition is used to create social norms for how men should behave, with Connell illustrating this through Robert

Brannon's widely quoted account of "'our culture's blueprint of manhood': No Sissy Stuff, The Big Wheel, The Sturdy Oak and Give 'em Hell" (p. 70). The final approach is *Semiotic*, which defines "masculinity through a system of symbolic difference in which masculine and feminine places are contrasted. Masculinity is, in effect, defined as not-femininity" (p. 70).

The ideology of masculinity is easy to comprehend as being connected to being male; however, definitions or examples of masculinity are harder to pin down (Adams, 2008, p. 8). Michael Schwalbe (1996) wrote that "a man must show that he is rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done and ardently heterosexual" (p. 18). Additionally, David Buchbinder (1994) expressed that "men are generally shown to be stoic, bearing their agony discreetly, dismissing mortal wound as mere scratches, and thinking of others—family, girlfriend, home, another soldier—rather than themselves" (p. 75). Masculinity has also "been defined by what it is not, in other words, through a system of binary oppositions, including man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine" (Adams, p. 8). This was best described by Roger Horrocks (1995) when he noted that "all shades of masculine identity, ranging from macho to the effeminate, have this in common: they convey the message: 'I am not a woman'" (p. 33).

### ***Masculinity in Film***

In his book, Grønstad (2010) attempts to create a theory on violence in film, finding that it is a major construct of masculinity in film. He notes that violence is "an almost exclusively male prerogative," especially in male-dominated film genres such as war, detective, gangster, science fiction, and the western (p. 90). Violence makes it possible for the male protagonist to create a "positive masculine identity" (p. 91). Besides

violence, another major construct of conventional masculinity is agency of the protagonist and the ability for intention and action. Additionally, seeing femininity as a fatal threat is another major construct of masculinity in film, with many narratives connecting disillusion with domesticity (p. 128).

Grønstad argues that film heroes connect violence and masculinity through the way they face mortality. They fear death, but aren't afraid to die, instead they are defined by the way they face the threat of death (p. 129). The western genre illustrates how the construct of masculinity in film is constructed and deconstructed, with the western demonstrating that "manhood is in fact a biological process rather than a culturally acquired mode of behavior" (p. 143).

Grønstad finds that violence is an "enactment of masculinity" (p. 166), adding that masculinity is an act, and is without substance leading to more violence or other acts to demonstrate otherwise (p. 167). Another construct of masculinity is that of the "ethics of trust reminiscent of that which regulates the relationship between the men" in westerns (p. 168).

In his research on Turkish cinema and television, Gürkan (2017) finds that constructs of masculinity depends on factors "such as historical, class, cultural, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, and ethnicity" (p. 403). Additionally, these constructs are based on the genre, with Gürkan finding that film genres such as westerns and gangster movies are male dominated, using "mannish" images to create their hero (p. 404). The traditional male image in films construct the women in contrast to men, in which "men are observed to have an unlimited sense of courage, ambition and revenge" (p. 404).

Meanwhile, Kord and Krimmer (2013) discuss masculinity in Hollywood, noting that “hegemonic masculinity” is very prominent in film, which “is the set of practices, whose features are determined locally, which sustains men’s dominance over women, sometimes through physical force but usually through cultural and discursive practices” (p. 12). Males are constrained by this type of masculinity because they are embodied in American history and economy, and in their personal and familial relationships. There are three other types of masculinities in film: subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Subordination includes the “inferior category by those identifying as heterosexual, as are any males perceived as feminine” (p. 12). Complicity is the practice of patriarchy, and marginalization includes “men not matching the dominant group in terms of class, ethnicity, religion, or race; men with disabilities also would be included in the category” (p. 13). In their study, Kord and Krimmer analyze the films: *King Kong* (2005), directed by Peter Jackson; *300* (2006), directed by Zack Snyder; *V for Vendetta* (2005), directed by James McTeigue; and *Tropic Thunder* (2008), directed by Ben Stiller, finding that all four categories of masculinity were evident in these films.

Similarly, Knee (2016) analyzes the film *Unstoppable* (2010) and its use of “techniques of classic masculinist blockbuster filmmaking” (p. 149). Knee notes that the filmmakers used “phallic mastery” through the portrayal of two “machismo” protagonists, whose job is to stop an out of control train. Moreover, the protagonists are trying “to rein in the runaway locomotive while also reining in the uncooperative women in their respective personal lives – with control over the ‘unmanned’ train simultaneously yielding control over the women for both protagonists” (p. 149). The filmmakers demonstrate masculinity through images of the younger protagonist’s “bare and muscular

toned body,” as well as through the same character needing to perform physical and therefore masculine endeavors on the run-away train. Subsequently, the filmmakers employ heroism to further demonstrate masculinity, portraying the protagonists putting their lives on the line in order to stop the run-away train (p. 149).

### ***Masculinity in the War Film***

Historically speaking, masculinity and war films have been connected since the early twentieth century. According to Clarke, the war genre emerged in the 1920s, bridging masculinity to the forefront with films representing “heroic masculinity, male bonding, and manly masculinity” (p. 186). The men in these films were represented as “he-men” who had seen their civility taken away and were “rough around the edges,” which Clarke argues was an accurate depiction of American masculinity of the day (p. 186). Meanwhile, the films of the 1920s portrayed women as melodramatic and valorized men (p. 186).

In his dissertation, Sitter (2013) argues that World War II changed Hollywood by creating a movement towards making war films that tended to be “exceedingly masculine combat films that portrayed violence to a degree that Hollywood had not previously witnessed” (p. 164). This resulted in masculinity as being perceived as more violent than prior to the war. “The association between violence and masculinity was one of Hollywood's major long-term trends that can clearly be traced to the war” (p. 164). After the war, Hollywood turned to film noir (American thriller/detective films) in helping redefine “masculinity and sexuality in postwar American” (p. 165). This led to “many women (being) pushed out of their wartime professions to make room for men...Many were reluctant to return to the patriarchal society of the 1930s, creating anxieties about

the sexual division of the public and private spheres, and challenging gender expectations” (p. 165). Sitter argues that World War II changed masculinity because of its affiliation to combat and the military:

While physically fit men were required for the war, they also needed to be mentally able to deal with violence as well. They were expected to be stoic and unflinching, and this meant that men were seen as emotionally devoid in many of the war films. While men were expected to take part in the killing, women were expected to take part in the mental and physical healing process of injured and returning soldiers. This continued to be the expectation after the war, when women were expected to help readjust a new and pervasive abject masculinity, the heroic disabled (p. 167).

After the war, many masculinity characteristics were instilled for the decades to come. An emphasis on a “hard masculinity” was continually emphasized and reorganized during the Cold War. As a result of the impending threat of Communism, “concepts like hard masculinity, inflated male bravado, hypermasculinity, and a rejection of the feminine were arguably even more exaggerated after World War II had ended” (p. 168). The threat of Communism led to a dominating cultural and political sphere that promoted “masculine toughness, capitalism, and the male breadwinner ideal” (pp. 168-169).

According to McDonald (2015), the Hollywood war film is used as an agent “to solicit American myth and nationalism” and “mediates masculinities and masculinities’ relationships to military violence” (p. 238). Masculinities embracing gun and military culture are rooted in American political, social, and cultural institutions, and these beliefs/attitudes are ever changing “as institutions and the individuals within them react to changes in local, national, and global communities” (p. 238). No matter how these changes are connected, “war, masculinities, and violence remain interconnected throughout these shifts in politics, society, and culture” (p. 238). In his analysis,

McDonald finds that violent masculinities in war films have changed since the war movies of the 1980s, creating an underpinning of morality. He argues that in a vast majority of the films analyzed, “the soldiers are doing what is good, what is right, and what they ought to do” (p. 240). The movies are avoiding the political issues of the 1980s war films, and are instead “foregrounding a moral judgment of the soldiers’ roles and actions... (and are) able to achieve a more positive and nationalistic military message” (pp. 240-241).

Kiliçarslan (2009) argues that Hollywood films, especially combat war films, “depict a masculinist framework which has greater implications than being mere portrayals of manliness” (p. 106). This framework, which is most evident in combat war films, creates a visual image of war “inscribed by the codes of masculinity as defined by the patriarchal culture” (p. 106). As Kiliçarslan observes:

These messages again might appear in the form of outright representations and characterizations or hidden and subliminal manifestations of an ideology whose primary aim is to maintain a social structure based on male leadership, hegemony and privilege. Instead of questioning the possibility of a cultural and social system based on gender equality, Hollywood films attempt to reinstate the patriarchal and male-centered socio-cultural structure (p. 106).

Hollywood portrays these codes through many ways, specifically through “the mystification and spiritualization of war and combat, spiritual transformation through a ritualistic act of killing, the display of the military world as a family of fathers and sons” (p. 107). These war images create a sense of manliness and glorify the battlefield experience, leaving “both war itself and the warrior image (as) exalted and presented in visual form as an equivalent of the traditional myths with almost supernatural or transcendent values and meanings” (p. 107).

Donald and MacDonald (2011) argue that the vast majority of war films only include women “to provide men with love interests and add a little sex appeal to the film” (p. 4). Culture depicts that “the external appearances, emotions, and culture of women are often portrayed to males as an undesirable other. In the world of men, things female is used “as negative comparisons, are characterized as inferior, and thus should be avoided” (p. 42). Male dominance of women is also a construct of manliness; “thus, to soldiers, an indicator of manliness is one’s ability to attract and successfully seduce and/or win over women” (p. 45).

Mulvey (1989), argues that film manipulates the conceptions of difference between men and women to society and in society. She notes, “Film reflects, reveals even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle” (p. 833). This view of differences is established subconsciously by the “patriarchal society” and has “structured film form” (p. 833).

Furthermore, Donald and MacDonald (2011) argue that war films use “ancient ritual of becoming a man/warrior” through basic training and being separated from family, women interaction, and “local subculture,” and are given the same uniform and basic haircut to illustrate they are “new members of the warrior class” (p. 5). The authors illustrate that in war films, the coward dies a thousand times in comparison to the brave soldier, and that fear of death or injury apparent to a soldier in the film states that they are unworthy of being true men (p. 80). “A true man takes charge, exudes authority, and manages the scariest situations with a John Wayne-like calm” (p. 83). Courage is a quality of manliness and fear is the opposite of courage, with society teaching: “When

girls cower and scream and stand on a chair when a mouse is discovered in the kitchen, boys are basically told that they must come to the rescue, fearlessly chasing the rodent with a broom, mayhem in mind” (p. 161).

Buchalski (2013) argues that masculinity is important to war films, noting that masculinity and the military are interconnected: “Hegemonic masculinity in the military and the films that are made about war place primary importance in attributes like physical fitness, ability and efficiency, and competitiveness,” which are portrayed through “training sequences, in combat action, and through the camaraderie that exists between soldiers” (p. 109). Buchalaski states that even with the removal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in 2012, and with more women entering the military, the masculine ideal continues to be the same in films. For example, he suggests, “women and homosexuals are thought to be incapable of demonstrating a male, heterosexual sexual prowess, which the military has come to value as a part of its hegemony, so those groups are viewed as subordinate, or ‘lower,’ masculinities” (p. 109).

Cavell (1979) argues that the war film genre portrays men (soldiers) and women in starkly different lights. He notes that males in uniform represent the men doing the work of the world. This work represents community, the myth that society is dominated by male hegemony, and represents the natural state of things. This is illustrated in the war film genre, which is male dominated, with one or two women playing peripheral characters (p. 47). These types of films create a “community” that is about brotherhood and comradery, portraying women as the anticomunity because they interfere with the comradery (p. 48). This is exhibited when the man leaves the brotherhood, he goes home to his wife, and his life is over (p. 49).

### ***Masculinity in World War II Films***

In their study of World War II films, Gates (2008) argues that American hero masculinity during the war was shaped by detective films before the war. One of these films was *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), directed by John Huston and starring Humphrey Bogart. The detective was portrayed as “tough and working-class,” which would later serve as the symbol for American manhood during World War II (p. 7). Summerfield (2011) found that maritime British films set during the World War II saw a transformation in masculine constructs. The sailors went from “drunken, riotous, and sexually predatory” to being patriotic, a defender, and a good husband and father (p. 348). The sailors were portrayed as courageous and honorable with the majority of films exhibiting heroic naval battles. The later films went from featuring upper-class naval officers to more of a rough around the edges captain as an alternative masculine construct (p. 352).

Crim (2018) argues that the film *Fury* (2014), directed by David Ayer, portrays a different type of masculinity than other World War II films. The film demonstrates both the brotherhood of combat and the decay of the soldiers’ humanity when being faced with the horrors of war. The film is different in that other World War II films demonstrate the heroism in the protagonist, avoiding the negative effects of war on good men, essentially being a fight between good and evil (p. 4). *Fury* depicts a masculinity that is free of civility, but full of loyalty to one’s fellow soldier. The spectator is left asking themselves whether any of the protagonists are worth saving (p. 5).

*Fury* is set aside from the typical World War II combat film as it depicts unsympathetic protagonists who reflect the masculine gaze that connects violence and

sex, with women left to deal with such a predicament of war. This is portrayed in the film as the American soldiers are considering the idea of raping and murdering civilian women. Civility and decency in war requires effort and energy (p. 5). The tank crew is left to hold a key crossroads for the war efforts, which can be seen as heroic, but it is also suicidal. Crim argues that this type of masculinity has no place outside of war, and especially outside of the tank (p. 11). The traditional hero in World War II films “are pushed to the limits and frequently do cross boundaries, but ultimately they maintain their humanity” (p. 11). However, in *Fury*, there is a blend between the “intimate bond forged between men at war with the tragic rise of a nihilistic masculinity” (p. 12).

In their study of the film, *The Wings of Eagles* (1957), directed by John Ford, Meeuf (2009) argues that John Wayne’s character portrayal of a disabled veteran creates a “hard” masculinity when dealing with the trauma of his wounds. This is in contrast to the “soft” masculinity portrayed in other films about wounded veterans who use the family and fatherhood/being a husband to deal with the trauma of their wounds. Wayne’s character constantly avoids settling for domesticity and the nuclear family and instead embraces the hypermasculine ideals typical to his other films (p. 89). The film portrays disability as a “feminizing obstacle,” in which only the strong-willed man can overcome it (p. 89). This idea was similar in another World War II film, *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), in which Wayne created a masculine image of “the Cold Warrior/empire builder who rejects femininity and the nuclear family in favor of all-male spheres” (p. 92). In that film, “Wayne plays a tyrannical and disturbing father figure whose hardened masculinity is incompatible with domesticity and family life, an obsessive leader whose intractability puts him at odds with his adoptive ‘sons,’ both of whom embrace entrance into the

nuclear family” (p. 94). Meeuf notes that in the post-war 1950s, there was a tension between hard and soft masculinity. Hard masculinity was required for the battlefield, where as soft masculinity was necessary for home life (p. 93).

In *The Wings of Eagles*, the true desires of Wayne’s character are revealed through his hard masculinity. It praises his pleasures in the brotherhood of the military and its accomplishments essentially creating a superior military and defeating the enemy (p. 97). Wayne’s broken body was not seen as a loss of masculinity, but instead demonstrated that he was resilient and tough, rather than being feminized through the nuclear family (p. 106). Through these masculine constructs, “Cold Warrior manhood” becomes an option for disabled veterans (p. 108).

In his study of World War II films, Sitter (2013) found that violence was glorified in war, and it was forever linked with as a construct of masculinity. Violence was necessary for war, and women did not serve in the military at the time, therefore, it became recognized as solely a masculine behavior (p. 2). It was recognized that violence and masculinity were a necessary part of manhood during World War II, but not after the soldiers returned home. Two films in the study demonstrated that violence is not a natural behavior (p. 4).

Sitter argues that hegemonic masculinity was the dominate form of masculinity during World War II, and that was defined as “white, able-bodied, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant” (p. 7). This was a celebrated type of masculinity during the war, which was dominantly portrayed by Hollywood in its films (p. 7). Warrior masculinity is a major construct of World War II films, and it is a necessary part of war to make it socially

acceptable (p. 7). World War II films draw a fine line between the portrayals of hard and soft masculinity, with soft reserved for civilians and hard for soldiers (p. 10).

During World War II, major Hollywood constructs of masculinity included recruitment and “males' patriotic duty to their nation and the necessity to kill in order to protect their families and democracy” (p. 67). This was exemplified through the connection between men and their uniforms: “An ideal masculinity was visually represented by the soldier in uniform” (p. 75). Men were transformed by their uniforms and become part of a privileged masculinity (p. 76), with Sitter arguing, “The ideal soldier became synonymous with the ideal masculinity” (p. 76).

Hollywood played its part in legitimizing violence and masculinity through the portrayed soldiers' commitment to protecting the nation's liberty; “the violence associated with war was regarded as unavoidable and a point of sacrifice and bravery” (p. 76). Hollywood war movies demonstrated that violence was necessary to preserve liberty, underscoring how these sacrifices were required (pp. 76-77). The films often portrayed a patriotic and hyper-masculinity. This type of masculinity was exhibited as disciplined, courageous, and emotionless. The U.S. wanted to be seen as tough and strong, similar to the Germans, so they had to redefine their masculinity (p. 77).

Films portrayed masculinity through heroics and romanticized death as heroic (p. 81) These films focused on younger soldiers and exhibited aggressiveness, which was strongly associated with masculinity at the time (p. 81). Brotherhood was a major construct of masculinity in World War II films, emphasizing making sacrifices for the sake of the team (p. 109). Another major construct included fearlessness on the battlefield (p. 112). In the end, the major constructs of masculinity in World War II films, according

to Sitter, are: “uniform, bravery, leadership, or the ability to inflict violence,” while “the ideal masculinity was also the ideal combat soldier” (p. 129).

### ***Masculinity in Vietnam War Films***

In their study of the rise of white American male masculinity in the Vietnam War, Jeffords (1988) found that masculinity was defined in contrast to femininity.

“Unpredictability, weakness, indeterminacy, indecisiveness, dependence” were the typically identifying features of feminine America that were used as a backdrop to define masculinity. These were used to “shift in attitude toward both Vietnam and the men who fought the war” (p. 527).

In their study of modern-day depictions of the Vietnam War film, Clarke (2006) found that *Tigerland* (2000), directed by Joel Schumacher, and *We Were Soldiers* (2002), directed by Randall Wallace, were more reminiscent of World War II films than the typical film of the 1980s concerning constructs of masculinity. Both of these films use “adapted aspects of the World War II film with contemporary ideals evident in the presentation of the naturalized masculinity of the central hero” (p. 19). With the return of the hero in these films, masculinity has been reclaimed. In contrast, 1980’s depictions of the Vietnam War were hyper-realistic, depicting a “saturation” of violence and the chaos of war, with a cast of characters bearing no heroes. *Platoon* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) have been lauded as an accurate depiction of the Vietnam War (p. 20). Both of the films demonstrated a naturalized gender and valorized specific masculine traits, making these films seem more natural and authentic (p. 20).

Masculinity in the films were seen as something from the perspective of a specific character, and it was set in the past, which depicted it as how it was in that era, instead of

questioning masculinity based off of currenting viewpoints (p. 21). Clarke argues that 1980s Vietnam War films needed to “re-masculinize” America and were depicted as such, whereas modern-day depictions replace it with “ideal heroes that understand their natural abilities as leaders and brothers in war” (p. 22). Although being a leader can be portrayed as something inherently masculine, the female and male characters are aligned with each other in *We Were Soldiers* (2002), with both exhibiting leadership roles (p. 23). In contrast, the female and male characters relationships in *Tigerland* (2000) as merely sexual. Additionally, the films depict male bonding amongst soldiers in a female free military, which is inherently masculine (p. 24).

The white American male exemplified through a chiseled body used as a weapon has been a mainstay throughout the Vietnam War era films, mainly depicted by actors Chuck Norris and Sylvester Stallone. The sculpted male body has been celebrated and attention grabbing in its “exultation” of its masculinity. Male characters even seem to appropriate females as they sew up their own wounds. Additionally, the male physique is celebrated through nakedness and large sculpted muscles, which reign supreme (Williams, 2003, p. 221). The films tend to end in man-to-man and body-to-body combat, attributing the loss in the war to feminine bureaucrats (pp. 222-223).

From this cinematic perspective, homosexuality is unavoidable in the male-dominated military, undermining manhood. To be able to solve this, both Stallone and Norris’ characters are hypermasculine, constantly bulking up their bodies and rejecting the femininity that “involves homosexuality, physical weakness, cowardice, intellectualism, and lack of sexual voracity” (p. 223). The care and maintenance of the male body is necessary to qualify for the “masculine bond” (p. 223).

Intelligence is used to demonstrate masculinity in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) and *Good Guys Wear Black* (1977), with characters exhibiting feminine interests such as “classical music, fine wine, Persian rugs, gourmet cooking, *and* patience and respect for independent women and opposing political views” (p. 225). In contrast, the Vietnamese are feminized by making them look weak, while the white masculine Americans look strong and supreme (p. 225).

In a study of Vietnam War films, Stegall (2014) describes 1960s Hollywood masculinity in various beliefs. The first defines masculinity as aggressive and competitive, “qualities are most positively and honorably displayed in military service, particularly in combat, and conversely, a man who is unwilling to engage in warfare is a coward” (p. 3). The second defines masculinity as similar to the warrior image where soldiers exhibit “almost superhuman stoicism regarding pain and loss, and conversely, a man who is incapable of controlling his emotions is either homosexual or expressing characteristics associated with a woman” (p. 3). The third defines masculinity based on allegiance to “one’s country/nation-state and/or god and that to die for one’s country/nation-state and/or god is the highest honor a man can earn in his life” (p. 3). Finally, the fourth associates masculinity “with the American soldier as defender of the weak, defeater of the oppressor, and savior of the world” (p. 3).

Stegall argues that “macho ethos, blood lust, and nationalistic fervor” are a necessary part of Vietnam War films and war films in general (p. 63). Additionally, the “brothers in arms mythos” is the most important masculine narrative, glorifying one’s killing capacity in combat, while demonizing those who restrain from killing as cowards. In the end, the label of “soldier” is inherently male (p. 168).

McClancy (2014), argues that the *Rambo* films depict masculinity in Vietnam War films in two ways: the typical masculinity and the soldier as damaged by war. They note that Rambo is seen as the ultimate warrior, embodying “heroic, militarized masculinity in his exceptional strength and fighting abilities” (p. 514). On the other hand, he is not the typical role model exemplified by soldiers, but he is portrayed more as a killing machine. McClancy notes that if soldiers are seen as victims, then they have lost their masculinity, based on the definition from “the ultimate apogee of manhood” (p. 517).

### ***Masculinity in Other Disciplines***

Meanwhile, Stodnick and Trilling (2012) explore the constructs of Anglo-Saxon masculinity, arguing that swords are the obvious artifact that span all material culture disciplines (archeology, documentary, and art history) when discussing Anglo-Saxon masculinity. Material culture constructs, maintains, controls, and transforms “social identities and relationships” (p. 117). This was especially evident since swords are traditionally associated with men in England. The swords were found predominately in adult male burial sites between the fifth and seventh centuries, typically being in graves of a person older than 20 and younger than 45 (p. 116-127). As an item of material culture in Anglo-Saxon masculinity, the sword played a major role in its construction. From its craftsmanship to its use, swords were controlled by adult males. The sword “was central to the negotiation of lordship, family relationships, the interactions between different ethnic groups, and religious conversion, and it was also resonant of broader Germanic value-systems and legends” (p. 130). The sword carried with it “practical and

symbolic significance” and “was relevant to masculine aspirations and identity across the social spectrum” (p. 130).

Moddelmog and Del Gizzo (2012) explore masculinity in Ernest Hemingway’s writings during the early half of the twentieth century. They found that masculinity was straying away from the masculinity constructed by Theodore Roosevelt, which told men that they should “get back to nature, to hike and hunt; they participated in rough sports or took an intense interest in military matters” (p. 278). Hemingway was portraying his characters in a negative light in his post-World War I writings. His writings were filled with male characters who were wounded and traumatized, which were the consequences of war injuries. Hemingway was portraying a new sense of postwar masculinity, which demonstrated how wounded men responded to such wounds. The characters responded with grace under pressure, which is “conducting oneself courageously in the face of trauma, sometimes achieved by holding tight to a ‘Code’ of behavior that bestows meaning on an absurd world” (p. 279).

Hemingway defined masculinity through misogyny by his use of female characters to benefit men. For example, men become heroes through the death of a woman, or men find a sense of selfhood by getting rid of the woman holding them back (Moddelmog and Del Gizzo, p. 280). Hemingway created many characters with sexual relationships both with men and women as a way of exploring masculinity (pp. 281-282). For example, one character who was dealing with issues of sexuality, aligns himself with bullfighting as a “strategy of compensatory manhood” (p. 283). This manhood is connected with tradition in other ethnicities, with bullfighting representing “the hero battling a monster, battling death” (p. 283). Overall, Hemingway’s idea of masculinity is

focused on white, Anglo-American masculine constructs (p. 283). In his later writings, Hemingway depicted masculinity in terms of men not made to be defeated (p. 285). Aside from constructs of masculinity of the Cold War, Moddelmog and Del Gizzo that Hemingway “trying to reclaim traditional sources of male authority, demonizing gays, communists, and other alternative masculinities, celebrating American cultural and military power” (p. 285).

Masculinity is defined by predetermined characteristics, actions, attitudes, and expectations in a society, which is constantly changing over time, and, in particular, in cultures and societies (Wortmann and Park, 2011, p. 1). Consumer culture and masculinity go hand-in-hand, with the mass media constructing and disseminating it through images and ideals, marketed along products, with studies showing that “at least some boys and men internalize these images and construct identities, enact behavior, purchase goods and services, and even shape bodies that conform to what is presented to them” (p. 1). Males who fail to achieve these images are seen in a negative light by society and themselves (p. 1). One of the major images of constructed identities involves the ideal male physical body and specific body parts. These images are typically featured in today’s society through sports, bodybuilding competitions, and men’s health and fitness magazines (p. 1). Males are expected to have a “V” shaped torso, with specific products marketed to men to be able to achieve such a body (p. 1).

Male sexuality is another construct of masculinity in consumer culture, primarily defined by the ability to achieve an erection (Wortmann and Park, p. 2). The marketing of the products typically is homophobic, leading to the men accidentally doing something and then immediately making up for it by performing something hypermasculine (p. 2).

Teenage masculine constructs involve media products emphasizing a mix of “violence, toughness, sexual conquest, heterosexism, homophobia, and aggression as critical elements of masculinity” (p. 2). Many studies have found that these types of consumer constructs of masculinity are having an ill effect on teenage boys. Teenage boys are trying to change their bodies to be more muscular and are trying to “masculinize” themselves to separate themselves from women and gays by feminizing them (p. 2).

### **Summary**

Genre theory suggests that a genre sets a standard for what to expect in a film. This is created through a set of rules, standards, or methods that a filmmaker can follow, in order to create a film as part of that genre. Film genre has had wide effects on how spectators view the world, according to Cavell (1979). Films are embodied in our lives and the events that happen to us, thus becoming part of our memory. Additionally, films are relatable to everyone “because we have all had similar experiences in our memories” (p. 154).

Cavell argues that filmmakers convince the viewer that movies are a snapshot of reality, stating that “Movies convince us of the world’s reality in the only way we have to be convinced, without learning to bring the world closer to the heart’s desire: by taking views of it” (p. 102). Filmmakers use automatism, which involves doing things without thought to why they are doing them. This is carried out when filmmakers follow specific genres. Automatism can lead to films being created without specific thought and following the themes, methods, and rules that are employed in certain genres. This can have lasting effects from the reality portrayed by the filmmakers, which then becomes part of the memory and view of reality of the spectator (p. 102).

Genre theory suggests that everything falls within a certain category, with viewers judging it based on other works that fall within that category. Genres not only follow a set of rules, but include recognizable cultural elements. Genres exist based on time, time and place, specific themes and actions and large time tables. The war genre is no different in that it follows a set of rules. It answers the question of “Why do we fight?” and it includes information and an emotional experience, while using a set of values and the “mythology of sacrifice.” It further uses the ideas of community, society, values as part of their mythos (Grotkopp and Kappelhoff, 2012, p. 52). The narrative of the war genre can incorporate attitudes toward, response to, and results of war. The war genre is seen as typically having a propagandistic element determined by the type of message trying to be portrayed by the filmmaker. The two main types of war films are the battlefield situation and the antiwar film (Solomon, 1976, pp. 242-252)

Meanwhile, filmmakers play a major role in the creation of the film, with their decisions impacting what is seen in the film and how it is portrayed. Auteur theory argues that the director is seen as the major creative contributor to the film. The director has control over the foundational visual elements such as staging, cinematography, lighting, and scene length rather than dialogue portray the film message. Moreover, the director has the ability to leave their recognizable personal stamp on the overall work (“Auteur Theory,” 2018).

With the power of films to be seen as reality, filmmakers possess a strong tool of communication that can alter the overall collective memory of society. Some may use automatism to continue the specific methods and rules that have been used for decades in that specific genre without knowing that they are affecting society’s view on reality.

Additionally, filmmakers can put their own personal stamp on their films, thinking they are making change, but are still following themes of that same genre, even if actual reality has changed. This is important because masculinity constructs are a major aspect of the war film genre and many of the rules, themes, and methods of this genre came to fruition pre-1970 when women were not soldiers in the military. It is important to study these constructs as post-9/11 American war films depict a military that is twenty percent women, as these constructs can have a major effect on a twenty-first century society. The purpose of this dissertation is to see how masculinity is constructed by filmmakers today in the new wave of post-9/11 American war films and its potential to affect the overall view of masculinity in today's society.

## CHAPTER 3

### OVERVIEW OF FILMS ANALYZED

#### **Introduction**

Masculinity is prominent in the military because the military is traditionally dominated by the male hegemony (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107). As such, the war genre is dominated by masculinity constructs that have been instilled since WWII (Sitter, 2013; Clarke, 2015). These constructs lay out a masculinity that can be formed from specific characteristics (Connell, 2015; Schwalbe, 1996) to creating an overall image that celebrates the warrior (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107) and male-bonding (Clarke, 2015, p. 186). This chapter textually examines the aesthetic of cinematography; acting; sound, including dialogue, sound effects, and music; and mise-en-scène as a vehicle for interrogating the process of masculinity construction in the six films set during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

#### ***Megan Leavey (2017)***

*Megan Leavey*, directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite and written by Pamela Gray, Annie Mumolo, and Tim Lovestedt, is a film about a corporal in the Marine Corp, Megan Leavey (Kate Mara). At the beginning of the film, Leavey is seen as a single woman living at her mother's house, who is portrayed as lost and addicted to alcohol. Her best friend and lover had recently died of a drug overdose, and she was feeling the effects of the loss. She decides to join Marines without the consent of her family, and leaves for basic training. Out of bad or good luck, Leavey is reprimanded for urinating in public by the commanding officer at the base where she is stationed. Her punishment is to clean the kennels of the bomb-sniffing canine unit, where she meets an angry dog named Rex.

While carrying out her punishment, she decides she wants to be on the bomb squad.

When she begs Gunny Martin (Common) to put her on his squad, he concedes. There is no available dog for her to train with, but when a fellow soldier is injured, his dog Rex becomes available. The rest of the film follows Rex and Leavey through their tour in Iraq, chronicling their successes and failures, both in Iraq and back home in the U.S.

From the beginning of the film, Cowperthwaite constructs masculinity in various ways. Leavey's character is portrayed from the outset as a loner. A montage shows her hungover and basically lazy and doing little in her life. From this point, her character could either be a man or woman. The montage continues, in which Leavey is seen getting fired from her preschool job for not connecting with people. Throughout the montage, Leavey is dressed in outfits that seem very masculine, showing her in a hoodie and slouching. Leavey's character is built similar to 1920s masculinity where males were depicted as "rough around the edges" (Clarke, 2015, p. 186). The next scene shows her mother, Jackie (Edie Falco) in Leavey's room, where she finds a Marine pamphlet, and she appearing to be disgusted.

Later, the audience sees Leavey on a bus headed to boot camp. The bus is filled with both women and men signed up for the military. The very next scene features a montage of boot camp. The montage features music that is fast paced to make it seem exciting. There is a medium close-up of Leavey standing at attention, with all of the women in their sports bras with their shirts off. This shows their bodies, but in a non-sexual way. All of the drill leaders are women, and so are the soldiers in the boot camp. The montage demonstrates how tough a soldier has to be through drills, and tackling the obstacle course. Leavey and others are struggling through it all, while they are getting

yelled at by both women and men drill leaders. A medium close-up of Leavey shows her in full gear with gun in the pool, trying to swim while the male drill leader yells at her. This ritual is how soldiers become part of the “warrior class” or “man/warrior” by going through basic training separated from family and society (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5).

The film then portrays boot camp graduation, with Leavey dressed in her military uniform, which is not very feminine. She sees her mother after the ceremony, with her mother saying that her daughter doesn’t look terrible and doesn’t look all “GI Jane.” After graduation, in a medium shot, there is a group of 18 soldiers, including five female soldiers, in frame. The commanding officer calls out Leavey, Lopez (Melina Matthews), and Timmins (Alicia Lobo), calling up on the male soldiers to welcome them, adding that they are going to make everyone proud. The next scene features Leavey, Lopez, and Timmins in a bar. A man hits on them, but when he gets too close, they push him away and brush him off. Timmins was wearing stiletto heels to the bar, which could be considered typical dress for the activity, but not overly sexualized. This group of scenes depicts female soldiers as equals to their male counterparts, instead of in contrast as masculinity is typically perceived (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

The next scene shows Leavey, Lopez, and Timmins heading back to base when Leavey has to urinate, she decides to do it behind a bush against the building. She squats down to urinate, but gets caught. The next scene shows Leavey in front of the Master Sergeant (Corey Johnson) getting reprimanded for urinating on base. The Marines are for heroes, he says, adding that what Leavey has done has disrespected the men and women who made the Marines great. Leavey shows no emotion as she is being reprimanded. The

Master Sergeant calls her a punk, which is a gender-neutral term. A common theme throughout the film is Leavey's use of expletives, which she uses frequently. Leavey's behavior is typically reserved for a masculine soldier, one who is aggressive and irresponsible (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

As part of her punishment, Leavey is asked to help with the training program for the bomb squad, where she is setup as the decoy for the canines to attack. The dog training soldiers tell her she does not need to wear the entire suit because the dogs will only attack the upper body. Leavey is attacked and bitten on the buttocks. She shows some fear, but not feminine emotion. The male soldiers, playing a trick on her treat her as an equal, instead of feminizing her. This treatment by her fellow soldiers goes against the idea that females are "inferior" (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 12). A later scene shows her talking to the dog that bit her, Rex, telling him she is afraid of him, but that she is going to make him afraid of her.

Leavey wants to be part of the bomb squad, with Martin telling her she has a be at the top of her class and pass her Marine exams. A montage shows her working harder at physical training and marksmanship, listening to baseball on the radio while running and studying. Later, the montage depicts her getting stronger and improving at marksmanship, working on keeping up with the male soldiers. The music is exciting and is a buildup to show her getting an awesome score on her test to become a dog trainer. This type of behavior falls under the *Essentialist* approach to masculinity, where the male is a risk-taker and aggressive in their pursuits (Connell, 2005, p. 68). Leavey is shown again with her fellow soldiers and the male soldiers make fun of her, but as if she is just another soldier.

The next scene shows Martin talking to all of his unit where Leavey is the only woman in the unit of men. Martin talks to soldiers around her by asking if they are still virgins, but does not ask Leavey. This portrays Leavey as un-masculine because she is “uninterested in sexual conquest” like her male counterparts (Connell, 2005, p. 67). Martin decides to give Rex to Leavey even though she is inexperienced. She seems nervous but does not express it outside of her eyes. She is stoic and emotionless. This type of demeanor is typically reserved for the masculine (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). The training of Rex in the next scene makes her look scared through her emotions or at least nervous. In the next scene, the audience meets the military veterinarian, who is a woman and she seems competent.

The next scene uses a medium close-up showing Leavey bringing Rex into her bedroom and her hair is down. She is talking to Rex saying that people are counting on them and they have to do it right, referring to being part of the bomb squad and the importance of their work. Leavey has her hair down, but is in baggy sweats, which is nonsexual attire. Leavey’s dress throughout the film is not sexual or masculine. This goes against why women are typically in war films, which is to be a love interest or for sex appeal (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4). The next scene has Martin pumping up his soldiers as they are being deployed says, “You need to act, trust your partner, trust yourself.”

The next scene uses a medium close-up of Leavey getting her gear together. Sergeant Andrew Dean (Tom Felton) talks to Leavey saying it’s ok to be nervous and says he wants her to report back on the ass she kicked there. When Leavey arrives in Iraq, she gets her own barracks. She says to Rex that sometimes it pays to be a girl. She then

hears gun shots and says to the Rex to not be scared, once again exhibited the stoicism reserved for masculinity (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

The next scene shows Leavey taking a shower. The shower scene has rock music which makes it seem like an action movie. The close-up shows her just showering like anyone average and is once again not sexualized. When leaving the shower, she is in average clothes and one soldier checks her out but Cpl. Matt Morales (Ramon Rodriguez) hits him in the head. This portrays both Leavey as both a sexual and non-sexual interest for the movie (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4).

Morales later catches up to Leavey and talks to her calling her by her first name instead of Leavey. He accompanies her to talk to Jarvis (Luke Neal) about her assignments as part of the unit. Jarvis says to Leavey when she is getting the tour of the base that the last girl got her panties in a twist because she was only allowed to do bomb checks at check points instead of out in the field. This type of dialogue demonizes women, reflecting the male hegemony of the military (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109) After they talk with Jarvis, Morales tells Leavey that there is a higher bounty on women dog handlers by the enemy. The enemy wants to kill her or bone her then kill her.

The next scene shows soldiers watching Leavey and Rex. A medium shot shows Leavey training Rex and a soldier says in the background “Do they ever take a break?” insinuating that Leavey is working hard. Leavey then goes on a mission out in the field where she finds a lot of weapons and bombs. The leader thanks her and Rex and says that they just saved a bunch of lives and that he was proud of them. The next scene has rap music playing and Leavey is hanging out with the other soldiers. The male soldiers are wrestling and playing beer pong. She seems to be a part of the group, she’s a average

soldier. The music carries over to the next scene where they are training, making it exciting. In this montage, Leavey is portrayed as an equal to the male soldiers, as well as someone celebrated for their bravery and accomplishments (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404).

Morales and Leavey are seen talking and he asks her about Jessie. Jessie is the boy that made her want to leave home because he died. Leavey tells him about the story of them taking pills and being drunk. How she woke up and he did not. Leavey says it should have been her not Jessie who did not wake up. During the entire sequence of her telling the story, she does not show emotion. She is composed just like a average person would be. Leavey exhibits no emotion when talking about the death of her friend and emotion is seen as inferior to masculinity (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42)

Although Leavey was told that she would only be working at check points by Jarvis, she gets to go on more missions instead of the male bomb squad members. On one of those missions, Leavey is walking around while Rex is sniffing. She yells at other soldier that are talking, telling them to stop. She does so with authority in her voice and face/eyes. They stop talking immediately showing her respect. Later Rex is taking a break and a soldier questions the need for a break. Leavey says with confidence that Rex has worked for two hours in 120 degrees, so he deserves it. Leavey is portrayed here as rational, tough, and in control, which are all inherently masculine (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

During that same mission, a bomb goes off right next to Rex and Leavey. A muffled sound shows a medium close-up of Leavey caring about Rex's well-being with her crawling toward him. She is bleeding and has cuts on her face. The other soldiers respond with the desire to go get the people who blew the bomb up and say that to

Leavey that she is too injured and cannot go. Leavey insists and says that she can go even though she was just blown up. Her face shows emotion and her voice speaks with authority. This shows that she is tough. She is going to do her job no matter what. The soldiers are now heading toward the enemy and getting their revenge. They find themselves in a fire fight and Leavey is seen as just like any other soldier. She is taking charge and firing at the enemy. She says “we need to move” with authority and has a calm demeanor. Throughout this scene, Leavey is depicted as stoic, “bearing her agony discreetly” (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

The next scene shows Leavey as she gets back to the base. She is covered in dirt and has blood and cuts all over her as she gets into the medivac. A close-up shows her crying as Rex is barking at her as she leaves. She then shows emotion in a close-up. Leavey is in the hospital and she is crying because she wants to see her dog. She is cut up and bruised in the face. This scene exhibits emotion in Leavey; however, in a non-feminine way.

Leavey returns home to the U.S. and stays with Jackie and Jim (Will Patton). Jackie gives Leavey a box of makeup for Christmas and Leavey seems disinterested in it. Throughout her time back home, Leavey does not seem to be affected by war. She later returns to the base where she was originally stationed. She goes back to the training area and there is another girl training to be on the bomb squad.

In a later scene, Morales and Leavey are seen making out, but it is not turned into a sexual thing; however, they do talk about dating long term. Morales asks Leavey about her wounds and she says that her back, neck, head and arches hurt. She says it with just normal tone. Morales jokes about Leavey not being able to wear stiletto heels and she is

sarcastic in saying “oh darn” in response. She then moves on to talking about training with Rex. Since coming back, all she can think about is Rex and doing her job. Although Leavey is portrayed as a love interest, it is very subtle as she can only focus on her dog.

In a later scene, Rex is on Leavey’s bed and hears a noise. He starts freaking out and Leavey calms him down, demonstrating that she is unflappable. Later, Morales and Leavey are in bed together. He has his shirt off with his muscles showing and she is in a cut off shirt, once again not sexual. Including Morales with his shirt off is a tool to demonstrate masculinity through visual images (Knee, 2016, p. 149).

Leavey finds out Rex is being redeployed without her. She goes into Martin’s office to ask to adopt Rex, but he is not there. She gets mad and throws stuff off of the desk and grunts loudly. Her violence and is typically a masculine trait (Grønstad, 2010) The next scene shows Leavey in Rex’s kennel. She sits with him and a medium close-up shows her crying while petting him. She then leaves. The next scene shows a close-up of her crying while driving. There is sentimental/emotional music as she passes the bomb squad dogs training at the base. Her emotion though is reserved for the feminine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42).

The next morning, Leavey wakes up and is called out of her room by Jackie. She comes out and is in a bralette but has cleavage. She has a six pack and it is not very sexual. Leavey gets mad at Jackie and Jackie tells her that she cannot come home as a war hero and treat her so badly. The use of the sculpted body is a tool typically reserved for males and is typically reserved for women as sex appeal (Knee, 2016; Donald and MacDonald, 2011).

The next scene shows Leavey with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder while living with her dad, Bob (Bradley Whitford). The car alarm goes off and she freaks out thinking it is a car bomb. The next scene shows her at a service station, and she sees a dog in a car, and she goes with a bat to break the dog out of the car. The owner yells at her and she says to take care of his dog because it is hot. She seems broken without Rex. The film cuts to a year later and Leavey is talking in group therapy. The therapist is a woman and there is a mix of women and men in the group. Leavey talks about how she is doing better but has little human interaction. She talks about Rex and starts crying when the therapist asks her what she would say to Rex today. Later, Bob comes into Leavey's bedroom and tells her that you got to keep living. You got to figure out what it would take to make it worth it (life). Leavey then tears up and says Rex would be worth it. Bob tells her to keep failing and failing and fight for life. He says, "You know how to fight because you are a freaking marine." Disability is portrayed as un-masculine; however, if it can be overcome, it is seen as masculine (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13; Meeuf, 2009, p. 89)

### ***Stop-Loss (2008)***

*Stop-Loss*, directed by Kimberly Pierce and written by Kimberly Pierce and Mark Richard follows a group of soldiers who recently served and returned home to Texas from Iraq. The film follows Brandon King (Ryan Phillippe) and his hometown friends, Tommy Burgess (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and Steve Shriver (Channing Tatum) from serving in Iraq to dealing with the effects of war. King comes home to find out that he has been stop-lost by the military, which means that the military is forcibly retaining him on active duty beyond his original contract. He is expected to return to duty within the

month. Instead of accepting the stop-loss, King decides to fight it, but is unsuccessful. King decides to flee and go to Washington D.C. to talk with his local representative to get him out of the military. Meanwhile, Shriver is dealing with the problem of King fleeing and trying to better his situation with the military, as well as taking care of Burgess who is dealing with a broken marriage and alcoholism. He cuts a deal with their commanding officer Lt. Col. Boot Miller (Timothy Olyphant) to bring back King and also help him further his career as a sniper. Shriver continues to keep an eye on Burgess but takes his eye off of him long enough to lose him. The film demonstrates the unintended consequences of war and the effects on soldiers both during and in their lives post war.

From the beginning of the film, Pierce constructs masculinity in various ways. In the very first scene, a montage of the main characters and their fellow soldiers demonstrates the brotherhood of the military. There are several soldiers singing a song about fighting and being in the army. The song talks about their dads being in the army and them so that they can protect the freedom of their brothers, sisters, and mothers. Then a montage shows of each soldier during their tour together with one soldier having a tattoo that says, "Death before dishonor." Burgess is seen being baptized during the montage which could signify being baptized into the brotherhood. Brotherhood is a major construct of masculinity in the military where it is part of the community that is dominated by men (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49)

The next scene shows the soldiers at a checkpoint and they hear gun shots, but the leader tells them they are just pop shots and to not worry. During their time at the checkpoint, Shiver shows Rico Rodriguez (Victor Rasuk) a video of his fiancé, Michelle (Abbie Cornish) and Rodriguez says, "Damn man she is hot. She and me would make

some nice TexMex babies.” Rodriguez then sees Michelle’s bra and gets excited and says that he saw her “tits.” A male who is interested in sex is someone who is inherently masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 67).

The next scene shows the soldiers still at the checkpoint and a car comes by and does a drive by shooting and the soldiers react as stoic people and fire back. There are medium close-up shots on each soldier shooting calmly and with determination in their eyes. The soldiers then take pursuit and chase the enemy into an alleyway. While in a vehicular chase, one soldier says to not engage the enemy because there are too many civilians, which shows the soldier as not aggressive and smart. The next scene shows the soldiers in a firefight and they swear a lot. A medium close-up shows Shriver’s eyes and he looks alert and calm, which is repeated with the other soldiers’ eyes. None of the soldiers look scared. The soldiers get pinned down in the alley and King yells orders stoically. An RPG fires into one of the Humvees and a medium close-up on the King shows he is surprised scared. Al 'Preacher' Colson (Quay Terry) tackles Burgess and saves him from getting hit. Rodriguez gets hit and he is covered in blood. Shriver is composed while helping Rodriguez. Another soldier’s friend gets hit and he gets violent and starts killing people with revenge. Shriver then helps killing the enemy and rushes in like a hero into the building to get the people shooting at them. King is sensible and yells at Shriver not to enter the building. King goes in after Shriver and Shriver is hit and says he is alright. He does not have any pain and walks out. It is not completely evident, but Shriver may have killed a bunch of women in the building when he ran in. This group of scenes demonstrates the *Essentialist* definition of masculinity: “risk-taking, responsibility, irresponsibility, aggression, Zeus energy” (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

Additionally, it lays out the blueprint of the *Normative* definition of masculinity: tough, does not back down, and fights with all he's got (p. 70).

The next scene creates another video montage with rap music this time. The song lyrics talk about keeping it together, being desensitized, and how it's easy to have hate be their remedy. The montage shows the soldiers who had fallen or were injured during the firefight. It shows the soldiers with their years of life and then have things that say, "never left the faith, fallen hero, and wounded fight on." The montage shows what they went through and their helmets resting on their guns similar to headstones.

The next scene shows the group of soldiers on leave in Texas on a bus. Miller, their commanding officer, is addressing them and says that when they are on leave to "not fuck anyone underage...you will not beat your wife, kids or dog. You will not drink and drive—you will have the woman drive and let her get the DUI." In response, Isaac 'Eyeball' Butler (Rob Brown) talks about how he slept with someone who said she was 18. Being irresponsible and violent are inherently masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

The parade ends and King is asked to give a speech. King talks about how he was not expecting to give a speech. He just wanted to make sure his guys got back safe. He struggles with the speech and is starting to show emotion, when Shriver comes up behind him to save him. Shriver tells the crowd that we have to kill people in Iraq instead of having to kill them here in Texas, which makes him look more like a man than emotional. After the speech, King is worried about his soldiers especially Rodriguez who was hit during the firefight and in the hospital. Exhibiting emotion is feminizing and therefore undesirable as a male characteristic (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42)

The main characters are now in a bar celebrating being home with their families. King is sitting down and two women, who are all dressed scantily clad, come up to do shots in a sexual manner with King. A medium close-up of Burgess shows him talking about going back and getting that Haji that killed Preacher and sending them back to the Bible tops. The camera pans and uses medium close-ups on the mothers and they have all looks of disapproval or are uncomfortable with Burgess and Shriver talking about killing people and dropping bombs on them. Burgess' wife, Jeanie (Mamie Gummer) then gets asked to dance by another man and Burgess tells the guy she is his wife. The man walks away, and Burgess decides to go and beat him up. The wife was civilized to the man who asked while Burgess was not. Burgess has to be restrained by King and he is told to calm down and get a drink. King says "it ain't a party without a fight." This scene demonstrates that being violent is inherently masculine (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90) and exhibiting such violence is uncivilized. Males are uncivilized while females are civilized (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

Later that night, Michelle calls King to come over and help. Shriver is in his underwear and the audience sees his muscles as he is digging a fox hole in his front yard. Michelle tells King how Shriver was drunk, thought he was in Iraq, kicked over furniture, and hit her. King tells her that Shriver loves her so much and that he is just drunk, which brushes right over the abuse. Burgess is seen outside driving drunk and tells King that he got kicked out by Jeanie for fighting at the party. King and Burgess go to a ranch to blow off some steam. They shoot wedding gifts because Burgess is mad about getting kicked out. Shriver crawls out of the trunk in his underwear where the audience see his muscles again. Shriver then shoots some of the wedding gifts with a look of rage as he hits all of

his targets. Another montage with metal music playing is shown. The music lyrics say, “let the bodies hit the floor and there is nothing is wrong with me.” It shows the soldiers shooting and doing other activities in their uniforms. Shriver and King are seen talking and Shriver is skinning a snake. King confronts him about beating Michelle (Michelle is a close family friend of the King family, so King is very protective of her. This is a common theme of the film) and tells him to never do it again. They then wrestle with each other. Burgee then says with a blank look that he should not have shot the wedding gifts. Soldiers are once again depicted as violent and uncivilized, which is seen through the lens of the civilized female characters (Grønstad, 2010; Cavell, 1979).

After finding out that he has been stop-lost, King decides to confront Miller in his office. King and Miller get into a yelling match and they both use their eyes, eyebrows, and voice to show anger and defiance. King is then escorted out where he fights two soldiers and gets away. King talks with Shriver over the phone and Shriver tells him to calm down and get a grip. King represents the risk-taking, aggressive, and irresponsible of the *Essentialist* definition of masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. 69). King returns home and talks with his family. King’s dad, Roy (Ciarán Hinds) and his mom, Ida (Linda Emond) talk to King about what their options are. Ida wants him to flee to Mexico until it blows over while Roy wants him to protect his reputation by not seeking help from the senator or by going for help outside of the chain of command. He wants him to be a man. Roy is a responsible man like the *Essentialist* definition and Ida is un-masculine in wanting King to just run and be peaceable (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

King decides to leave and go to Washington D.C. to talk to the senator for help. Michelle decides to drive him there and they go in her car. At the motel where King and

Michelle are staying, he has a flash back and tries to save a soldier in the pool. He says he's ok even though he probably is not. He says he'll be alright to Michelle. King is being stoic here and brushing off his PTSD, which is a masculine thing to do (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

Burgess is seen in jail for driving drunk and is talking to an army officer. Shriver is there trying to get him out. Burgess is talking about how he is not good at anything else but being a soldier. He wants to reenlist, but the Army does not want him back. His character seems to not have the ability to be civilized (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

King and Michelle arrive in Memphis and he decides he needs to make a stop to Preacher's parent's house to tell them how their son died. While he is explaining how Preacher died, their other son, Michael (Steven Strait), says to King, "is it standard operating procedure to lead your men into an ambush? His life was wasted over there."

King and Michelle return to their car and see that it has just been robbed. King decides to pursue the robbers and gets into a fight where the three of them beat him up. The tide turns and he then beats the three of them up. He is bleeding from his head wound. He lines up the robbers on their knees and tells them he is going to shoot them. The look in his eyes and face show that he is violent and scary. Michelle pulls the car around and tries to stop him. She threatens that she will leave him if he does not stop. He has gone crazy and his eyes and face shows it. The robbers look scared as if they are going to be killed. They are bleeding as well. King has blood running down his face. Violence and masculinity are connected here in the way King faces mortality. To him he is defined by the way he faced the threat of death or overcame it but is portrayed when Michelle arrives as uncivilized (Grønstad, 2010, p. 129).

The next scene shows a medium shot of King's reflection in the mirror. He has his shirt off and is looking into the mirror with a look of rage. We see his muscles and he rips his shirt apart to clean his head wound. Michelle says let me help you and he says he's got it. She has a gentle touch and starts to clean his wound. He winces at the pain, grits his teeth, and grunts. He puts a stich like bandage on his wound, grunts, and winces at the pain, but grits his teeth. The use of the young muscular body exhibits a visual image that is masculine (Knee, 2016, p. 149).

King leaves the motel to seek out a fellow stop-loss soldier who has fled the military. Josh (Tory Kittles), the other soldier, offers King the number to a friend that can help him get over the border to Canada. King refuses the first time and says he is not interested in the yellow-bellied-ness of fleeing, basically saying that I'm not a coward. Cowardice is feminized here and is portrayed as un-masculine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80)

Shriver shows up at the motel the next morning to collect Michelle. She says, "hey baby" and Shriver does not even really acknowledge her. King finds out that Shriver got a deal from Miller to do sniper school if he brought King back. King thinks he backstabbed him by doing that. Shriver and Michelle get into a fight about him reenlisting and Shriver talks about how it is good for him because he'll have a career. Michelle kicks him out and he says that it is fucked up that she did that, which seems like marriage is less important than marriage or civilization. This falls under the idea that men are uncivilized and women are civilized—when men return home from the military, they go home to die because there is no room for their rough masculine behavior in the civilized world (Cavell, 1979, p. 49). Shriver says that King and he are better than these

people who are deserters. Shriver walks away from King because King decides to stay. King still has dried blood on his face and neck from his wound.

King and Michelle go to a bar. Michelle is dressed in a shirt and jeans so not very sexualized.. While doing shots, Michelle talks to King and says that she can't be a military wife and wait for Shriver to come home and touch her face for a year. They both drink a lot in the bar. The next scene shows Burgess walking out of a bar drunk and all he can talk about is getting his wife back. He can't live without her. These two scenes portray women in contrast as the sexual object or love interest (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4), they are strong and needed by their male counterparts.

Michelle and King then visit Rodriguez in the hospital. Rodriguez is missing a leg and an arm, is blind, and covered in burn marks. Yet he is so happy, and he is lifting weights. All he can talk about is how cute Michelle is and how she sounds cute. He is very positive, and the audience can see it in his face and eyes. Rodriguez then talks about what King is doing with Michelle and asks if she was giving "him rides" before taking him to the hospital. Rodriguez is calm and happy even though he is disabled, which is a major masculine construct (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75; Connell, 2005, p. 70).

Michelle and King are sitting in her car and he says, "I signed up thinking I was going over to help and protect my country. That's not what I signed up for. The enemy is not in the desert, they are in the buildings and you don't know who is who. All you can do is fight for survival. Protecting the person next to you. It's either kill or be killed mentality." King tells this to Michelle and then is worried that if he tells her this that she is going to think less of him. He tells her how he had to kill a father and son to be able to save Shriver in the building. He says he is done with killing and is not leading any more

men into slaughter, which seems anti-masculine for him to tell her all of that. King is being civilized, anti-war, and emotional, which are all feminine and therefore inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). However, they are not portrayed in the film as such. King's masculinity is portrayed more under the *Positivist* definition that men are defined for what they actually are, which King is still masculine even though he is civilized anti-war, and emotional (Connell, 2005, p. 69). Michelle later sells her car, so that King can have enough money to be smuggled across the Canadian border.

Burgess ends up killing himself and at his funeral, his estranged wife, Jackie is crying hysterically. A medium close-up is used to show Shriver as he talks to Jackie and recites the saying for giving the flag over to her. His eyes show that he is fighting back emotions. His voice is also trembling. A medium shot shows that he then is teary eyed as he touches Burgess' casket. King shows up at the end of the funeral. Shriver sees him starts beating him up. Shriver yells at King for leaving and coming back too late. They get in a big fight and beat each other up. King tells Shriver to go over to Iraq and get killed. King says, "Go over and do you fucking duty." A masculine soldier has a sense of nationalism and doing their duty and that is what Shriver is telling King (McDonald, 2015, p. 238). King makes Shriver look at the headstone and tells him "do you see this? This is you next." Shriver yells at King and says, "you don't fucking belong here." A medium shot shows Shriver kneeling down and crying. King tells Shriver that his brain is full. It is full of all the people he got killed. All of the people who died under his command. Shriver and King are both violent in this scene and are both emotional. The violence is inherently masculine, which is appropriate, but the exhibiting of emotion is

inherently feminine. Masculinity is defined in contrast or opposition to the feminine (Adams, 2008, p. 8).

King returns home and he is crying while hugging his parents. He touches Burgess' military items and starts to cry. The music is sad. He shakes Roy's hand and Roy starts to cry as King leaves. The next scene goes back to the start. A medium close-up shows King as happy to be going to war. Ida is emotional and hugging Roy. Roy just waves and smiles. Shriver looks like he is sad and emotional to be leaving. Close-ups on the faces of all the other soldiers show them as looking scared and emotional while King is just calm. These two scenes exhibit emotion which is feminine and at odds with masculinity (Horrocks, 1995, p. 33). King's character is portrayed as both masculine and feminine in this pair of scenes.

### ***American Sniper (2014)***

*American Sniper*, directed by Clint Eastwood and written by Jason Hall, chronicles the four tours of Chris Kyle (Bradley Cooper) in Iraq and his return home. The film follows Kyle as he grows up in Texas learning the values of "God, family, and country" from his father. These values would lead a misguided Kyle from being a Texas cowboy to joining the Navy SEALs. During his survival of basic training in San Diego, Kyle meets his eventual wife Taya (Sienna Miller) and marries her right before shipping out to his first tour in Iraq. Kyle is tasked with being a sniper for the military and he takes his task to heart. Every time the enemy kills one of the soldiers under his watchful eye, he takes it personally. Kyle eventually becomes the deadliest sniper in U.S. military history and is constantly facing his enemy rival sniper, Mustafa (Sammy Sheik). Kyle returns home and it is apparent that he is not present, he functions best in the field of battle. He

cannot function until Mustafa is either dead or the war is over because he cannot stand having soldiers continue to be killed. Kyle eventually goes face to face one last time with Mustafa where he makes a kill shot. He calls Taya and tells her he can now come home because his mission is over. Kyle comes home and finds his new calling by helping recuperating veterans by taking them out shooting and bonding with them.

From the beginning of the film, Eastwood constructs masculinity in various ways. In an early scene, Kyle is watching through his scope a woman and her boy walking towards some Marines. A medium shot of the woman shows her giving the boy a grenade and expects him to use it instead of her. Boy is shot by Kyle, so she picks up the grenade and he shoots her as well. The whole scene Kyle whispers to himself saying not to use the grenade to the boy and woman. When he shoots both the boy and woman, Goat-Winston (Kyle Gallner) celebrates and says, "Shit yeah. Evil bitch!" A medium close-up on Kyle's face shows a look of disgust. This woman is portrayed in contrast to the un-masculine, which is being peaceable. She is depicted as being violent here (Connell, 2005, p. 67).

Later, a young Kyle (Cole Konis) and his dad, Wayne Kyle (Ben Reed) are hunting. Kyle kills a deer and Wayne is proud of him. However, Wayne gives the young Kyle grief for leaving his rifle in the dirt. Wayne tells young Kyle that he is a good shot and that he'll make a good hunter in the future. The next scene shows Kyle's younger brother, Jeff (Luke Sunshine) being beat up by a bully (Brandon Salgado Telis). The young Kyle steps in and saves Jeff by beating up the bully. The very next scene shows the Kyle family around the dinner table where Wayne talks to his family about sheep and how they cannot protect themselves because they are weak. He alludes that young Kyle is going to be a sheep dog that is a protector. He uses patriarchy by pulling out his belt and

threatening his kids that they better not be wolves, those who use violence to prey on the weak. The mother, Deby Kyle (Elise Robertson) then says “Frank” as if to be the calming or civilized partner in the marriage. Wayne continues to tell the kids that they have his permission to beat up on wolves (bully) and finish it. Masculinity portrays men with an “unlimited sense of courage, ambition and revenge” (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404).

Later in the film, Kyle is touring around Texas in the rodeo circuit. He is seen competing in a rodeo as a bareback horse rider, which could be seen as tough and manly in Texas. He ends up winning the rodeo. Kyle then tells his brother Jeff (Keir O'Donnell) about how he won a belt and that it should get his girlfriend, Sarah (Marnette Patterson) in the mood for sex. Kyle and Jeff return to Kyle's house and find Sarah in bed with a Cowboy (Jason Hall). Kyle proceeds to act tough and beat up the Cowboy and Sarah says, “You think because you are a cowboy because you rodeo, you're just a ranch hand.” The film portrays cowboys as being a status symbol for toughness. Kyle is portrayed as violent here, which is inherently masculine (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90).

Kyle decides that he wants to find another path, so he walks into a Navy recruitment office and he and the Navy Recruiter (Billy Miller) talk. They discuss about how Kyle is from Texas, is patriotic, and likes to fight, so he should join the “warrior elite” of the Navy SEALs. Kyle says to the recruiter that he is not like most men, he does not quit. Kyle is portrayed as patriotic and likes to fight, which are both constructs of masculinity in the military (McDonald, 2015, p. 238).

The next couple of scenes portray Navy SEAL basic training. Kyle is seen doing sit-ups with other soldiers being sprayed with water by Instructor Rolle (Leonard

Roberts). A medium close-up shows Kyle as his face is being sprayed by Rolle when the following dialogue happens:

Rolle: "You a quitter, boy?"

Kyle: "No, sir!"

Rolle: "Bullshit, you are fleet-meat. Don't turn away. Look up and take it. You're old as fuck. Did you join the Navy cause you had such a good time on Noah's Arc? How old are you?"

Kyle: "30, sir."

Rolle: "30! You fart dust and could've fathered half these boys. You think cause you had a pop-gun back in Texas you're cut out to be a SEAL?"

Kyle: "No, sir."

Navy Seal training continues to be portrayed and Rolle talks about finding warriors and getting the quitters out. The soldiers are sprayed with hoses while they do more physical training. Rolle make fun of the quitters after someone rings the bell, calling it quits. After another person rings the bell he says, "That's a quitter. If he quits here, he'll quit in battle. When shit gets hairy he can't step up. You get shot, he can't pull you out. We're gonna weed out the quitters and see if we can find a warrior or two." He then says, "Do you want me to call your momma to take your place. I am about to put on some Marvin Gaye and get in that ass." The warrior image is used here to exalt the Navy Seals as well as the brotherhood of passing though basic training as being masculine (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107).

Kyle and his fellow soldiers go into a bar to celebrate finishing basic training and one soldiers has a target painted on their back while the other soldiers play darts on it,

shows that he is tough to take the pain. Kyle goes and orders a drink at the bar and starts talking to Taya who had just fended off another guy. Taya portrays herself as a strong female in the following conversation with Kyle:

Taya: “What kind of pants does a girl have to wear to be left alone?”

Kyle: “Corduroy.”

Taya: “Is that how it is with you guys—suddenly single after three beers?”

Kyle: “Only thing that happens to me after three beers is a fourth.”

Taya: “That’s great. A real red-neck.”

Kyle: “I’m no redneck, I’m a Texan.”

Taya: “What’s the difference?”

Kyle: “We ride horses, they ride their cousins.”

Taya: “Are you kidding me? You’re a SEAL?”

Taya: “I know all about you guys. My sister was engaged to a SEAL.”

Taya: “You’re a bunch of arrogant, self-centered pricks who think you can lie and do whatever the fuck you want.” I’d never date a SEAL.

Kyle: “How can you say we’re self-centered? I’d lay down my life for my country.”

Taya: “Why?”

Kyle: “Cause it’s the greatest country on earth and I believe it’s worth protecting.

I’m sorry this guy hurt your sister but that’s not me. Nice talking to you.”

Taya: “Pretty egotistical of you to think you can protect us all, isn’t it Chris?”

Kyle: “Our instructors say our biggest enemies are ego, liquor, and women.”

Kyle and Taya head out into the parking lot and Taya begins to vomit. Kyle holds her hair up and she says that she is not going to sleep with him tonight. The masculine and feminine are portrayed here in contrast as Taya is the strong tough woman and Kyle is the sweet gentleman (Adams, 2008, p. 8).

Taya and Kyle go on a date at the carnival on the pier. Kyle wins a big bear for his marksmanship and gives it to Taya. She asks if he wanted to be a soldier and he tells her that he wanted to be a cowboy but felt he had a higher purpose. She asks him, “So you started rescuing girls from bars?” alluding to how they met. He brushes off the question and says that he rescued the bar from her. Taya is a very feminine girl who is strong and can take care of herself—she does not have trouble telling people what she thinks. Kyle and Taya have sex, but she is just in her underwear, which is not as sexualized. Taya reveals that she is pregnant, and Kyle decides the right thing to do is to marry her. At their wedding reception, the couple is announced as Mr. and Mrs. Kyle. Taya is presented as a love interest for the film, but is not there for sexual appeal (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4).

Kyle is watching TV and he sees the World Trade Center towers on fire and a close-up of his face reveals he is outraged which is evident in his eyes. When the soldiers get the call to go to war and they are excited and celebrate with shots, which shows their sense of nationalism and pride in protecting their country (McDonald, 2015, p. 238). Kyle’s heart is racing with excitement or fear, neither is obvious to the audience. During his first tour, Kyle is nicknamed Tex. Sexual talk is prevalent amongst the soldiers while on tour. The film flashes back to when Kyle killed the woman and boy with the grenade, and he talks about it with Biggles (Jake McDorman):

Biggles: “Talk to me, man. Did you pop your cherry?”

Kyle: “This kid didn’t even have hair on his balls and his mom hands him a grenade—sends him running off to kill Marines.”

Biggles: “You saw his balls?”

Kyle: “It was evil, man. That was hate like I’ve never seen it before.”

Biggles: “That kid could’ve taken out ten Marines.”

Kyle: “I know.”

Biggles: “You did your job. End of fuckin story.”

Kyle: “It’s just not how you imagine the first one going down.”

Biggles: “How about the other ones? What about the other kills?”

Kyle: “The other ones—were righteous. Like God was blowing on my bullets.”

During the dialogue, a medium close-up reveals that Kyle is having a hard time coming to terms with killing a boy and his mom. He seems sad about it. Kyle is trying to be rational and in control of his emotions, which are both masculine traits (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

Throughout his first tour, Kyle calls Taya on the satellite phone while he is out on missions. He tells her “I miss you really bad.” During one phone call, Taya hears gunshots and Kyle is not responding. A medium shot reveals Taya hysterically crying because she thinks Kyle just was shot. Taya exhibits emotion, which is in contrast to the masculine reaction of bearing their emotion discretely (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). Sexual talk is used again when a commanding officer says that they are “going to need trackers on it if we are humping money.”

During one mission, the soldiers get pinned down by Mustafa, the enemy sniper while one of their informants is being killed. Kyle decides that he will be a hero by putting himself in play and reveal his position to help Sheikh Al-Obodi (Navid Negahban) and his son, Omar (Jad Mhidi Senhaji) who are being killed by The Butcher (Mido Hamada). Kyle gets pinned down by Mustafa and keeps trying to help but to no avail. Kyle swears in frustration of not being to help. After he gets rescued by his soldiers, he then wants to get a squad together to pursue The Butcher, once again trying to be the hero. Kyle is grounded from combat after being pinned down. A medium shot shows him exercising and deadlifting what appears to be a lot of weight. His face reveals that he is very mad. Kyle is aggressive and wanting revenge, which are both masculine traits (Connell, 2005, p. 68; Gürkan, 2017, p. 404).

Throughout the film, Kyle keeps telling Taya how much he loves her and how beautiful she is. Kyle returns home and Kyle tells Taya “It’ll be ok, I promise,” to calm her nerves. She replies, “Why are you so good to me?” This exhibits the lack of gender equality in the film, instead instills a patriarchal and male-centered socio-cultural society (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107).

Kyle and Taya visit the doctor’s office for a pregnancy checkup and Kyle seems to be having a hard time with all of the noises in the office and is sweating profusely. The doctor (Belle Angel) then starts asking him questions about his health:

Doctor: “How about you Mr. Kyle? How’re you feeling?”

Kyle: “Good. Doing good.”

Doctor: “I imagine you’re still decompressing.”

Kyle: “Not really.”

Taya: "Well, this is the first time we left the house."

Kyle: "I'm just happy to be home."

Doctor: "Here, slip this on for me."

Doctor: "Are you a smoker? Do you drink?"

Kyle: "Only when I'm thirsty."

Doctor: "170 over 110."

Taya: "Jesus Christ Chris..."

Kyle: "Is that high?"

Doctor: "Not if you just had 14 cups of coffee. But for someone who is sitting down..."

Kyle: "I'll look into it. Thanks doc"

Kyle says that he is fine and denies that there is anything wrong with his health. Kyle is portrayed here as unemotional, simply brushing off any problems he may have with his health (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

The very next scene, Kyle and Taya are driving home. Kyle gets mad at Taya for not being supportive of him not thinking there is anything wrong with him. She tells him that he has barely been present. He is not talking and is acting like everything is ok with him. Kyle responds that he should not be home because there is a war out there. He feels like no one is talking about it and he is not helping because he is home in sunny San Diego. He is not useful being home with her. A medium close-up reveals that Taya is upset and sad about his comments. Kyle is uncivilized at home and cannot function unless he is in the battlefield (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49). Kyle decides to go out on another tour in Iraq and Taya says to him, "You have to make it back to us...ok?" She basically

says that her and the baby cannot function without him, so he has to stay alive. This demonstrates a patriarchal type of masculinity in that women need men to survive (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13).

On his way back to Iraq, Kyle sees his brother Jeff. Kyle is excited to see him, and Jeff has this overall presence of being tired. Jeff tells Kyle that he is a legend and that Kyle is his hero. Kyle asks where he is going, and he says that he is tired, so he is going home. Kyle tells him that their dad is proud of him and Jeff responds with “fuck this place” and Kyle reacts with rage to what his brother said. This scene portrays cowardice as un-masculine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80).

Kyle returns home from another tour and he seems like he is longing to be back in the battlefield. In response Taya says to Kyle, “We’ve got our whole lives right? Even you are here, I see you, I feel you, but you’re not here. You’re my husband, the father of my children, but they are the ones that pull you back.” Kyle is still unable to be civilized and can only function on the battlefield (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

Kyle and his team go out on a mission and are shot at and hurt. They regroup and the commanding officer tell them that it’s their decision to go back if they want. “We’re going back out,” says Kyle and the rest of them say “Fuck yeah!” Music makes it seem cool and they destroy the enemy. Masculinity is strengthened through brotherhood on the battlefield and through efficiency and competitiveness in war (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109).

Kyle and Mark Lee (Luke Grimes) are talking after a briefing and Lee expresses doubt about what they are doing. Kyle says his mantra of “God, family, country” and Lee says that he feels like when he was a kid in Oregon. They had an electric fence and they would see who could hold on as long as they could. He feels like he has no feelings, he is

just numb. Lee tells Kyle that he just wants to believe in what they are doing again, and Kyle tells him that they are protecting their homes from the enemy and pumps Lee up again. Lee ends up shot and killed a few scenes later. A medium close-up of Kyle at Lee's funeral shows him without emotion, standing at attention with his sunglasses on. Taya asks Kyle what he thought of Lee's letter and he says that his letter killed him because he was weak and doubted the war effort. Cowardice has no place in the battlefield, as courage is glorified and fear is demonized (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 161).

Kyle goes and visits an injured Marine in the hospital. Kyle says to the Marine that his fiancé is lucky to have him, "all 2 inches of you." Kyle tells him that he is going out again to give the enemy what they deserve, to pay them back for hurting the Marine.

Kyle tells Taya that he wants to do another tour and she gets upset. She asks why he does it and he says, "I do it to protect you because I have to serve my country." She responds, "Your kids don't have a father and I need you to be human again. I need you here." Taya's character goes from strong female character at the beginning to not being able to function without Kyle around. This exhibits the social patriarchy of the film as well as the need for nationalism in masculinity (McDonald, 2015; Kiliçarslan, 2009). There are no women soldiers, except for an extra in one scene during a military briefing and could easily be missed. Women are all seen only as mothers or wives.

During his last tour, Kyle is on top of a building with other soldiers. He can tell where Mustafa is and wants to kill him. The other soldiers tell Kyle that the shot is more than a mile out and it is impossible. A medium close-up on Kyle's face shows that he does not care, and he takes the shot and it is successful. Although he knew it would put

the soldiers in danger, he wanted to be the hero and kill Mustafa. Kyle then calls Taya. He starts crying and tells her that he is ready to come home. Kyle exhibits aggression, which is inherently masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 68) and then he crosses over from being uncivilized to being civilized in wanting to come home and through exhibiting emotion (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

Kyle returns home but goes to a bar instead. He gets a call from Taya while at a bar and he starts crying. He says that he came there because he needed a minute before he came home. Kyle exhibits emotion, which is typically depicted as inferior because it is inherently feminine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). The next scene shows Kyle at home during a BBQ and he is struggling to cope with being home. He sees his son playing with their dog and the dog starts to play fight. Kyle pulls out his gun and goes over to rip the dog away from his son. A close-up on his face reveals a crazy look in his eyes and he is sweating. Taya yells at him and he snaps out of it. Kyle exhibits PTSD and having a disability is portrayed as a 'feminizing obstacle' (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89).

The next scene, Kyle is talking to a VA Doctor (Robert Clotworthy) and Kyle tells him about the incident at the BBQ. The doctor asks if he is worried about what he did, and Kyle shrugs it off like it was nothing. Kyle then talks about how he is haunted by the guys he could not save. Basically, shows that he is manly, and he does not have PTSD when he clearly does. This shows Kyle as stoic and bearing his mental wounds discretely (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). Additionally, he is overcoming his disability, which is masculine (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89). The next scene shows Kyle taking injured veterans out to go shooting. The VA doctor gave him this endeavor to help him have a purpose because there are veterans that need saving here in the U.S. One veteran named Wynn (Jacob

Schick) while shooting says “Bulls-eye, boy! Damn, if that don’t feel like I got my balls back.” A later scene shows Kyle taking his son out hunting just like he and his dad did when he was a kid.

### ***The Hurt Locker (2008)***

*The Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal follows one of the Army bomb squads during their tour in Iraq. After the death of their commander, Sergeant Matt Thompson (Guy Pearce), Sergeant J.T. Sanborn (Anthony Mackie) and Specialist Owen Eldridge (Brian Geraghty) are faced with the challenge of being under their new erratic commander, Staff Sergeant William James (Jeremy Renner). From their first mission together, Sanborn and Eldridge do not see eye to eye with James’ style of leadership. They see him as a loose cannon with his unconventional ways of communication while defusing bombs. James is portrayed as a soldier addicted to war and the adrenaline that accompanies it. This explains his erratic behavior while conducting the duties of arguably the most dangerous job in the Army. Throughout the film, Sanborn is at odds with James and his tactics while trying to understand who he is and why he does things the ways he does. Meanwhile, Eldridge is dealing with the death of Thompson and is slowly dealing with the thought that he is going to die in the battlefield. The film chronicles the entire tour of Sanborn, Eldridge, and James as they deal with the consequences of war both emotionally and physically. Eventually, James is sent home and it is obvious that he cannot function in a average life with his wife and child, so he returns to the battlefield where he belongs.

From the beginning of the film, Bigelow constructs masculinity in various ways. The very first scene shows Thompson, Sanborn, and Eldridge on a mission to diffuse a

bomb. They are using a robot to diffuse the bomb and they all seem to enjoy each other's company, which shows comradery. Comradery is a common construct of masculinity (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49). While looking at the camera screen of the robot, the following sexual talk happens while laughing with each other:

Thompson: "Push it in."

Sanborn: "I can't get it inside."

Thompson: "Pretend it's your dick."

Sanborn: "I'm pretending it's your dick."

They realize that there is a bomb inside and they send the robot back with a carriage full of C-4 to blow it up. The carriage breaks in the process so Thompson decides that he has to put on the bomb suit and blow it up himself. He seems scared. While he is walking down to the bomb, he is breathing heavily as if to keep calm. He is also joking with Sanborn as he walks down to keep calm. Medium close-ups on Sanborn show that they are on edge and scared as well. The music creates an overall atmosphere for the audience that they should be on edge as well. Eldridge notices that someone has a cell phone and he runs at him with Sanborn. Sanborn yells at Eldridge to shoot the guy, but he does not have a clear shot. The music is now eery as if something bad is about to happen. The man blows the bomb up and Thompson is killed. These soldiers demonstrate that "a man must show that he is rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done" (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

The very next scene shows Sanborn in a room with a bunch of white boxes. He is told to put Thompson's dog tag somewhere in the box. There are a lot of white boxes. A medium close-up reveals that Sanborn is in a state of shock. He has a blank look in his

eyes and his eyebrows do not move. He seems emotionless. All he can do is stare at Thompson's white box.

Sanborn goes to meet James for the first time and knocks on his barracks door. James is smoking and listening to heavy metal music. The two talk and James asks Sanborn to help him remove the plywood over the window. Sanborn tells him that that is not a good idea because they often get mortar shelled during the night. James disregards it and says that the plywood would do little to nothing to block the shells from coming in. This demonstrates that James is irresponsible and a risk-taker, which fall under the *Essentialist* definition of masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

During their first mission together, James comes off as reckless. He has little regard for bomb squad protocol. James walks down the street without cover and goes out of sight of Sanborn who is supposed to support him. Sanborn yells at him through the radio and James does not answer. James finds a bomb and comes back to put on the suit. He decides that he does not want to wear the bomb gloves and Sanborn protests, but James disregards him. As James is walking back to the bomb site, a man is driving a car really fast at him. He yells at the driver to back up and the driver does not. He then pulls out his handgun and points it at the driver. While James is doing this, Sanborn yells at him to stop. The man eventually drives away and Sanborn chastises James. James laughs at what would be a dangerous situation as if it was nothing at all. He seems desensitized. Sanborn asks him if the man was an insurgent and James answers laughing, "Well if he isn't an insurgent, he is now." James then returns to the bomb and diffuses it. James sees the bombmaker watching in the background and James smiles at him with the detached

bomb parts in his hand. James has a look of triumph. Once again James exhibits the characteristics of the *Essentialist* definition of masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

The next scene shows Eldridge playing a shooting video game when Colonel John Cambridge (Christian Camargo) comes up to him. Cambridge is the company psychiatrist. Cambridge asks Eldridge how he is doing. He replies saying that he is being all that he can be, but that he has a problem with that statement. He feels that all he can be is dead. A medium close-up shows that he is in a heightened state of emotion with his eyes wide. He seems very mad by the tone of his voice. Cambridge tells him that he needs to stop focusing on death. Eldridge responds by talking about how Thompson was alive and then he was dead while showing the same emotion and cocking his gun back and forth. A close-up on Cambridge's face shows no emotion. Eldridge is exhibiting symptoms of PTSD from Thompson's death and this would typically be seen as subordinate in constructs of masculinity (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109); however, the filmmaker does not portray Eldridge in that way.

Later in the film, the bomb squad is called on a mission at the United Nations building. There is a bomb in a parked car next to the building. They arrive and the U.N. guard tells them where the car is and how he knows that there is a bomb. James responds by telling the guard, "Why don't you go to the car and peak inside and tell me what you see. Just kidding." The guard looks scared and James seems perfectly calm. James puts on the suit and heads down to the car. While walking down to the car, people start shooting at James, yet he does not seem fazed. The bullets hit the car and start a fire. James goes and gets a fire extinguisher and puts out the fire while all the other soldiers are running to kill the people shooting at them. He seems calm as if he is putting out a

fire at home. James gets the car open and sees how many explosives the car has. A medium shot shows him with a surprised look, and he drops his tool in disbelief. James takes off the bomb suit and says to himself calmly that if he is going to die today, better do it comfortably, referring to the suit being hot. While trying to figure out how to diffuse the bomb, James swears at the bombmaker to himself. During this scene, Eldridge and Sanborn are covering James as he diffuses the bomb. Sanborn is calm, giving James an update as he gives one back to Sanborn. Meanwhile, Eldridge is sweating and has a look of fear over his eyes as he sees more and more people watching them from above. James takes off his headset because it was annoying him and proceeds to finish the job. He finds the piece he needs to remove and yells to Sanborn that he has diffused the bomb. James walks back to the Hummer. He gets a bottle of water, drinks some and throws the rest on his sweaty head. While doing that he yells out in celebration. He then smokes a cigarette and says, “that was good!” During this time, a medium close-up shows Eldridge carrying the bomb suit back to the Hummer with a look of terror on his face. As James is sitting in the Hummer smoking his cigarette, Sanborn walks up and punches him in the face with a calm look and tells him to never turn his headset off again. James retrieves his cigarette and starts smoking again as if nothing happened. Both Sanborn and James exhibit four of the five characteristics of *Essentialist* masculinity in this scene: risk-taking, responsibility, irresponsibility, and aggression (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

The very next scene shows Colonel Reed (David Morse) approaching the Hummer and asking for James. Reed has a look of amazement as he talks to James and James seems a little self-conscious in the following conversation with Reed:

Reed: “You were the guy in the flaming car, Sergeant James?”

James: "Yes, sir."

Reed: "Well hot damn, that was some hot shit. You're a wild man, you know that?" He's a wild man, you know that? Let me shake your hand.

James: "Thank you, sir."

Reed: "How many bombs have you disarmed, Sergeant?"

James: "Hell, I'm not sure. A lot."

Reed: "Sergeant, I asked you a question."

James: "Eight hundred seventy-three. Counting today, Sir."

Reed: "Holy shit. eight hundred and seventy fucking three bombs. God damn. That must be a record. So tell me, what's the best way to go about disarming one of these things?"

James: "The way you don't die."

Reed: "Good one, spoken like a wild man."

The warrior image of James is exalted and glorified by Reed, which is a common construct of masculinity (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107; Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5).

Another scene with Cambridge and Eldridge reveals that Eldridge is still scared of dying and expects to in the battlefield. Eldridge invites Cambridge to come out sometime with him to see how bad it is being with James. Eldridge is once again exhibiting symptoms of PTSD from Thompson's death, but it is not being portrayed in a negative light like it would in typical constructs of masculinity (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13; Meeuf, 2009, p. 89).

In a later scene, the bomb squad is driving through the desert and they see some contractors with a flat tire. They drive over to help, but immediately get into a firefight

with some enemies while helping the contractors. A medium shot of the contractor team leader (Ralph Fiennes) and Contractor Chris (Barrie Rice) show them fighting similar to a Rambo movie with their AK-47s. A medium close-up on the team leader shows that he is having fun shooting at people and laughing about it. The warrior image is presented here as the soldiers and contractors create a sense of manliness and glorify the battlefield experience while having fun killing the enemy (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107). Most of the enemy are killed except for an enemy sniper. The team leader is trying to kill the enemy sniper but is killed himself. James and Sanborn immediately take his place. They run out of ammo and James asks Eldridge to get the ammo off of the dead body of the team leader. The ammo is covered in blood and James does not seem to care; however, it jams the gun. James asks Eldridge to clean the blood off and a close-up reveals that Eldridge is having a hard time. He seems scared and has a look of despair in his eyes. In comparison, Sanborn and James are calm. James tells Eldridge to spit and rub that “cooch” referring to the water and cleaning the blood off of the bullets, which is sexual. James tries to calm down Eldridge by telling him he is going to be ok. He then tells Eldridge that he is going to keep him safe and going to kill these bastards. Eldridge is painted as scared in the line of fire and James is courageous. Courage is a quality of manliness and fear is the opposite of courage and is feminized in society (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 161). Although Eldridge is scared, he is able to overcome it, which is masculine (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89). Additionally, James is not worried about his own situation and instead, worrying about a fellow soldier, which depicts him as stoic (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

The next scene cuts to Sanborn and James wrestling in their barracks. The music is heavy metal, which makes it seem exciting. Sanborn eggs on James to hit him in the

stomach and grunts at him. James punches him and Sanborn goes down with a grunt. James tells him that is what you get for punching your commanding officer. The warrior image is present here in showing their masculinity through their toughness (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18; Knee, 2016, p. 149). Sanborn leaves—Eldridge and James take have a drink and James says to Eldridge that he fought well. Eldridge says to James that he is not very good with people, but he is a hell of a warrior. They both sit down, and Eldridge admits that he was scared out in the field today. James responds by saying that everyone is a coward at some time in their lives. Cowardice is depicted as acceptable at times, which is in contrast to it being feminizing or inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80).

They then proceed to talk about women. Up to this point in the film, there is no reference to, or one shown in the film. Here is the conversation:

James: “That’s my son. A real tough little bastard. Like me.”

Sanborn: “So you’re married?”

James: “Well, she was my girlfriend, we had a baby, then she became my wife, then we got divorced. I thought we got divorced. But she’s still in the house, and she says we’re still together. So, I don’t know. What does that make her?”

Sanborn: “Dumb, to be with you?”

James: “She ain’t dumb. She’s loyal.”

Sanborn: “My problem is the one girl who I like keeps talking about Babies.

Babies. Babies.”

James: “Give her your sperm.”

Sanborn: “I know when I am ready. I’m not ready.”

During the following conversation, James seems indifferent to his marriage, but defends his wife as loyal. Meanwhile, Sanborn seems scared of having a family. Women in this conversation are depicted as civilized (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49) as well as their culture of wanting children to be overall inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42).

Later in the same scene, Sanborn says to James, “I owe you a punch mother fucker.” Sanborn makes James take off his shirt and they draw a target on his stomach. He punches James in the stomach and James falls to the ground. He gets up and says, “is that all you’ve got?” to Sanborn. Sanborn lifts up his shirt egging James on to come fight him. A medium shot shows them grunting like they are tough and warrior like. James then calls Sanborn a “bitch” and tackles him. He pins Sanborn to the ground and rides him like a bull. Sanborn is getting mad and yelling for James to get off of him. A medium close-up shows James’ muscles with his shirt off and him laughing. This scene demonstrates that “physical fitness, ability and efficiency, and competitiveness” are major aspects to male hegemonic masculinity (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109) as well as the sculpted male body (Knee, 2016, p. 149).

The bomb squad is called on another mission and Cambridge accompanies them. They end up going into a building, which turns out to be a bombmaking factory. Upon searching the building, they find a dead boy who was being turned into a body bomb. James recognizes the boy as his friend Beckham who sells DVDs. A medium close-up shows James emotional about seeing his friend Beckham as a body bomb. He seems to want to vomit and is appalled. James decides to disarm the body, but he cannot get himself to blow it up. Instead, he covers the body up and carries it out. Outside the building, Cambridge is trying to get civilians to move away from their Hummer and he

gets blown up by a bomb. A close-up on Eldridge shows him crying and having trouble breathing at what he just witnessed. Eldridge had been the one who invited Cambridge to come out on a mission with them. The expression of emotion is portrayed as average for anyone in such a situation by both James and Eldridge when it is typically seen as inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42).

In response to the enemy killing his friend Beckham, James goes off the rails. He sneaks off the base in search of his friends' killers. He ends up in a house and a woman shoos him out of her house, yelling at him and throwing pots at him. James returns to the base and comes to the gate. He tells the soldier that he has been at a whorehouse. The soldier says he'll let him in if James tells him where the whorehouse is. James is depicted once again as the *Essentialist* type of masculinity in that he is a risk-taker, aggressive, and irresponsible (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

Towards the end of the film, there is a large suicide bombing and James decides that he wants to find the perpetrators of it. Sanborn does not want to go, but James says "You can't say no to me. They are looking at us right now and are laughing at us." James wants to be the hero, and he is taking his fellow soldiers with him. They end up going after the enemy and Eldridge ends up getting captured and shot. James is depicted as irresponsible, which is a masculine trait (Connell, 2005, p. 68). After they return to base, James goes into the shower with full gear on. A medium close-up shows James in the shower after they save Eldridge and he is seen as emotional, but then he becomes angry and starts kicking and punching the walls. The emotion depicted is not seen as inferior as it typically would be (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42); however, he then becomes

angry, which would fall under the *Normative* definition of masculinity where males do not deal in ‘sissy stuff’ (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

On the next mission, James is faced with disarming a man with a bomb on him. He yells at him that it would be easier to just shoot him so he could disarm the bomb. The man with the bomb on him says that he does not want to die because he has a family. He does not want James to leave and a medium close-up on the man’s eyes show him being emotional and crying. James yells to the man that he cannot save him and that he is sorry. James’ voice cracks with emotion as he keeps saying sorry. He yells “I’m sorry” on last time with a strong voice and runs off. The bomb goes off and a close-up on James shows him breathing on his back with blood coming out of his nose. This is similar to the prior scene where James exhibits emotion, but regains control and does not deal in ‘sissy stuff’ (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

The next scene shows James and Sanborn talking on the drive back to the base. James asks if Sanborn is ok and he says no. Sanborn has a tone of voice that is as if he has hit rock bottom. He just seems sad and at his wits end. He says that he does not want to die out here. Two inches and he could have his throat cut by shrapnel. Sanborn just says that he is done. Sanborn then asks James how he does it being fearless and reckless. James responds with that he just goes out and does not think about it. They both have blood on their faces. James throughout the whole conversation says that Sanborn is not going to die in the battlefield, and he has a calm demeanor about it. Sanborn is not bearing his agony discreetly, which is in contrast to James who is worrying about his fellow soldier (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

The next scene shows James in a grocery store with his wife, Connie James (Evangeline Lilly). She asks him to go get some cereal. A medium shot shows him oddly staring at all of the options of cereal as if he is lost and cannot make a decision. Then there is a montage of him cleaning out his gutters at his house and him sitting in front of a blank TV screen. It then cuts to him cooking with Connie. He tells her about how someone killed 50 people with a bomb in Iraq and he says that they need more bomb techs. Connie does not respond and asks him to chop up some carrots. After the montage at home is over, the film cuts to him walking off of a military plane. The music is blasting, and it is exciting music. James has a look of enjoyment as he walks off of the plane and then cuts to him with the same look walking in the bomb suit. When he was at home, he had a look of discontent as if he was not entirely happy there. This demonstrates that women are civilized and men are not. Male soldiers return home from war to die (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

### ***Green Zone* (2010)**

*Green Zone*, directed by Paul Greengrass and written by Brian Helgeland, is a film that follows Miller (Matt Damon) in his pursuit of the truth about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq. The film follows him through his third site where he and his soldiers find no WMDs. He then questions his commanding officers about the intel on the WMD sites and everyone assures him that the intel is good even though he has yet to find any WMDs. Through the help of a local Iraqi, Freddy (Khalid Abdalla), Miller begins his pursuit of uncovering the truth about the WMD intel. He finds out that Al Rawi (Igal Naor) is the key to him finding out where the intel came from and pursues him for the rest of the film. With the help of CIA agent, Martin Brown (Brendan Gleeson), Miller is

able to uncover the truth. However, Clark Poundstone (Greg Kinnear), a government official from the Pentagon, does everything in his power to make sure that Brown and Miller do not find the truth. Miller ends up getting ahead of the Proudstone and sets up a meeting with Rawi to talk about what really happened. Proudstone finds out about the meeting and sends special forces soldier Briggs (Jason Isaacs) to stop him. Briggs and his soldiers lead an all at attack on the building where the meeting with Rawi was happening. Rawi escapes and Miller follows him. Briggs follows and the three of them end up crossing paths ending in death. Miller ends up uncovering the truth and does the moral thing by letting the world know the truth.

From the beginning of the film, Greengrass constructs masculinity in various ways. The film opens up to Baghdad being bombed by the U.S. military and a house being cleared out of its people and things. The audience sees Rawi barking orders at his men as they are fleeing the house. The audience only sees men who seem calm as they carry out the orders. There are screams of women and children; however, none are seen in frame. Rawi continues to lead his men as they leave the house carrying their important items. This scene depicts Rawi in contrast to the women who are screaming, showing that he is not a women, but a man (Horrocks, 1995, p. 33).

The next scene shows Miller and his convoy driving into Baghdad. Miller seems to be the leader and is telling the soldiers what they are going to do when they get to the location. Medium close-ups on the soldiers show them as alert including Miller. They arrive at their destination and there is gunfire. A medium shot shows a black man screaming from a wound as the medical team is working on him. Miller walks over and asks who is in charge. Miller finds out and starts yelling at James Brown (Troy Brown) at

the site for having a battle here. Brown tells Miller that he does not have enough men to setup even a perimeter for Miller's team to safely check out the WMD site. Miller with earnestness in his voice, tells Brown that this is a WMD site and he and his men need to get in there. Brown tells Miller that there is a sniper and should not go into the site. Miller immediately takes control and tells his men that these soldiers, referring to Brown's men, cannot do their job right and that they need to go in and check on the WMD site. Miller is calm as he barks orders to his soldiers on what they are going to do. Wilkins (Jerry Della Salla) pulls Miller aside and says to him that Brown's men have not done "dick" to secure this area and tells Miller not to go on the reconnaissance mission. Miller responds and tells him that he does not know what is over there and that he needs to go in right now. Miller says it calmly and with earnestness in his voice. Miller tells Wilkins to get a second team ready to help. Miller continues to bark orders and rounds up the troops. The scene cuts and Miller asks a soldier where the sniper is, and his team immediately goes to work firing at the sniper. The music is subtle but exciting. There are sounds of gunfire and civilians screaming. The camera follows Miller as he goes through the firefight and keeps running around to each of his soldiers telling them what to do. He gives them orders and they follow. The music gets louder and more exciting. The soldiers are running through more of the area to get closer to the sniper. They stop within range of the sniper and Miller decides to be the bait and draw out the sniper. His men kill the sniper. A close-up on his face show him as calm and stoic. He keeps yelling orders as they run towards the WMD site. Miller is depicted as masculine because he is "rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done" (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

Women are mainly journalists in the film and there is a fair amount of them. The main journalists, Lawrie Dayne (Amy Ryan) talks with Proudstone and she tells him she wants to talk to the source on the WMD sites pressing him for information. He brushes her off. Shows that women are civilized (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49), but subordinate to men (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 12).

Later in the film, Miller and his team return to the base and a medium close-up on Miller's face shows a look of concern seen through his eyes. He is frustrated because he has not found any WMDs on his last three missions. On the base, there is a woman in the communication room and there are two other women during a briefing by Colonel Jonathan Vaught (Allen Vaught), which would fall in line with demographic figures of the time. During the briefing, Miller asks if the intel is accurate and the Military Intel 2 Star (Patrick St. Esprit) says that it is solid. Miller continues to question them about the intel. He says that there is nothing there and he seems mad and frustrated. Colonel Bethel (Michael O'Neill) tells him that the intel is accurate. A medium close-up shows that Miller seems disappointed. Miller is showing that he is indomitable and rational, which are both masculine characteristics (Schwalbe, 1996, p 18).

On their next mission, Miller and his team get stopped on the street by a crowd. Miller sends a few soldiers forward to clear the traffic and they get into a fight with some civilians. Miller sees this and immediately comes out and yells at his soldiers. They have excuses and he tells them to get the fuck back to their vehicles. Miller is furious and show sit through his eyes. A close-up shows him concerned as they drive away. Miller is in control and gets the job done, which are masculine characteristics (Schwalbe, 1996, p 18).

In an intel briefing, there is a woman present with CIA and other government officials. Brown questions Proudstone's plan to settle things in Iraq. Proudstone calls out Brown and they shout at each other. Brown looks concerned because of the plan. There is an obvious rivalry between these two characters. Competition is a common construct of masculinity and it is exhibited here (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109).

Miller and his soldiers are stopped once again. Miller is called over to a situation with a civilian that had been pinned to the ground. The civilian, Freddy is yelling because he is mad about being pinned down. Miller is calm while talking to Freddy. Freddy tells him about the meeting Rawi and other Iraqi military is having. Miller is calm and believes him. Wilkins once again questions Miller asking him if he actually believes Freddy. Miller gets all of his soldiers together to discuss the plan to go to the meeting where Rawi and others are. Wilkins tells Damon that their mission is here digging holes. Miller says he wants to actually do something. Miller's soldiers question him about the intel, and he says that we do not know if we are going into an ambush. He tells the soldiers to get their fucking game face on and to roll. He seems unemotional and a leader while telling them what they are going to do. He then says "hooa" and the soldiers repeat it back. Miller is ambitious and wants to get the job done, which are masculine characteristics (Schwalbe, 1996, p 18).

The film cuts back to the meeting with Rawi. The other military officials are fighting with each other over what they should do with the Americans. Rawi waits, then calms them down and talks some sense into them. He seems calm as he explains what needs to be done. Miller and his team are waiting outside of the meeting they stop people as they come out. The music is fast and loud. The soldiers yell at the people as they

surround the car. The soldiers break into the house and there are women and children. Miller is yelling orders as they search the house. Miller goes into the basement and is fired at, but he is calm during it. The music speeds up and ends. Miller is calm. During the firefight, Miller kills one man and the body is spewing blood. Upstairs, Sanaa (Soumaya Akaaboune) is furious with the soldiers, which is depicted through a medium shot and in her face. The other women and children are screaming and crying. Miller tells the soldiers that none of the people upstairs can leave the room because there is a body. The soldiers are interrogating Qasim (Muayad Ali) and the wailing from the woman and children in the other room is loud. Miller yells after he finds out who they are interrogating and tells his soldiers to come with him. Miller is in control, ambitious, and is getting the job done, which are all masculine traits (Schwalbe, 1996, p 18).

Later in the film, Miller and his soldiers are negotiating with Qasim, when Briggs up and takes Qasim away. Miller yells at Briggs and Briggs tells him that this is above his pay grade. Briggs walks away but finds out that Qasim is missing a book. Miller refuses to give Briggs the book, so Briggs punches him in the nose. Miller and Briggs wrestle and the other soldiers start a big brawl. Briggs pins Miller to the ground and rips open his uniform to find the book. Miller spits and has a bloody nose. Briggs leaves and Miller chases after Freddy who has the book. Miller and Briggs are competitive (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109) and aggressive (Connell, 2005, p. 68), which are both characteristics of masculinity. The music is exciting as they go in pursuit. Miller yells orders as they go after Freddy. They catch Freddy and Damon yells at him asking what the fuck he was doing. Freddy yells back at him and tells him what else he has to do to get Miller to trust him. Miller accidentally pulls Freddy's prosthetic leg off and then gives it back to him.

The audience learns that he lost his leg in Iran in 1987 and that he is trying to help the Americans because he wants to help his country. Freddy has a look of compassion on his face and also very emotional. Miller is aggressive in his approach to Freddy, which is inherently masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

Dayne approaches Proudstone and asks him for help. She tells him that if he cannot help her, she will find someone who can. Later, Miller and his soldiers go into the Republican Palace and there are women in bikinis at the pool. The two soldiers and Miller look at the women and ask if there is time to work on them. They then ask if they can have a beer and they say no. Dayne asks Miller if it is not weird that they keep coming up empty on the WMDs. Dayne seems sober and intelligent. The women here are used for sex appeal (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4) and portrayed as equal in the case of Dayne, which is in contrast to masculine war films (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4).

Proudstone comes in on the interrogation of the Qasim. A medium close-up on Qasim shows he is sweating and crying. Briggs grabs Qasim's throat and tells him that Qasim needs to tell him where Rawi is. Briggs tells Qasim that he is going to tell Briggs where Rawi is. Qasim tells Briggs the information where to find Rawi is in his book. Briggs is portrayed as aggressive, which is masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 68). Miller meets with Brown and tells Brown that he came here to help his country and find WMDs. He has not found shit. Miller raises his voice while saying that and has a look of anger. Proudstone comes in with a cocky look on his face and tells Brown that he and his team are shut down. Brown and Proudstone are portrayed as competitive, which is inherently masculine (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Miller and Freddy go on a mission to talk with

Qasim. They first meet with another prisoner and that prisoner is scared, bloody, and breathing heavily. They then get to see Qasim and he is bloody and barely breathing. Miller yells for a medic and Qasim says one word but seems to be barely alive. What looks like a local Iraqi but a U.S. asset with a ski mask on goes into safe house and enters firing his weapon. He shoots everyone with a lot of violence. Violence is a major construct of masculinity (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90). Miller asks where Rawi is to the last person alive and then kills him at point blank. The music is fast and exciting. Miller is depicted as in control and ambitious, which are both inherently masculine (Schwalbe, 1996, p 18).

Miller needs to find out more information about the WMDs, so he goes to Dayne. Dayne tells him that she got her information from a reliable source named Magellan, but she has never met him. Miller gets mad at her and asks how she knew the intel was correct. He yells at her with a look of earnestness in his eyes asking if she had ever even gone to Magellan's locations because there is nothing there. Miller presses Dayne more and she admits that she was called by a government official (Proudstone) and was handed the intel. Miller raises his voice again saying that you did not even see if the intel was good. Dayne starts to get defensive in her voice, but also quivers. She defends herself and makes the excuse that the source was a government official, so she trusted him. He gave her no reason to not trust him. Dayne is portrayed at first as an equal to Miller, which is in contrast to typical masculine constructs (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4) to then subordinate to him, which falls in line with typical masculine constructs (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109).

There are women working in the CIA when Miller talks to Brown. Miller tells Brown with earnestness in his voice that he needs to know where the next safe house is. The music becomes exciting and Miller and his soldiers head to the safehouse. The same guy with the ski mask goes and violently kills more men. He is about to kill another man as he looks for Rawi and the music is exciting. A blonde soldier comes out of the shadows and kills the ski mask guy. Miller barks orders at his team. Freddy questions Miller and Miller tells him to just do his job. The guy they saved goes to Rawi and tells him Miller wants to meet with him. Rawi just sits there blank faced as he finds out that the Americans killed Qasim. Miller is once again portrayed as “rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done” (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

Back at the Republican Palace, there are people eating lunch and there are a lot of women in government roles. Briggs calls Proudstone and tells him that his local asset is down. Briggs goes into the command center and starts barking orders. He seems determined and stoic. Briggs, with a look of determination, runs toward the chopper. He barks out orders and sounds calm. The music is exciting. Miller looks at the checkpoint where he is to meet Rawi and he calmly tells his soldiers his orders. The music turns to eerie. Miller keeps telling his soldiers what is happening. His soldiers keep following and look alert. The music speeds up again and there is a voiceover of the announcement of the Iraqi military disbanding. Rawi, with a look of determination, gets his commanders together—they start to collect their gear and other things as they prepare to walk out. Miller is kidnapped, his soldiers call for help, and Briggs tells them to return to their vehicles. The kidnapers are aggressive yelling at Miller when his phone rings. They get

the phone and throw it out of the car. The music is exciting. Briggs says that he is going in after Miller. The kidnappers rush Miller into the building and into a chair. They hit him so he will go into the room. Freddy is seen hobbling on his fake leg. Briggs and Miller are portrayed as aggressive (Connell, 2005, p. 68) and in control (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

Rawi and Miller talk. Rawi looks tired and Miller is calm even though there is a gun to his face. A medium close-up on Briggs shows him looking determined. Briggs calls out orders to his soldiers. He has a deep voice which sounds manly. The music is slowly getting faster. Rawi grabs Miller by the neck. Rawi tells Miller that Rawi has no place because the American government has made Rawi an outlaw even though he told them there were not any WMDs. Rawi has a look of anger mixed with sadness. Miller gets hit by the butt of the gun and he seems to be holding it together. He has a calm look on his face and tells Rawi to come back to the base. Rawi tells him that the war has just begun. The music speeds up and there is a lot of gunfire. The Iraqi soldier gets into a fight with Miller. He hits him and tries to kill him. Miller fights back and grunts. He falls on his back with the gun in hand and shoots the Iraqi guy and there is blood spatter. The rest of the soldiers are seen fighting and a medium close-up on Briggs shows him calmly, but determined, walking into the firefight with his gun at the ready. Briggs gets into the building and a close-up shows that he is mad and determined. Briggs keeps barking out orders to his soldiers. Miller pursues Rawi and Briggs follows. Miller breaks through a house and yells at the occupants to get down. The woman and children are screaming. Miller runs through while being fired at. Briggs chases through the same house. A woman grabs his gun and the soldiers kill two armed men. Briggs looks determined and mad. Freddy keeps hobbling along. Rawi's soldier sends Rawi forward and stays behind

to cover him. The chopper is shot down, a close-up on Briggs shows him pissed and Miller has almost a look of enjoyment as the chopper goes down. Miller drives a car in pursuit of Rawi and he gets his back window shot out but keeps driving in an indomitable fashion. Rawi looks like he is losing steam and starts coughing. He looks scared. Briggs sees Rawi and is determined to kill him. Miller tackles Briggs. Briggs looks pissed and aims at Miller and then back at Rawi. Briggs is shot by the Rawi soldier who stayed behind, and Miller kills that soldier. Both deaths have a lot of blood. Rawi looks defeated and drops his gun as he walks over to Miller. Miller looks unflappable and so does Rawi. Freddy comes out of nowhere and kills Rawi. He has a look of determination. Miller with a confused and sad look on his face yells at Freddy asking what the fuck he just did. Freddy says with emotion in his eyes and voice that Miller cannot determine what is right for this country. The music is emotional and exciting. Miller tells Freddy to go home. Freddy looks tired. Briggs and Miller are portrayed as aggressive (Connell, 2005, p. 68), ambitious, competitive, and in control (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18) during the pursuit of Rawi, which are all masculine traits. Freddy exhibits emotion, which is typically seen as inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42), but is in control and aggressive, which are masculine characteristics.

Miller hands his intel report to Proudstone and tells him he knows what Proudstone did. Proudstone says that it does not matter now because it is in the past. Miller immediately gets a look of anger in his eyes and raises his voice saying that why we go to war every time matters. He tries to grab Proudstone and two soldiers grab Miller as he gets more anger in his voice. They tell Miller to calm down. "Do you have any idea what you've done here?" Miller asks Proudstone with anger in his voice. Proudstone calls

him a son of bitch. Miller and Proudstone are both portrayed as aggressive, which is inherently masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 68).

### ***Lions for Lambs (2007)***

*Lions for Lambs*, directed by Robert Redford and written by Matthew Michael Carnahan is a film about the war in Afghanistan. The film is split between three parallel story lines: one with journalist Janine Roth (Meryl Streep) while interviewing Senator Jasper Irving (Tom Cruise), the second is with soldiers Ernest Rodriguez (Michael Peña) Arian Finch (Derek Luke), and the third is a meeting between Professor Stephen Malley (Robert Redford) and his student Todd Hays (Andrew Garfield). The three storylines are all connected through the story of Finch and Rodriguez who are soldiers in Afghanistan. Finch and Rodriguez were students of Malley and in the same class as Hays.

Additionally, they are soldiers in the new initiative that Irving is heading up. Roth and Irving are meeting because Irving wants a news coverage about the new strategy in Afghanistan and he wants it told correctly. Malley wants Hays to reach his full potential so he is talking about the decision of Rodriguez and Finch to join the military when they could go to any graduate school or do anything they wanted back home in the U.S. The film cuts back and forth between the storylines showing the consequences of war on everyone.

From the beginning of the film, Redford constructs masculinity in various ways. The film begins with Roth as she goes up to Capitol Hill to meet with Irving. She is dressed in a pantsuit and glasses and has long hair. She is a journalist. In one of her stories she called Irving the future of his political party. Irving is doing a favor for Roth for calling him that, so he is giving an hour-long interview. Irving is very articulate. Roth wants to

write a detailed timeline about the war on terror and Irving wants her to write a story on a new plan on Afghanistan that can culminate into victory. Irving is meeting with her to make sure that the news is correct. Irving's secretary is a woman. Irving and Roth are portrayed more in line with each other instead of in contrast as would be in a typical masculine way (Adams, 2008, p. 8).

The film cuts to a briefing at Bagram air base in Afghanistan and there is one woman present out of twentyish men, which falls short of the demographics of the military of the day. Lt. Col. Falco (Peter Berg) talks to Finch about his knee and Finch says he is ready for the 15-mile hike. They all yell in unison, "Hooya!" This demonstrates brotherhood and comradery amongst the soldiers, which is a typical masculine construct (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49; Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Berg says that the enemy is now "impotent," more than before, but this time they need to be stepped on. The tribes up in the mountains are too weak to fight the Taliban so the U.S. military has to come in and help. Berg says, "We are going to get ourselves into that kitchen and put our hands on their throats." "Hooya," the soldiers all say, and Berg says they are going to meet the Taliban with American meat.

Later, the soldiers are on their way to their mission in the mountains. A medium close-up shows Rodriguez and Finch playing games in the back of the chopper. They keep hitting the other trying to slap their hand. Finch pushes Rodriguez and he falls back. Rodriguez asks how Finch could be more afraid of clouds than bullets and Finch responds by saying that he would rather take a bullet than a fall. This admittance of fear of falling would typically be portrayed as un-masculine, but Finch is not afraid of being shot so it brings the portrayal back to masculine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 131).

Cutting back to the conversation with Roth and Irving, Irving admits that the military had made mistakes in the war, but that they have learned from them. He says that they are using the military as the opening punch for their new strategy. Roth keeps asking questions and Irving gets annoyed that she is taking his comments out of what he thinks is the context. Roth seems to be very smart. Irving says that it is part of his responsibility to protect the American people and that Roth and the media can call it fear mongering. Irving and Roth are portrayed more in line with each other instead of in contrast (Adams, 2008, p. 8), with them almost sparring in competition with each other (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109), which is inherently masculine.

Cutting back to the soldiers, they are talking about the jump they are about to make. The soldier says that the jump is going to be a nasty one and it makes Finch nervous. The chopper is shot at and the music seems dramatic, as two soldiers get killed and blood gets all over Finch and the chopper. Finch immediately starts into soldier mode and yelling orders. Soldiers are screaming in pain from being shot. Finch tries to help the person as he screams from his graphic bloody wound. Rodriguez starts shooting and has a determined look on his face. Rodriguez ends up falling out of the chopper. Finch gets a look of terror in his eyes and then yells to the pilot to land. Finch then faces his fears and jumps out of the chopper after Rodriguez. Finch exhibits 'heroic masculinity' during this scene, which is a traditional construct for war films (Clarke, 2015, p. 186).

Malley and Hays are taking in Malley's office about politics. Hays says that Washington is corrupt and hypocritical. Hays talks about how politicians are being "jacked off" by a page under the desk while lecturing people about morality. Hays swears a lot.

Cutting back to the soldiers, Finch wakes up on the top of a mountain covered with snow. He is struggling to get up and he moans in pain. He sees Rodriguez and yells to him. A medium close-up shows that he looks really worried about Rodriguez and says his name with a crack in his voice. Rodriguez wakes up and is bleeding profusely. Rodriguez yells back at Finch and says his name and calls him a fucking idiot. Finch asks how Rodriguez is, and Rodriguez says that he is in bad shape. He yells back at Finch and says that he is stuck. Finch is portrayed as stoic, bearing his pain discretely, and worrying about his fellow soldier instead of himself (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

Back to Roth and Irving, Irving says that the military is not going to send one or two guys on the ground. They would do what they needed to do to get the job done. Roth says that it is ok coming from a person who is sitting in an airconditioned office. Roth continues to question the war effort and Irving talks down to her. Roth asks him if they took the human loss into account and he skirts past the question, showing that they are being very violent and only care about getting the job done. Roth talks about why they sent so many troops and supplies to Iraq and not to Afghanistan where they need it. He then tells her why and says that they committed mistakes, colossal mistakes. Roth seems logical where Irving seem to just be violent/aggressive and needing to squash the enemy. Irving calls out Roth for comparing the Afghanistan war to Vietnam. He gets mad at her, which is shown through a close-up on his face. In this scene, Roth and Irving are portrayed in contrast to each other, which is expected in a masculine film (Adams, 2008, p. 8). She is portrayed as civilized, where Irving is portrayed as uncivilized (Cavell, 1979), aggressive (Connell, 2005, p. 68), and violent (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90).

Cutting back to the mountain, Rodriguez is covered in blood and looks beat up. There is a group of soldiers in the communication room and they are trying to find Rodriguez and Finch. They find them and the woman soldier (Heidi Janson) says there is a rescue bird in the air, they are on their way, and they are waiting for you. This portrays women as equal to other soldiers instead of in contrast to them (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404). A medium close-up shows Rodriguez shivering and a close-up on his face shows him scared and breathing hard. He bites down on his shirt and turns around on his back to see his leg. He screams in pain as he turns and says that he's in pretty bad shape. Finch tells him that he is going to need a tourniquet and Rodriguez says that he only has one hand. Finch starts to grunt to dig himself out to go help Rodriguez, but he stops at the sound of the enemy. Rodriguez is not being stoic because he is screaming in pain from his wounds, while Finch is stoic by trying to help Rodriguez and ignore any wound or problems Finch is having (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

Irving admits that they made mistakes in the war effort because they had bad intel, leaders who have never bled on the field, and bad PR. Irving went to WestPoint and said that he would never apologize for his achievements. Irving says that he has admitted his mistakes, when will you to Roth because her network and the media sold the war effort. He then wants to work with her to help him sell the solution. Irving comes off logical in explaining their new strategy. Irving and Roth are once again portrayed as equals instead of in contrast to each other (Adams, 2008, p. 8).

Finch starts to dig himself out and goes crazy doing it. Rodriguez says that he needs to breathe and Finch calms down. A medium close-up shows Finch laughing. It then cuts back to a class of Malley's when Finch and Rodriguez were giving a

presentation. Finch drops the papers and the class laughs. Rodriguez tells a joke making fun of Finch and Finch makes fun of Rodriguez back. Seems like male bonding, which is inherently masculine (Clarke, 2015, p. 186). Malley talks about Finch and Rodriguez with Hays and says that the way they took action to change things in this country was to go out and fight for it in Afghanistan. This shows nationalism and duty to their country, which is a construct of masculinity (McDonald, 2015, p. 238).

The film cuts back to the classroom presentation of Finch and Rodriguez. There are several women in the classroom where Finch and Rodriguez are giving their proposition of engagement at home. They are giving a very strong argument amongst the class about their proposal for engagement in the U.S. and the debate with the class gets heated. Only one girl is in the debate and the rest are men. Finch and Rodriguez get called out—they put their army enlistment papers on the overhead projector and the class falls silent. It cuts to them talking about their enlistment with Malley and Malley has a concerned look on his face and a pleading tone in his voice. Malley tells them that he did not enlist but was drafted to Vietnam. Finch and Rodriguez enlisted because they want to be a part of the greatest thing going on in their lives. They could be going to any graduate school, but they chose to enlist. Rodriguez says that the men who lead step up when there is something to be done. This shows that they are ambitious, which is a masculine trait (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18). They cite that to return as Black and Mexican army vets and go to graduate school would be unheard of. They seem confident in their decision to enlist and it shows in their body language. It cuts back to the mountain. A close-up on Rodriguez shows him covered in blood and Finch is looking through his scope, he looks calm.

Roth talks about how her news channel overnight went from a news organization to a business to caring more about revenue. They do not like hard news anymore. Irving says they do not need any more people to join the war effort, just the will of the people to finish the war. Roth questions him and asks how he knows they will get it done. Irving says that the people and everyone needs a win, winning helps everyone. He has a voice of determination and asks her if she wants to win the war on terror. He has a look of determination in his eyes and asks her if she wants to win. Irving gets a phone call and finds out that the plan has not worked, and they have two soldiers surrounded on the mountain. Irving seems tired and complains about all of their failures. He says that he does not want to send out men and women of this country to fight. He can only tell their families that at least their lives are being used for something good. He then immediately changes his demeanor to happy and moves on from the meeting. Roth leaves the meeting and the music starts to get solemn. A close-up on her face shows her with a look of concerned, pensive, and slightly emotional. Roth and Irving are portrayed in contrast to each other with Irving being unemotional even though his mission failed (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75) and Roth be civilized and emotional (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49; Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42).

Finch yells to Rodriguez that he needs ammo. Rodriguez throws ammo over and grunts. He throws ammo again and again, grunting from pain every time he does it. He is still badly hurt. Rodriguez looks down at his injuries and moans. Rodríguez and Finch are shooting at the enemy. They seem calm and willing to fight. Rodriguez tells Finch to save his ammo. They still seem calm even though the situation seems dire. Finch is on his back and he is covered in snow and is cold. Rodriguez is still covered in blood. They both

look scared. The music is solemn again. Finch yells “Do they see us?” as the mountain gets bombed. Rodriguez yells “Is it over?” and they both keep looking for the enemy. Even though they are both hurt and are in a dire situation, Finch and Rodriguez exhibit characteristics of the *Normative* definition of masculinity: they do not back down, they stand strong, and they give the enemy ‘hell’ during the firefight (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

Roth says to her editor (Kevin Dunn) that she does not feel like the story from Irving is real. Her editor gets mad at her because she is questioning Irving and his actual story. Roth thinks it is propaganda. The editor says that they do the news and then yells at her that they report the verifiable facts. She gets mad and says that Irving is so desperate for a win that they will do anything. Her editor tells Roth to calm down. Roth asks him what happened to you...you’d take a punch at anyone if you had the chance. He gets mad at her because she does not want to do the story because of “a woman’s intuition.” She yells back and calls it bullshit. She refuses to write the story that Irving gave her, and she will never be able to write the story that she really wants to. A medium close-up shows her emotional as she tries to fight for the truth. Roth is portrayed in contrast to her editor (Adams, 2008, p. 8) and as subordinate to him (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 12). A close-up on Roth shows her sad as she passes in a car by the WWII monument, the White House and Arlington cemetery. The music is sad, and she starts crying. The camera cuts to the cemetery again. This exhibition of emotion is reserved for the feminine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42).

Finch fires at the enemy soldiers and he still looks really cold. Rodriguez yells at Finch to get over to him. Finch starts digging his leg out which is bleeding really bad. He grunts as he gets it out. Rodriguez shoots and does cover fire to help Finch get over.

Finch fires more and more shots at the Taliban. He grunts again as he falls over to Rodriguez. They both look determined as they defend themselves. The music is exciting. Rodriguez asks Finch if he has ammo. Finch says no and is shivering. Rodriguez tells him that he does not have any ammo either. He is shivering as well. They realize that they are probably not going to be saved. Rodriguez tells Finch to go because he has a good leg. He refuses. They say they do not want to die like this. Rodriguez tells Finch to stand him up. They both look tired, but they are standing. The music is very patriotic but sad. They are shot at and killed by the Taliban but take it standing up instead of laying down. Once again, Finch and Rodriguez exhibit characteristics of the *Normative* definition of masculinity: they do not back down, they stand strong, and they give the enemy 'hell' until they die (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

Malley and Hays are still talking about the potential Malley sees in Hays. Malley tells him that if you try and fail that is better than failing to try...at least you did something. Malley tells Hays that he is his own man and he needs to own his own decisions. A later scene shows Hays watching the news and sees that there is another offensive in Afghanistan. A close-up shows that he is pondering and deep in thought. His friend sitting on the couch asks him questions and he does not answer. Seems like he is thinking of joining the military to do something with his life. This follows the myth of nationalism and the military that is often connected with masculinity (McDonald, 2015, p. 238).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CINEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

#### **Introduction**

The textual analysis of the six films in this study revealed various constructions of masculinity with the following constructs to be explored in detail in this chapter: portrayal of women, including both lead and supporting characters; warrior image; sexual discourse; unintended consequences of war; comradeship among soldiers; anti-war music and dialogue; don't show emotion, just be a man; violent demeanor; cowardice is not manly; patriotism and duty; emotion is acceptable for men to show; war is the place where men thrive; leadership; and the juxtaposition of Irving versus Roth.

#### **Portrayal of Women in Both Lead and Supporting Characters**

The *Semiotic* approach to masculinity defines it in contrast to femininity, or as not-feminine (Connell, 2005, p. 70). Masculinity and femininity are typically portrayed in oppositions, such as “man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine” (Adams, 2008, p. 8). All levels of masculinity are conveyed in one message “I am not a woman” (Horrocks, 1995, p. 33). In film, women are typically constructed in contrast to men who are defined as having “unlimited sense of courage, ambition and revenge” (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404). In film, the feminine is portrayed as inferior, with women portrayed as subordinate to men and marginalized (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, pp. 12-13). For men to be masculine, they must reject the feminine (Sitter, 2013, p. 168). Instead of striving for gender equality in films, Hollywood reinstates the patriarchy and male hegemony in society (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 106). In the majority of war films, women are only included as love interests and for sex appeal (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4). Additionally,

the culture of women and emotions, in these films, are portrayed as inferior to men and should be circumvented (p. 42). Another construct of masculinity in war films is the male dominance of women, in which a soldier's ability to attract and seduce a woman is a gauge of his masculinity (p. 45). In war films, women are portrayed as less than males as they are incapable of performing similar "sexual prowess" (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Females are constructed as civilized or the anticomunity, where as males are portrayed as the community. The community is the uncivilized brotherhood of war, yet it is the work for the world. When men leave that world to go home to their wives, they go home to die (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49).

In the film, *Megan Leavey*, the female lead (Leavey) is portrayed as gender neutral. She is seen as a loner, an alcoholic, and lazy. She tends to have a hard time connecting with people which could be both feminine or masculine. Leavey returns home to the U.S., staying with Jackie and Jim. Jackie gives Leavey a box of makeup for Christmas, but Leavey seems disinterested in it, which is gender-neutral. In a later scene, Morales asks Leavey about her wounds, with Leavey saying in an unemotional tone that her back, neck, head, and arches hurt. She is not overly tough or weak. Later in the film, Leavey finds out Rex is being redeployed without her. She goes into Martin's office to ask to adopt Rex, gets angry and messes up Martin's office with a grunt. Leavey then sits with Rex, crying. She is crying again as she is driving passed the bomb squad dogs training at the base. One common gender-neutral theme is that Leavey uses expletives throughout the film. Additionally, Leavey loves baseball and is constantly listening to it while working out.

She dresses in outfits such as hoodie and baggy clothes. In non-military situations, Leavey often has her hair down and is dressed in nonsexual attire. Leavey's dress throughout the film is not sexual or masculine. It is average attire. Her military uniform is gender neutral. Her mother even mentions that she does not look all masculine like in *G.I. Jane* (1997). One scene shows Leavey in a bralette and she has cleavage. She has a six pack, but her overall appearance is not very sexual.

In many situations throughout the film, Leavey does not show emotion, but instead gender-neutral fear and nervousness. For instance, when she is discussing how her friend Jessie died, Leavey stays composed and is not emotional like an average person. In contrast, when Leavey returns to base and is put into a medical helicopter, she is crying as she leaves Rex. Later she is seen in the hospital crying because she wants to see Rex. This makes her seem feminine; however, she is covered in dirt, cuts, and blood, which makes her seem tough.

The film portrays an accurate number of women in the military, with five soldiers being women out of a group of 18. There is also another woman soldier later when Leavey returns from her leave, who is part of the bomb squad. Additionally, all of the drill leaders at boot camp are women, as are the soldiers in the boot camp. Women are treated the same throughout the film as their male counterparts instead of as inferior. For example, Leavey decides to urinate in public like a male soldier would do, which gets her reprimanded. The master sergeant says that this institution is for heroes, adding she will not disrespect the men and women who made the Marines great. He yells at Leavey and she does not show any emotion. He calls her a punk, which is a gender-neutral term. Leavey is portrayed as stoic and capable. For example, she is given Rex as her bomb-

squad canine, even though she is inexperienced. She tells Rex that people are counting on them to do their work right because it is important, which elevates Leavey as an integral part of the military. When she arrives at her barracks in Iraq, Rex gets scared by gunfire, and she tells him to not be scared. Leavey is often seen as working hard and recognized for her work.

The female characters are not sexualized in the film. For example, when Leavey and her fellow soldiers go to the bar, they get hit on but brush the man off, leading to nothing more from that storyline. At the bar, the female characters are wearing typical clothes that are not overly sexualized. In a typically sexualized shower scene, Leavey is seen as showering and it is not sexualized. She is dressed in sexual scenes in ordinary clothes. Morales jokes about Leavey not being able to wear stiletto heels, and she is sarcastic in saying “oh darn” in response. During boot camp, Leavey is seen standing at attention and all of the women are in their sports bras and have their shirts off. This shows their bodies, but in a non-sexual way.

Leavey’s fellow soldiers treat her as just another soldier. For example, when she is working with the canine squad, they haze her and she gets bitten by Rex. Another scene shows Leavey hanging out with her fellow soldiers. The male soldiers are wrestling and playing beer pong. She seems to be a part of the group, and she is portrayed as an average soldier.

The supporting female characters are Leavey’s mother, Jackie, the Marine veterinarian, and the therapist. Jackie is portrayed as a ordinary wife who thinks her daughter does not belong in the military. She thinks the military is for men, and women who enter are going to come out as masculine. She thinks her daughter should wear

makeup and be more feminine. The Marine veterinarian and therapist are portrayed as competent.

In the film *Stop-Loss*, the female characters are portrayed in many ways. They are sexualized during a celebration at a bar. During that scene, King is sitting down and two women, who are dressed scantily clad, come up do shots in a sexual manner with him. During that same scene, the women are portrayed as civilized. Burgess and Shriver are talking about killing the enemy, and medium close-ups on the mothers show looks of disapproval or uncomfortableness. In that same scene, Burgess' wife, Jeanine, gets hit on by another man, but she politely declines to dance. Burgess takes offense, proceeding to beat the man up, whereas Jeanine was civilized. Ida, King's mother, is portrayed as feminine in that she shows emotion when he leaves for Washington, D.C. and when he deploys for the first time.

The main character, Michelle, is portrayed early in the film as weak, needing a man to function. She relies on King to help her in her relationship with Shriver because he beats her. King has to defend her often to Shriver, but later she is portrayed as civilized and strong. She stops King when he is about to kill some thieves, helping him clean up his wounds from the fight. Additionally, she breaks up with Shriver on her own. She is not overly sexualized in her dress as she typically wears T-shirts and jeans, and her hair is usually down. She tells King after she and Shriver break up that she cannot be a military wife because she cannot wait a year to be touched by her husband.

In the film *American Sniper*, the female lead, Taya, does the opposite to Michelle in *Stop-Loss*, in that she goes from being portrayed as a strong, independent woman to weak, and needing a man to help her function. When Taya first meets Kyle, she is

fending off another man in a bar, and immediately goes on the defensive with Kyle as he hits on her. She ends up throwing up in the parking lot of the bar, with Kyle holding her hair up. She immediately responds to his kind gesture saying that she would not be sleeping with him that night. In the beginning, Taya is a very strong woman who can take care of herself and does not have trouble speaking her mind. During a sex scene, Taya is not overly sexualized as she is in her underwear and not naked.

After Taya finds out she is pregnant and she gets engaged to Kyle, her character begins to be portrayed as weak and needing of a man to function. During a phone call with Kyle on his tour, she hears gunfire and breaks down on the sidewalk, hysterically crying. Kyle constantly has to calm her down when he is on tour, telling her everything will be fine. Later in the film, Taya is portrayed as civilized, especially about Kyle's health. For example, at the doctor's office, Kyle gets his blood pressure tested, which is very high. Taya reveals to the doctor that Kyle has not been talking much since he returned. The doctor tells him that his blood pressure is very high, but he brushes it off as if nothing is wrong. Kyle gets mad at her for not supporting his neglect of his high blood pressure, telling her that he does not want to be home right now. Taya gets upset and sad from his comments. Every time Kyle comes home and reveals that he wants to do another tour, Taya gets upset. She tells him that his children need a father and that she needs him to be present because she needs him here.

There are a few other instances where women are portrayed in the film. For example, the doctor who tells Kyle that he has high blood pressure is seen as competent and civilized. There are no women soldiers, except for an extra in one scene during a military briefing. The rest of the women are all portrayed only as mothers or wives. There

is one instance where there is an enemy woman who gives a boy a grenade to throw at some Marines. When the boy is killed, she picks up the grenade and also is killed. This shows that a woman can be strong; however, the soldiers are disgusted with her, calling her an “evil bitch.”

In *The Hurt Locker*, there is only one woman portrayed and another mentioned in dialogue. James discusses his wife, Connie, with little regard. He calls her loyal and defends her when Sanborn calls her dumb for still being with James. Sanborn discusses a girl that he likes, but all she can talk about is babies, saying that he is not ready to have a family. This portrays women as demanding and wanting the soldiers to become civilized.

Later in the film, James is in a grocery store with his wife, Connie. He is asked by her to get cereal and he stands there as if he is lost in a civilized world. Later, he is cooking with Connie, telling her about how someone killed 50 people with a bomb in Iraq, adding that they need more bomb technicians. Connie does not respond, asking him to chop up some carrots. James seems out of his element in the civilized world where the things of the military that interest him do not matter to Connie. She is portrayed as civilized, whereas he is not.

In *Green Zone*, women are mainly journalists. The main journalist, Dayne, talks with Proudstone, telling him she wants to talk to the source on the WMD sites pressing him for information. He brushes her off. Later, Dayne approaches Proudstone, asking him for help. She tells him that if he cannot help her, she will find someone who can. This shows that she does not rely completely on men to function. Later, Dayne asks Miller if it is not weird that they keep coming up empty on the WMDs, but Dayne seems sober and intelligent. Miller ends up needing to find out more information about the WMD sites, so

he goes to Dayne for information, which elevates her status as a woman. Dayne and Miller get into an argument about the sources of information and even though Miller raises his voice, she defends her decisions with confidence, with no quiver in her voice.

However, women are present in other parts of the film. There are women working in the CIA when Miller talks to Brown. Back at the Republican Palace, there are people eating lunch, and there are plenty of women in government roles. On the base, there is a woman in the communication room. There are two other women during a briefing by the colonel. Later, Miller and his soldiers go into the Republican Palace, where there are women in bikinis at the pool. The two soldiers and Miller look at the women, asking if there is time to work on them. This is the only sexual reference towards women in the film.

In *Lions for Lambs*, there are women both in the military and in the civilian world. During a briefing at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, there is one woman present out of 20 men. Additionally, there is a woman soldier in the communication center who has some dialogue with the commanding officer. During the classroom presentation of Finch and Rodriguez, there are several women in attendance. There is a heated argument between Finch and Rodriguez and the class; however, there is only one woman as part of the debate.

Additionally, the female lead, Roth, is depicted as an average woman. She is portrayed as professional, logical, strong, and inquisitive on the one hand, and emotional on the other. This is best portrayed after she leaves the interview with Irving and is talking with her editor. Roth says to her editor that she does not feel like the story from Irving is real. The editor says that they do the news, then yells at her that they report the

verifiable facts. She gets angry, saying that Irving is so desperate for a win that they will do anything. Her editor tells Roth to calm down. Roth asks him “what happened to you...you’d take a punch at anyone if you had the chance.” He gets angry at her because she does not want to do the story on the basis of “a woman’s intuition.” She yells back, and calls his remark “bullshit.” She refuses to write the story that Irving gave her, and she will never be able to write the story that she really wants to. A medium close-up shows her emotional as she tries to fight for the truth. The next scene shows her sad as she passes in a car by the WWII monument, the White House, and Arlington cemetery. The music is sad, and she starts crying.

### **The Depiction of the Warrior Image**

The warrior image is created through the glorification of war and combat through the “spiritual transformation through a ritualistic act of killing” (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107). These acts exalt the warrior image, making it “supernatural” (p. 107). This “ancient ritual of becoming a man/warrior” is further constructed through surviving basic training and being separated from the world of family and women (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5). True warriors are courageous, and take “charge, exudes authority, and manages the scariest situations with a John Wayne-like calm” (p. 83). The warrior image values “physical fitness, ability and efficiency, and competitiveness” (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). True warriors are stoic, bearing their pain discretely (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). Warriors have “bare and muscular toned body” (Knee, 2016, p. 149) and are “rough around the edges” (Clarke, 2015, p. 186).

The warrior image is very common among the films that are examined in this dissertation. In *Megan Leavey*, the warrior image is created when Leavey goes to boot

camp. She and the other soldiers have their shirts off, appearing to be strong. The montage is exciting and fast paced, demonstrating how tough a soldier has to be through drills, and going through the obstacle course. Leavey and her fellow soldiers struggle through it all while they are getting yelled at by drill leaders. Leavey is seen in full-gear with gun in the pool trying to swim, showing how tough she is as she is yelled at by the drill leader. Later, Leavey wants to be part of the bomb squad and she has to be top of her class in physical fitness, marksmanship, and in her written exam. A montage shows her working harder and getting better at physical training and marksmanship, which reaches exciting levels, resulting in her passing her exams.

When Leavey is out on a mission, she is walking around while Rex is sniffing. She yells at other soldiers who are talking, telling them to stop with authority in her voice and in her face and eyes. They stop talking immediately, showing her respect. A soldier questions her about giving Rex a break, and she tells him that he deserves it and the soldier backs down. During that same mission, a bomb goes off right next to Rex and Leavey. She is bleeding and has cuts on her face. Leavey insists on going with the other soldiers in retaliation, even though she is hurt. This shows that she is tough, stoic, and is going to do her job no matter what. When the soldiers and Leavey get into a firefight, she takes charge by firing at the enemy. She says “we need to move” with authority and has a calm demeanor.

The warrior image is similar in *Stop-Loss*. A group of soldiers are at a checkpoint, when a car appears doing a drive-by shooting. The soldiers react with indomitable expressions and fire back. Medium close-ups on each soldier shows them shooting calmly and with determination in their eyes. The soldiers then take pursuit and chase the

enemy into an alleyway. None of the soldiers look scared as they engage in a firefight. The soldiers get pinned down in the alley, with King yelling orders stoically. Soldiers are helping each other and others are getting shot. Shriver is composed while helping Rodriguez. Shriver then helps by killing the enemy, rushing in like a hero into the building to kill the people shooting at them. King goes in after Shriver, and when Shriver is hit, he says he is alright. He does not have any pain and walks out.

In a later scene, a medium shot of King's reflection in the mirror shows him with his shirt off and is looking into the mirror with a look of rage. The spectator sees his muscles and he rips his shirt apart to clean his head wound. Michelle helps him clean his wound. He grimaces at the pain, gritting his teeth and grunting. He puts a stitch-like bandage on his wound, grunts, and winces at the pain, but grits his teeth. In another scene, Michelle and King visit Rodriguez in the hospital. Rodriguez is missing a leg and an arm, is blind, and is covered in burn marks. Yet, appears so happy, and he is lifting weights. Additionally, Shriver is shown with his shirt off and he is seen as muscular.

In *American Sniper*, Kyle is part of the Navy SEALs, who are the "warrior elite." He joins them because he is better than most men, and he does not quit. Kyle goes through basic training and is harassed by the drill instructor. He is told that he is old and is asked if he is a quitter. The drill instructor throughout basic training says that he is finding the warriors and getting rid of the quitters. Every time someone rings the bell, which signals someone has quit, the instructor is critical of them. When one person quits he says, "That's a quitter. If he quits here, he'll quit in battle. When shit gets hairy he can't step up. You get shot, he can't pull you out. We're gonna weed out the quitters and see if we can find a warrior or two." Throughout the film, Kyle is constantly told that he

is a legend because he is the best at protecting his soldiers. The legend says that Kyle could kill a hundred men with one bullet, and that the Marines feel invincible with Kyle looking over them.

Another example is when Kyle and Taya visit the doctor's office for a pregnancy checkup. Kyle, sweating profusely, seems to be having a hard time with all of the noises in the office. The doctor starts asking him questions about his health:

Doctor: "How about you Mr. Kyle? How're you feeling?"

Kyle: "Good. Doing good."

Doctor: "I imagine you're still decompressing."

Kyle: "Not really."

Taya: "Well, this is the first time we left the house."

Kyle: "I'm just happy to be home."

Doctor: "Here, slip this on for me."

Doctor: "Are you a smoker? Do you drink?"

Kyle: "Only when I'm thirsty."

Doctor: "170 over 110."

Taya: "Jesus Christ Chris..."

Kyle: "Is that high?"

Doctor: "Not if you just had 14 cups of coffee. But for someone who is sitting down..."

Doctor: "I'll look into it. Thanks doc"

Kyle says that he is fine, denying that there is anything wrong with his health. Another instance is when Kyle talks to a VA doctor, telling him about the incident at the

barbeque. The doctor asks if he is worried about what he did, but Kyle shrugs it off like it was nothing. Kyle then talks about how he is haunted by the men he could not save, demonstrating that he is manly and he does not have PTSD, although he clearly does.

In *The Hurt Locker*, the warrior image is glorified similarly to *American Sniper*. After James defuses a bomb at the United Nations building, a colonel discusses with him how many bombs he has defused. He calls James a “wild man,” shaking his hand. He asks James how many bombs he has defused, learning it has been 873, and the colonel is amazed. Later in the film, a warrior image similar to *Megan Leavey* and *Stop-Loss* is portrayed. The bomb squad helps some contractors in the desert with a flat tire, but they end up in a firefight. Two of the contractors fight as if they were warriors like Sylvester Stallone in the *Rambo* films. The contractors laugh and enjoy shooting their AK-47s and killing the enemy. They end up being killed by a sniper, so James and Sanborn stoically take over. They are composed as they try to take out the sniper, who they eventually kill. James calms Eldridge down, telling him that he is going to keep him safe. The warrior image is depicted through Sanborn when he and James wrestle in the barracks. Sanborn eggs James on to punch and wrestle him. Sanborn takes his shirt off, beats his chest, and grunts to get James to fight him.

The warrior image is most prominent in *Green Zone* through Miller. Earlier in the film, Miller is guiding his soldiers to various WMD sites. The first site they go to is being shot at by a sniper, and the area is in chaos. Miller asks who is in charge, immediately questioning that leader’s competence. Miller states that they need to carry out their mission, but is questioned about the plan. He tells the soldier who is questioning him that he does not know what is over there, but that he needs to go there and do it now. He says

it calmly, but with earnestness in his voice. Miller goes into action, finding out where the sniper is located. He is stoic and calm as he guides his soldiers through the executed plan. They fire at the sniper, while moving swiftly closer to the WMD site. Miller puts himself in danger and serves as the decoy, while his soldiers kill the sniper. Throughout the entire mission, Miller is yelling out orders, guiding his soldiers through the firefight.

Later in the film, Miller meets Freddy, learning of a meeting that could help him in his pursuit of information about the WMD sites. He immediately goes into action, creating a plan to infiltrate the meeting. A soldier tells him that their mission is to dig holes, not interrupt meetings. Miller says he wants to actually do something instead of standing around. Another soldier questions Miller, telling his soldiers to get their “fucking game face on” and to roll. He seems calm while telling them what they are going to do. Miller and his team infiltrate the meeting, yelling out orders during the entire process. Miller goes into the basement and is fired at, but he remains calm during it.

Briggs is another example of the warrior image in *Green Zone*. After learning that one of his local assets was killed, Briggs goes into action and starts barking orders. He seems determined. He gets into a helicopter and calmly orders his soldiers around. During this time, Miller is trying to find the Iraqi general Rawi. He calmly tells his soldiers his orders. Miller keeps telling his soldiers what is happening, while his soldiers keep following. As Rawi and Miller talk, Miller remains calm even though there is a gun to his face. Miller gets hit by the butt of the gun, but he seems to be holding it together. The Iraqi soldier gets into a fight with Miller, hitting him and trying to kill him. Miller fights back and grunts. He falls on his back with the gun in hand, shooting the Iraqi man with blood spatter depicted. Briggs calmly, but determined, walks into the firefight with

his gun at the ready, continuing to bark orders to his soldiers. Miller pursues Rawi and Briggs follows. Miller runs while being fired at and Briggs chases them. Miller drives a car in pursuit of Rawi, but he has his back window shot out and keeps driving in an indomitable fashion. Briggs sees Rawi in his sights and has a determined look to kill him. Miller tackles Briggs, with Rawi looking defeated and dropping his gun as he walks over to Miller. Miller looks stoic, as does Rawi. Freddy comes out of nowhere, killing Rawi, with a look of determination.

Meanwhile, *Lions for Lambs* uses the battlefield in its development of the warrior image, similar to the other films. Finch and Rodriguez are in a helicopter waiting to make a jump into enemy territory, but Finch seems nervous about the jump. The helicopter is shot at and two soldiers are killed. Finch immediately falls into soldier mode, yelling orders. Finch tries to help a wounded soldier as he screams from his graphic bloody wound. Rodriguez starts shooting with a determined look on his face when Rodriguez falls out of the helicopter, Finch gets a look of terror in his eyes. Finch then faces his fears, jumping out of the helicopter after Rodriguez.

Finch and Rodriguez are stuck on a mountaintop alone. Finch fires at the enemy soldiers, Rodriguez yelling at Finch to get over to him. Finch starts digging his leg out of the snow, which is bleeding badly. He grunts as he gets it out. Rodriguez shoots covering fire to help Finch. Finch grunts again as he falls over to Rodriguez. They both look unflappable and determined as they defend themselves. Rodriguez asks Finch if he has ammunition, but Finch says no. Rodriguez tells him that he does not have any ammo either. They realize that they are probably not going to be saved, Rodriguez tells Finch to save himself, but he refuses. They say they do not want to die like this, so Rodriguez tells

Finch to stand him up. They both look exhausted, but they are standing. They are shot and killed by the Taliban, but take it standing up instead of laying down.

### **Sexual Discourse**

In war films, the male dominance of women involve a soldier's ability to attract and seduce a woman as a gauge of his masculinity (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 45). Additionally, a male's "sexual prowess" is a celebrated part of his masculinity (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Moreover, a person "uninterested in sexual conquest" is perceived as un-masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 67).

This focus on sex as a masculinity construct could help explain why sexual talk is evident in these post-9/11 American war films. Sexual talk is inherently masculine and is evident in all the films examined. This is present in *Megan Leavey* when her and the other bomb squad soldiers graduate from their training. They are all standing at attention, when their commanding officer, Martin, talks to soldiers around Leavey. He asks them if they are still virgins, but does not ask Leavey. This sexual tone seems to be reserved for men, where women are celebrated as being pure and celibate. Later in the film, Leavey and Morales go into Jarvis' office to find out what she will be doing as part of the military unit. Jarvis misogynistically says to Leavey when she is given the tour of the base that the last girl "got her panties in a twist" because she was only allowed to do bomb checks at check points instead of out in the field. After they talk with Jarvis, Morales tells Leavey that there is a higher bounty on women dog handlers by the enemy because the enemy wants to kill her, or "bone" her, then kill her.

Sexual discourse is present in *Stop-Loss* with a first appearance at the checkpoint. Shriver shows Rodriguez a video of his fiancée, Michelle, with Rodriguez saying, "Damn

man she is hot. She and me would make some nice TexMex babies.” Rodriguez then sees Michelle’s bra, and gets excited, and says that he saw her “tits.” Later, the soldiers are on a bus in Texas. Miller, their commanding officer, is addressing them, saying that when they are on leave to “not fuck anyone underage.” When Michelle and King visit Rodriguez in the hospital, all Rodriguez can talk about is how cute Michelle is and how she sounds pretty. Rodriguez then talks about what King is doing with Michelle, asking if she was giving “him rides” before taking him to the hospital.

Sexual dialogue is used throughout *American Sniper* as well. Early in the film, Kyle is touring around Texas in the rodeo circuit. He is seen competing in a rodeo as a bareback horse rider winning the competition. After, Kyle tells his brother Jeff about how he won a belt and that it should get his girlfriend, Sarah, in the mood for sex. During his first tour, Kyle is talking to Biggles about how Kyle killed the woman and boy with the grenade. The following sexualized conversation occurred:

Biggles: “Talk to me, man. Did you pop your cherry?”

Kyle: “This kid didn’t even have hair on his balls and his mom hands him a grenade—sends him running off to kill Marines.”

Biggles: “You saw his balls?”

Kyle: “It was evil, man. That was hate like I’ve never seen it before.”

Biggles: “That kid could’ve taken out ten Marines.”

Kyle: “I know.”

Biggles: “You did your job. End of fuckin story.”

Sexual dialogue is used again when a commanding officer says that they are “going to need trackers on it if we are humping money.” Another example of sexual discourse

emerges when Kyle visits an injured Marine in the hospital. Kyle says to the Marine that his fiancé is lucky to have him, “all 2 inches of you.” Yet another examples emerges when a veteran named Wynn says while shooting, “Bulls-eye, boy! Damn, if that don’t feel like I got my balls back.”

As in the other films, *The Hurt Locker* contains sexual dialogue as well. During the first scene, while looking at the camera screen of the robot, the following sexual discourse occurs:

Thompson: “Push it in.”

Sanborn: “I can’t get it inside.”

Thompson: “Pretend it’s your dick.”

Sanborn: “I’m pretending it’s your dick.”

Another example occurs when Sanborn and James run out of ammunition while trying to take down an enemy sniper. James asks Eldridge to get the ammunition off of the dead body of the team leader. James asks Eldridge to clean the blood off the ammunition, but Eldridge has a hard time cleaning it off. James tells him to spit and rub that “cooch,” referring to the water and cleaning the blood off of the bullets.

There is only one example of sexual dialogue in both *Lions for Lambs* and *Green Zone*. In *Lions for Lambs*, the sexual discourse occurs when Malley and Hays are talking about politics in Malley’s office. Hays discusses about how politicians are being “jacked off” by a page under the desk while lecturing people about morality. Meanwhile, it occurs in *Green Zone* when Wilkins pulls Miller aside, saying to him that Brown’s men have not done “dick” to secure this area.

### **Unintended Consequences of War**

There are many unintended consequences of war that are depicted in the films analyzed for this dissertation. Some that are typically depicted as un-masculine are portrayed as acceptable and others as not. Disability is the main unintended consequence of war portrayed in these films, typically presented as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Disability in war films is typically portrayed as inferior and marginalized (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13) unless overcome (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89).

In *Megan Leavey*, Leavey exhibits PTSD while living with her father. When the car alarm goes off, and she “freaks out” thinking it is a car bomb. A later scene shows her at a service station where she sees a dog in a hot car. She grabs a baseball bat to break the dog out of the car, with the dog owner yelling at her and she tells him to take better care of his dog. She is obviously experiencing PTSD without Rex. Leavey eventually attends therapy, as she is depicted in a group-therapy session. The therapist asks Leavey how she is doing, Leavey says she is doing better, but has little human interaction. She talks about Rex and starts crying when the therapist asks her what she would say to Rex today. Leavey’s father comes into Leavey’s bedroom in a later scene, telling her that she has got to keep living and figure her life out. Leavey tears up, saying, “You know how to fight because you are a freaking Marine.” The film treats PTSD and exhibiting emotion as acceptable, not as weak.

In *Stop-Loss*, PTSD and the inability to function outside of the military are exhibited. When King decides to flee Texas to go talk to the senator in Washington D.C., he suffers an episode of PTSD. He is sitting by the pool at the motel when he has a flash back, diving into the pool as if to save a soldier. Michelle asks him if he is alright, but he brushes it off as though nothing happened, even though he is clearly showing signs of

PTSD. In a later scene, Burgess is seen in jail for driving drunk and is talking to an Army officer. Shriver is there trying to get him out. Burgess is talking about how he is not good at anything else but being a soldier. He wants to reenlist, but the Army does not want him back. His character seems to not have the ability to be civilized because he is constantly drunk. Shriver also exhibits PTSD when he is digging a fox hole in his front yard and he is having a dream as if he is in Iraq.

Kyle, in *American Sniper*, experiences PTSD when he returns from his final tour. Kyle returns home, but goes to a bar instead of telling Taya that he is back. He gets a call from Taya while at a bar and he starts crying. He says that he came there because he needed a minute before he came home. Later, Kyle is home during a barbeque and he sees his son playing with their dog and the dog starts to act in a violent, yet playful manner. Kyle pulls out his gun and goes over to rip the dog away from his son. He has a crazy look on his face and is sweating when Taya yells at him, he snaps out of it. He is then seen talking to a therapist, but he just brushes the incident off as if nothing had happened.

Meanwhile, Eldridge, in *The Hurt Locker*, is dealing with PTSD the entire movie after the death of Thompson. Eldridge becomes obsessed with the fact that he is going to die because James is going to get him killed. He tells this to the psychiatrist, Cambridge. He seems very uneasy as he talks about how Thompson was alive and then he was dead while cocking his gun back and forth. Eldridge also shows his PTSD when he is in a stressful situation while trying to clean ammunition for James and Sanborn in the desert. Additionally, he invites Cambridge out with them on a bomb raid and Cambridge gets blown up by a bomb. Eldridge picks up Cambridge's helmet and is sobbing.

## Comradery Among Soldiers

Male-bonding (Clarke, 2015, p. 186), comradery (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109), and brotherhood (Cavell, 1979, p. 48) are all major constructs of masculinity, and are a common theme among the films analyzed. This is exhibited in *Megan Leavey* as she is portrayed as part of the team even though she is a girl. This is seen when her fellow bomb squad members haze her on her first day. After raiding a house of weapons in Iraq, Leavey and the fellow soldiers celebrate with beers, jokes, and rock music. Additionally, after being injured during a mission, she retaliates with the other soldiers.

In *Stop-Loss*, brotherhood is evident from the very first scene. A montage depicts the main characters and their fellow soldiers singing a song about fighting and being in the Army. The song discusses about their fathers being in the Army and the protection of the freedom of their brothers, sisters, and mothers. The montage shows each of the soldiers during their tour together, with one soldier bearing a tattoo that declares, “Death before dishonor.” Burgess is seen being baptized during the montage, thus metaphorically being baptized into the brotherhood.

Comradery is exhibited in *Lions for Lambs* when the commander is getting his soldiers ready for battle. They all yell in unison, “Hooya!” The commander tells them about what they are going to do, saying “We are going to get ourselves into that kitchen and put our hands on their throats.” “Hooya,” the soldiers all say in unison. Finch and Rodriguez demonstrate brotherhood as they defend each other and are at each others’ side the entire movie, even when they are presenting in Malley’s class. During the presentation, Finch drops the papers and the class laughs. Rodriguez tells a joke, making fun of Finch, Finch then makes fun of Rodriguez in turn.

Brotherhood is exhibited in *The Hurt Locker* and *Green Zone*. In *The Hurt Locker*, the first scene shows Thompson, Sanborn, and Eldridge on a mission to diffuse a bomb. As they defuse it, they are making jokes and laughing as if they enjoy each other's company. In *Green Zone*, Miller's soldiers yell "Hooya" when he gives them commands before going out on their mission, which is similar to the soldiers in *Lions for Lambs*.

### **Anti-war Music and Dialogue**

The idea of being anti-war is typically portrayed as un-masculine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80) and it goes against the idea of nationalism that is part of military masculinity (McDonald, 2015, p. 238). However, this masculine anti-war construct is portrayed as both acceptable and unacceptable in the film *Stop-loss*. It is portrayed through anti-war dialogue by the male characters in the film. Additionally, it is present in the music selected during the video montages that the soldiers create. The anti-war sentiment is often portrayed as un-masculine; however, it is presented as both acceptable and un-masculine in the film overall. In one montage created by the soldiers, soldiers who have fallen or were injured during the firefight are shown. It depicts what they went through, as well as their helmets resting on their guns, similar to headstones. Below are written the years of life and a tribute such as, "never left the faith, fallen hero, and wounded fight on." The montage is overlaid with rap music that discusses about keeping it together, being desensitized, and how it is easy to have hate be the remedy.

In another scene, King and Michelle arrive in Memphis, with King deciding he needs to make a stop to Preacher's parents house to tell them how their son died. While he is explaining how Preacher died, their other son, Michael, says to King, "is it standard operating procedure to lead your men into an ambush? His life was wasted over there."

Moreover, King breaks down to Michelle saying, “I signed up thinking I was going over to help and protect my country. That’s not what I signed up for. The enemy is not in the desert, they are in the buildings and you don’t know who is who. All you can do is fight for survival. Protecting the person next to you. It is either kill or be killed mentality.” He tells her how he had to kill a father and son to be able to save Shriver in the building. King says that he is done being a soldier. Overall, it seems un-masculine for him to do this because he was afraid she would think less of him for doing it. However, she does not think less of him, so it is presented as acceptable to feel this way.

### **Don’t Show Emotion, Just be a Man**

In war films, masculinity is constructed in contrast to the feminine, and anything feminine, such as emotion, is portrayed as inferior and undesirable (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). In *Stop-Loss*, to show emotion is antithetical to being masculine. This is evident when King is asked to give a speech after a military parade. King struggles with the speech and is starting to show emotion, when Shriver comes up behind him to save him. Shriver tells the crowd that soldiers have to kill people in Iraq instead of having to kill them here in Texas, which makes him look more like a man than emotional. Another example is when King finds out he is being stop-lossed (when a soldier is forcibly retained on active duty beyond their agreed upon contract). He talks to Shriver over the phone, Shriver telling him to calm down and get a grip. King returns home to talk about his options with his family. King’s mother wants him to flee the country, while his father wants him to be a man and work it out with his commanding officers. A final example of this is when Michelle and King visit Rodriguez in the hospital. Rodriguez is missing a leg and an arm, is blind, and covered in burn marks. Yet,

he is demonstrating nothing but happiness, lifting weights to keep his strength up. Even though he is badly injured, he does not show that it is affecting him.

### **Violent Demeanor**

Violence is a major construct of masculinity that is portrayed as practically exclusive to males, especially in war films (Grønstad, 201, p. 90). Males who are violent have a sense of revenge as part of their identity (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404), and people who are not violent are perceived as un-masculine (Connell, 2005, p. 67).

Having a violent demeanor is a common theme among all of the films except for the male soldiers in *Megan Leavey* and overall in *Lions for Lambs*. Leavey does not show a violent demeanor as part of being a soldier, and Rodriguez and Finch only exhibit a play violence between each other. In *Stop-Loss*, Burgess and Shriver are violent in wanting revenge for the enemy soldiers killing their friend Preacher. Burgess is further violent when his wife, Jeanie, gets hit on by another man and he decides to beat him up. Shriver beats up Michelle, and King confronts him for it. They wrestle over it, with King telling Shriver that he should not beat women. Burgess is mad that he got kicked out by Jeanie, so he decides to shoot all of his wedding gifts to blow off steam. King gets in a yelling match with his commanding officer when he finds out that he is being stop-lossed. King is then escorted out where he fights two soldiers and gets away. King further shows a violent demeanor when he is with Michelle and their car gets robbed. When King decides to pursue the robbers, he is beaten up by three of them. King overcomes the robbers and lines them up on their knees, telling them he is going to shoot them. The look in his eyes and face shows that he is violent and scary. Additionally, when King is seen by Shriver at Burgess' funeral, they violently fight and yell at each other.

Kyle, in *American Sniper*, demonstrates a violent demeanor at times as well. When Kyle and Jeff return to his house, they find Sarah, Kyle's girlfriend, in bed with another man. Kyle proceeds to act tough and beat up the other man. During a mission in Iraq, the soldiers get pinned down by the enemy sniper, with Kyle deciding that he will be a hero by putting himself in play. Kyle gets pinned down by the sniper and keeps trying to help, but to no avail. After he gets rescued by his soldiers, he then wants to get a squad together to pursue the enemy. Kyle is grounded from combat after being pinned down and is shown lifting weights with an angry, violent look in his face. In a later scene, Kyle and his team go out on a mission and are shot at. They regroup, with Kyle saying they are going to destroy the enemy, which they do.

In *The Hurt Locker*, James and Sanborn exhibit the most violence. Sanborn hits James in the face after a mission to teach James a lesson on how to follow protocol. A later scene shows Sanborn and James wrestling in their barracks. Sanborn taunts James to hit him in the stomach and grunts at him. James punches him, with Sanborn going down with a grunt. Later, in the same scene, Sanborn says to James, "I owe you a punch mother fucker." Sanborn makes James take off his shirt and they draw a target on his stomach. He punches James in the stomach, with James falling to the ground. He gets up and says, "is that all you've got?". Sanborn lifts up his shirt, egging James on to come fight him. James then calls Sanborn a "bitch" and tackles him. He pins Sanborn to the ground, riding him like a bull. Sanborn is getting angry, and yells for James to get off of him.

Later in the film, James sneaks off the base in search of his friend's killers. He ends up in a house and a woman shoos him out of her residence, yelling at him and throwing pots at him. James returns to the base. Towards the end of the film, when there

is a major suicide bombing, James decides that he wants to find the perpetrators of it. Sanborn does not want to go, but James says “You can’t say no to me. They are looking at us right now and are laughing at us.” James wants to be the hero, and he is taking his fellow soldiers with him. When they end up going after the enemy, Eldridge is captured and shot.

In *Green Zone*, violence is depicted through both violence and competition between government workers. In an intel briefing, Brown questions Proudstone’s plan to settle things in Iraq. When Proudstone calls out Brown, they shout at each other. Later in the film, Miller and his soldiers are negotiating with Qasim, when Briggs appears and takes Qasim away. Miller yells at Briggs, with Briggs telling him that this is above his pay grade. Briggs walks away, but finds out that Qasim is missing a book. Miller refuses to give Briggs the book, so Briggs punches him in the nose. Miller and Briggs wrestle, and the other soldiers start a major brawl. Briggs pins Miller to the ground, ripping open his uniform to find the book. Miller spits blood and has a bloody nose. Later, Miller meets with Brown, telling Brown that he came here to help his country and find WMDs, but says that he has not found “shit.” Miller raises his voice while saying this, and his face has a look of anger. Proudstone comes in with a cocky look on his face and tells Brown that he and his team are shut down. Later, a local Iraqi with a ski mask on, goes into a safe house and enters firing his weapon. He shoots everyone in an act of graphic violence. He asks where Rawi is to the last person alive, and then kills him at point-blank range. At the end of the film, Miller hands his intel report to Proudstone, telling him he knows what Proudstone did. Proudstone says that it does not matter now because it is in the past. Miller immediately gets a look of anger in his eyes, raising his voice and saying

that why people go to war every time matters. He tries to grab Proudstone, but two soldiers restrain Miller as anger fills his voice. They tell Miller to calm down.

### **Cowardice is Not Manly**

In war films, cowardice is portrayed as un-masculine (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80), and this is evident in four of the films analyzed for this dissertation. In *Stop-Loss*, King leaves the motel seeking out a fellow stop-loss soldier who has fled the military. The soldier offers King the number to a friend who can help him get over the border to Canada. King refuses at first, saying he is not interested in “the yellow-belliedness” of fleeing the country. In a later scene, King shows up at the end of Burgess’ funeral, and Shriver and King fight. Shriver yells at King for leaving and coming back too late. Shriver yells at King, saying, “you don’t fucking belong here.”

In *American Sniper*, Kyle denounces cowards because he is presented as stoic and strong. For example, Kyle sees his brother Jeff—Kyle is excited to see him—but Jeff has this overall presence of being tired. Kyle asks where he is going, and he says that he is tired, so he is going home. Kyle tells him that their father is proud of him, with Jeff responding with “fuck this place” and Kyle reacting with rage at what his brother said. Later, Kyle and Lee are talking after a briefing, with Lee expressing doubt about what they are doing. Lee feels like he has no feelings, and that he is just numb. Lee tells Kyle that he just wants to believe in what they are doing again. Lee ends up shot and killed. During his funeral, a letter is read from Lee to his wife, and it expresses doubt in the war effort. After the funeral, Taya asks Kyle what he thought of Lee’s letter. He says that his letter killed him because he was weak and doubted the war effort.

There are two scenes in *The Hurt Locker* and *Green Zone* that present cowardice as un-masculine as well. In *The Hurt Locker*, Eldridge and James have a drink, with James saying to Eldridge that he fought well. They both sit down, with Eldridge admitting that he was scared out in the field today. James says that everyone is a coward at some time in their lives. In *Green Zone*, Proudstone comes in on the interrogation of the sweating and crying Qasim. Briggs grabs Qasim's throat, insisting that Qasim tell him where Rawi is, which he eventually does.

### **Patriotism and Duty**

Patriotism and duty is another construct that is presented as being masculine and is traditionally used in war films (McDonald, 2015, p. 238). This is an overall theme in *American Sniper* particularly through Kyle's character. From the beginning, Kyle is groomed by his father to care about his family, god, and country. His father teaches him to hunt, to take care of those who are weak, and to defend the defenseless against the enemy. Kyle's father encourages him to be a sheep dog and protect others from "wolves"—that is, those who use violence to prey on the weak. This parallels the U.S. and its war effort to protect those who cannot protect themselves. This is evident when Kyle is angry over the attacks on 9/11 and is excited to go to war against the enemy. It is further built up over the entire film, as Kyle is trying to complete his task of taking out the enemy sniper, Mustafa, who is killing U.S. soldiers. All he can do is think about the war even when he is home. When he is home, he is not present and cannot be present until Mustafa is dead. When he kills Mustafa, he calls Taya and tells her that he is ready to come home.

Additionally, patriotism is evident in *Lions for Lambs*, particularly through Finch and Rodriguez. They are giving a presentation in class and get in a heated debate over their plans for a better country. To silence their classmates, they put their army enlistment papers on the overhead projector. They then go to dinner with Malley, explaining why they are enlisting even though they could go to any graduate school in the country and have a bright future. Finch and Rodriguez enlisted because they want to be a part of the greatest thing going on in their lives. Rodriguez says that the men who lead step up when there is something to be done. Later, Malley and Hays are still talking about the potential Malley sees in Hays. Malley tells him that “if you try and fail that is better than failing to try...at least you did something.” Malley tells Hays that he is his own man and he needs to own his own decisions. Later, Hays is watching the news, learning that there is another offensive in Afghanistan. A close-up shows that he is pondering. His friend sitting on the couch asks him questions, but he does not answer. It seems as if he is thinking of joining the military to do something with his life.

### **Emotion is Acceptable for Men to Show**

Although emotion is typically constructed as un-masculine in war films (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42), many of the films in this study depict male soldiers as emotional, and in an acceptable way. In *The Hurt Locker*, when the soldiers are defusing a bomb in the first scene, Thompson puts on a bomb suit to diffuse it by hand, and he seems scared. Eldridge and Sanborn seem scared as well as the bomb scare escalates. The very next scene shows Sanborn in a room with a bunch of white boxes. He is told to put Thompson’s dog tag somewhere in the box, with Sanborn in a state of shock. With a blank look in his eyes and his eyebrows not moving, he seems emotionless. All he can do

is stare at Thompson's white box. During a later scene, the bomb-squad goes into a bomb-making facility and find a dead boy, who was being turned into a body bomb. When James recognizes the boy as his friend Beckham, who sells DVDs, he becomes emotional to the point of vomiting. James decides to disarm the body, but he cannot get himself to blow it up. Instead, he covers the body up and carries it out. Outside the building, Cambridge tries to get civilians to move away from their Hummer when he is blown up by a bomb. Eldridge is crying and having trouble breathing at what he just witnessed.

In a later scene, James is emotional after going on a mission that resulted in Eldridge getting hurt. James goes into the shower and he is seen as emotional, but then he becomes angry and starts kicking and punching the walls. Later, James is once again emotional as he is disarming a man with a bomb attached to him. The man with the bomb on him says that he does not want to die because he has a family. He does not want James to leave, and he is emotional and crying. James yells to the man that he cannot save him and that he is sorry. James' voice cracks with emotion as he keeps saying sorry. A final example is with Sanborn when he is in the Hummer talking to James. Sanborn says that he is not well, he seems sad and at his wits end. He says that he does not want to die out here.

Additionally, emotion is shown in *Lions for Lambs* in a few scenes. The first one is when Finch wakes up on the top of a mountain covered with snow. He sees Rodriguez, yells to him with a crack in his voice, while looking really worried about Rodriguez. In the same scene but later in the film, Rodriguez is covered in blood and looks beat up. Rodriguez is shivering and is scared. Later in the film, Finch and Rodriguez are battling

the enemy and are badly injured. They run out of ammunition and both look scared. The music is emotionally rising in this scene.

In *Stop-Loss*, emotion is evident through both Shriver and King. At Burgess' funeral, his estranged wife, Jackie, is crying hysterically. Shriver talks to Jackie, reciting the saying for giving the flag over to her while fighting back emotions. His voice is also trembling. He gets teary eyed as he touches Burgess' casket. When Shriver sees King after the funeral, they get into a major fight. After the fight, Shriver is kneeling down and crying. Following the funeral, King returns home, crying while hugging his parents. He touches Burgess' military items and starts to cry. The music in the scene is highly emotional. He shakes Roy's hand, and Roy starts to cry as King leaves. The next scene goes back to the start. Ida is emotional and hugging Roy. Shriver looks like he is sad and emotional to be leaving. Close-ups on the faces of all the other soldiers show them as looking scared and emotional, while King appears expressionless.

### **War is the Place where Men Thrive**

Through the battlefield experience (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 107) and through basic training (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5), men become part of the male-dominated community where they will thrive (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-48). In the six films analyzed, masculinity is constructed through how the battlefield is a place where men thrive. This is evident in *American Sniper*, when Kyle is unable to function when he is at home, but is perfectly capable when he is in the battlefield. Additionally, it is evident in the Burgess character in *Stop-Loss* when he is constantly drunk when he is home, but seems fine when he is in the battlefield. Furthermore, it is evident in *Megan Leavey* when she is not with Rex, she has PTSD.

In *The Hurt Locker*, it is evident through James' character. From the second the audience meets James, he just seems in his element. For example, when Sanborn goes to meet James for the first time and knocks on his barracks door, James is smoking and listening to heavy metal music. The two talk, with James asking Sanborn to help him remove the plywood over the window. Sanborn tells him that that is not a good idea because they often get mortar shelled during the night. James disregards the advice, saying that the plywood would do little to nothing to block the shells from coming in. Later, during their first mission together, James comes off as reckless. He has little regard for bomb-squad protocol. James walks down the street without cover and goes out of sight of Sanborn who is supposed to support him. James finds a bomb and comes back to put on the suit. When he decides that he does not want to wear the bomb gloves and Sanborn protests, James disregards him. James then returns to the bomb and diffuses it. Later in the film, the bomb squad is called on a mission at the United Nations building. There is a bomb in a parked car next to the building. They arrive, with the U.N. guard telling them where the car is and how he knows that there is a bomb. James responds by telling the guard, "Why don't you go to the car and peek inside and tell me what you see. Just kidding." The guard looks scared, but James seems perfectly calm. James puts on the suit and heads down to the car. While walking down to the car, people start shooting at James, yet he does not seem fazed. The bullets hit the car and start a fire. James gets a fire extinguisher and puts out the fire, while all the other soldiers are running to kill the people shooting at them. He seems calm as if he is putting out a fire at home. James gets the car open and sees how many explosives are inside. James takes off the bomb suit, saying to himself calmly that if he is going to die today, better do it comfortably,

referring to the suit being hot. He finds the piece he needs to remove, yelling to Sanborn that he has diffused the bomb. James walks back to the Hummer. He gets a bottle of water, drinks some and throws the rest on his sweaty head. While doing that he yells out in celebration. He then smokes a cigarette, saying, “that was good!”

At the end of the film, James returns home and is seen in a montage grocery shopping, cooking with his wife, cleaning out his gutters, and talking with his son. He seems unhappy at home. The end of the montage shows him walking out of a plane and then in the bomb suit, with heavy metal music playing. He now seems happy and in his element.

### **Leadership**

Masculinity has been defined as someone who “is rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done and ardently heterosexual” (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18). All of these characteristics describe a cinematic construct of someone who is a leader. Leadership is another construct of masculinity, which is most evident in *Green Zone* through the characters of Miller and Rawi. The film opens up with Baghdad being bombed by the U.S. military and a house being cleared out of its people and things. The audience sees Rawi barking orders at his men as they are fleeing the house. Women and children are screaming; however, Rawi continues to lead his men as they leave the house carrying their important items. In a later scene, Iraq military leaders are in a meeting with Rawi. The other military officials are fighting with each other over what they should do with the Americans. Rawi waits, then calms them down and talks some sense into them. He seems calm and stoic as he explains what needs to be done. In a subsequent scene, Miller and his team return to the base, and Miller is concerned. He is

frustrated because he has not found any WMDs on his last three missions. The film cuts to a briefing where Miller asks if the intel is accurate and the commander says that it is “solid.” Miller continues to question them about the intel. He says that there is nothing there, and he seems angry and frustrated. On their next mission, Miller and his team get stopped on the street by a crowd. Miller sends a few soldiers forward to clear the traffic, getting into a fight with some civilians. Miller sees this and immediately comes out and yells at his soldiers. As they make excuses, he tells them to get the “fuck back to their vehicles.” After Miller has sent out his intel report to all of the news media, a montage of Miller walking out and riding away in his Hummer is shown, with a medium close-up on his face portraying him as a good person because he sent the truth out through the media.

### **Irving versus Roth**

Masculinity is defined in contrast to femininity (Connell, 2005, p. 70), or as opposites such as “man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine” (Adams, 2008, p. 8). In the film *Lions for Lambs*, the characters of Irving and Roth are constructed in contrast and parallel to each other. Roth is dressed in a pantsuit and glasses and has long hair. As a journalist, she wants to write a detailed timeline about the war on terror. She asks many questions and is depicted as smart. She questions Irving’s perspective because he is talking from the comforts of his office. Roth asks tough questions such as why so many troops and supplies were sent to Iraq and not to Afghanistan where they are needed. Roth seems logical, and she takes blame for her news channel becoming more infotainment instead of hard news by explaining how her outlet overnight went from a news organization to a business that cared more about revenue. Roth leaves the meeting

and the music starts to get solemn. A close-up on her face shows her with a look of concern; pensive and slightly emotional.

On the other hand, Irving is very articulate, and he is only doing the interview as a favor to Roth. He wants Roth to write a specific story instead of letting her dictate how the interview goes. He is concerned that the news media do not tell the correct story. Irving admits that the military had made mistakes in the war, but that they have learned from them. Irving gets annoyed that Roth is taking his comments out of what he thinks is proper context. Irving feels that it is part of his responsibility to protect the American people. Irving talks down to Roth and Irving's strategy shows that the government is being very aggressive and violent, only caring about getting the job done. Irving admits that they made mistakes in the war effort because of bad intel, leaders who have never bled on the battlefield, and bad public relations. Irving comes off as logical in explaining the new strategy.

For the most part, Roth is constructed as an equal to Irving; however, Irving is portrayed more as a typical masculine person. He is more aggressive, angry, and has little regard for the consequences. Moreover, Irving talks down to Roth at times during the interview, and even calls her out. In response, Roth is calm and willing to accept her faults.

### **Summary**

The films analyzed for this dissertation demonstrate that the war film genre is making strides forward in gender equality, as well as continuing to perpetuate traditional masculine constructs. In *Megan Leavey*, Leavey is portrayed as an average soldier in a war film despite the fact that she is a woman. She is portrayed in the warrior image

similar to a male soldier. She is portrayed as stoic, aggressive, and able to get the job done in the battlefield. She is treated as if she is equal to any other soldier. Additionally, she is not sexualized and she exhibits signs of PTSD and emotion, which are portrayed as acceptable.

The films in this study show that the war genre is portraying women more accurately as soldiers. There were female soldiers in *Green Zone*, *Megan Leavey*, *Lions for Lambs*, and *American Sniper*. These women were either involved in briefings, as part of the communication team, or being in the battlefield. Only *Megan Leavey* portrayed an accurate number of female soldiers in the film.

Additionally, disability is being portrayed as acceptable. PTSD as a disability is portrayed in many of the films. It is portrayed as acceptable in *Megan Leavey* and in *The Hurt Locker*; however, it was only portrayed in the other films as acceptable if the soldier overcomes it. This is the case in *American Sniper* and in *Stop-Loss*. *Stop-Loss* further portrays disability from loss of limbs as acceptable as long as the soldier overcomes it stoically. Moreover, emotion is typically constructed as un-masculine in war films; however, many of the films in this study depict male soldiers as emotional, and in an acceptable way. This was evident in *The Hurt Locker*, *Lions for Lambs*, *American Sniper*, and *Stop-Loss*.

Although the films in this study demonstrated a move towards gender equality, many of the films continued to portray women in a negative light. Women continue to be portrayed as subordinate and weak to their male counterparts. Additionally, they continue to be sexualized. When they are depicted as strong, they are seen as inferior instead of being celebrated. This can be understood better as feminist theory suggests that the media

misrepresents women's lives to "sustain patriarchal images and values" (Rooney, 2006, p. 172). Additionally, film is argued to be produced specifically for males and therefore females need to conform to "masculine desires" (p. 172).

Other traditional masculine constructs of the war genre were also present. Being stoic, calm, aggressive, competitive, and able to get the job done as part the warrior image was evident, both through basic training and on the battlefield. This construct did make strides towards gender equality in *Megan Leavey*; however, that was the lone example. Gender-biased communication discusses how a focus on imagery, such as the traditional masculine ideal, can have a negative effect on social construction. Females and un-athletic males who either do not want to participate in physical activities or are un-athletic are excluded because they do not "fit the masculine ideal of an athlete" (Valley and Graber, 2017, p. 498).

Comradery was evident in many of the films to construct masculinity and cowardice was depicted as un-masculine in four of the films. Although it is portrayed as un-masculine, cowardice is portrayed in the latter half of *Stop-Loss* as acceptable in King's situation. Even though sexual dialogue was not evident as a masculine construct in the literature, sexual prowess is a common theme. All of the films exhibited some sort of sexual dialogue, which demonstrates a sexual prowess and therefore, can be seen as a masculine construct. The sexual dialogue was reserved for males only, and when it does involve females, it is only directed at them. Male sexuality, such as sexual prowess, seducing of females, and sexual ability are "consistently associated with hegemonic masculinity" especially in consumer culture (Wortmann, Wortmann, & Park, 2011, p. 2).

Additionally, males are most likely to talk freely about sex, while women are more closed (Ponzetti, 2003, p. 1437).

Violence and aggression parallel each other in many of the films as a masculine construct. Each film, except *Lions for Lambs*, have one character that exhibit a violent or aggressive behavior at one point or another. This behavior is typically is an act of revenge for killing their fellow soldiers or civilian friends. Although this is traditionally reserved for male soldiers, Leavey is portrayed as violent and aggressive in *Megan Leavey*. War and violence are interconnected with the main goal of a warrior being “preserving one’s own life and the lives of one’s comrades” (Raskind, McCaslin, and Jakupcak, 2014, p. 701). To become warriors, soldiers are “rigorously trained to become highly proficient in the multiple techniques of deadly force” (p. 701). Additionally, “eliminating a perceived threat with maximum violence and speed becomes a rapid reflexive response that becomes stronger with repeated combat deployments” (p. 701).

Patriotism and duty, similar to WWII films, was evident in two of the films as a construct. This was evident in *American Sniper* when Kyle was brought up to have values of god, family, and country instilled in him. Additionally, Finch and Rodriguez in *Stop-Loss* went to war because it was their duty to do so and they wanted to fight for their country. Patriotism and war have been connected for centuries (Somerville, 1981, p. 568). Patriotism and war create a visual of “a man with arms in hand risking his life on the field of battle” (p. 568). This risk is to defend one’s freedoms and physically defend one’s people and country from aggression and invasion (p. 568).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation set out to answer questions regarding how masculinity is constructed in post-9/11 American war films by both male and female directors and screenwriters and what cinematic techniques were being employed in its construction. Additionally, this dissertation aims to answer how women were being portrayed in these films. This study found that both traditional constructs of masculinity were being employed from earlier eras of the war film genre, as well as nontraditional masculine constructs.

#### **Masculinity Constructs**

##### ***Warrior Image***

The *Normative* approach to masculinity creates a social standard of what men should be (Connell, 2005, p. 70). That standard consists of someone who is tough, who can take pain, and who is aggressive. Other definitions of masculinity show that “men are generally shown to be stoic, bearing their agony discreetly, dismissing mortal wound as mere scratches” (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75), and having “almost superhuman stoicism regarding pain and loss” (Stegall, 2014, p. 3). Through the ritual of war, men become warriors as they are separated from society and family to go through basic training with other soldiers (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5). The warrior image is a major masculinity construct of WWII films, as war makes the image socially acceptable (Sitter, 2013, p. 7). In Vietnam-era war films, the warrior image is created through the chiseled male body, where the body is celebrated and exalted as inherently masculine (Williams, 2003, p. 221).

In *Megan Leavey*, the warrior image is created when Leavey goes to boot camp and while she is on a mission. She and the other soldiers have their shirts off and they appear to be strong. The montage is exciting and fast paced—demonstrating how tough a soldier has to be enduring drills, and the obstacle course. Leavey and her fellow soldiers struggle through it all while they are getting yelled at by drill leaders. Music, cinematography, and mise-en-scène are used to create the overall atmosphere of the montage. In a later scene, Leavey is injured, but continues to fight during a mission, which is portrayed through her acting, cinematography, and mise-en-scène with her makeup. The warrior image is similar in *Stop-Loss*, in which the soldiers fight the enemy in a calm and stoic way, but are aggressive when in a firefight and are calm under distress. When they are hurt, the “true” soldiers show no pain, and if they are injured, they brush it off, which is depicted through their acting and cinematography. This is further evident when King has his shirt off—he appears muscular, is all cut up and bleeding, and shows little pain when she cleans his wounds, which is all depicted through the mise-en-scène.

In *American Sniper*, Kyle is portrayed as a warrior. He joins the “warrior elite” in the Navy SEALs, surviving basic training, which is depicted through music, dialogue, and acting. In *The Hurt Locker*, the warrior image is glorified and the soldiers are portrayed as stoic and calm when faced with danger. Additionally, the warrior image is depicted through Sanborn when he and James wrestle in the barracks, with Sanborn taking his shirt off, beating his chest, and grunting to get James to fight him. The image is portrayed through acting, cinematography, sound, and mise-en-scène. In *Green Zone*, the warrior image is portrayed through Miller and Briggs appearing stoic and composed

under pressure. Meanwhile, *Lions for Lambs* uses the battlefield as a grounds for the warrior image, with Finch and Rodriguez portrayed as stoic and calm under pressure. Even when they are hurt, they fight to the last bullet. When they die, they die standing instead of on the ground like cowards, which is depicted through dialogue and acting.

### ***Sexual Dialogue***

Sexual discourse, or what is often referred to as “locker room talk,” is another construct that is inherently masculine with all of it being constructed through dialogue. This is present in *Megan Leavey* when the commanding officers talk about being virgins to male soldiers and not to Leavey. This sexual tone seems to be reserved for men, whereas women are celebrated as being pure and celibate. The film uses the sexual slang of “getting her panties in a twist” and discussing the enemy “boning” her. In *Stop-Loss*, sexual dialogue is used when Rodriguez talks about Michelle’s “tits” and making babies with her. Rodriguez then talks about what King is doing with Michelle, asking if she was giving “him rides” before taking him to the hospital.

In *American Sniper* sexual dialogue is used throughout. Kyle’s first kill is referred to as “popping his cherry” and the boy he killed didn’t have “dropped or hairy balls.” Later, a soldier refers to payouts to locals as “humping money.” Additionally, Kyle later makes fun of the size of a soldier’s genitals, and a disabled soldier talks about getting his “balls” back when firing a gun again. In *The Hurt Locker*, sexual discourse is present from the first scene when Thompson, Eldridge, and Sanborn discuss using the robot as a “penis” and “pushing it in.” The film also refers to sexual acts when Eldridge is cleaning off the blood from the ammunition by “spitting and rubbing it.” However, there is only one example of sexual discourse in both *Lions for Lambs* and *Green Zone*. In *Lions for*

*Lambs*, the sexual occurs when Hays characterizes politicians as being “jacked off” by a page under the desk while lecturing people about morality. Meanwhile, it occurs in *Green Zone* when Wilkins pulls Miller aside, saying to him that Brown’s men have not done “dick” to secure this area.

Sexuality, masculinity, and the military are all interconnected, which positions sexual discourse in these war films. The military male hegemony glorifies and requires a sexual prowess in its male soldiers, and demonizes those who do not have one as subordinate (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Masculinity defines an un-masculine person as someone not interested in sexual conquest (Connell, 2005, p. 67), and culture espouses a soldier’s manliness to their ability to attract and seduce women (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 45). Additionally, male sexuality is tied to hegemonic masculinity in consumer culture through one’s sexual prowess (Wortmann et al., 2011, p. 2).

### ***Unintended Consequences of War***

In Vietnam-era war films, homosexuality and femininity are rejected because they are characterized as representing physical weakness and cowardice. Soldiers counter homosexuality and femininity in these films by constantly bulking up their bodies to attain hypermasculinity (Williams, 2003, p. 106). Wounded soldiers are not necessarily portrayed as feminine in war films as long as soldiers demonstrate resilience and toughness without the help of the nuclear family, which is often portrayed as feminine (Meeuf, 2009, p. 106). These characteristics are exhibited in many of the films. In *Megan Leavey*, Leavey exhibits PTSD while living with her father, which is exhibited when a car alarm goes off and when Leavey tries to break a dog out of a car at a gas station. Her PTSD is evident through her acting. The PTSD is portrayed as acceptable even when she

exhibits emotion while talking about Rex during a therapy group session, which is evident in her acting and the cinematography. Although the film treats PTSD and exhibiting emotion as acceptable, the dialogue suggests that soldiers keep fighting and be tough to not dwell on the negative war experiences.

In *Stop-Loss*, PTSD and the inability to function outside of the military are exhibited. King has two spells, brushing them off as if there is nothing wrong, which is evident in his dialogue and acting. Burgess, who is constantly drunk, is portrayed as being unable to function in a civilized world. Moreover, Shriver exhibits PTSD when he is digging a foxhole in his front yard and he is having a dream as if he is in Iraq. The PTSD is evident in both Burgess' and Shriver's dialogue and in their acting. Meanwhile, Kyle, in *American Sniper*, experiences PTSD and emotion when he returns from his final tour. Kyle returns home from war, but goes to a bar instead of telling Taya that he is back. He gets a call from Taya while at a bar and he starts crying, saying that he came there because he needed a minute before coming home. Later, Kyle is home during a barbeque, seeing his son playing with the dog and the pet starts to play fight. Kyle pulls out his gun and goes over to rip the dog away from his son. Kyle has a crazy look on his face and he is sweating. Taya yells at him and he snaps out of it. He is then seen talking to a therapist, with the therapist asking him about the incident. He just brushes it off as if nothing happened, when it was, in fact, a scary incident. Meanwhile, Eldridge, in *The Hurt Locker*, is dealing with PTSD the entire movie after the death of Thompson. He seems uneasy and obsessed with his death, which is evident in his dialogue, acting, and in the cinematography.

As portrayed in many of the films analyzed for this study, soldiers will go to great lengths to avoid the perceived stigmas of being labeled as homosexual, feminine, or disabled through PTSD. A masculine soldier will overcome their PTSD by being strong-willed (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89), and physical fitness and competition demonstrates that a masculine soldier is better than the subordinate masculinities who are incapable of performing such tasks (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). Men who do not match the dominate masculinity are marginalized in war films and are portrayed as subordinate (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13). When a masculine soldier is portrayed as homosexual or feminine, they immediately do something hypermasculine, such as workout, as portrayed in *American Sniper*, or fight, as portrayed in *Stop-Loss* (Wortmann et al., 2011, p. 2).

### ***Comradery Among Soldiers***

Comradery also is an important component for the construction of masculinity in war films. This comradery is depicted through physical fitness, ability, efficiency, and competitiveness in training and combat situations (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). In war films, soldiers live in a male hegemonic society, in which they are part of a community. This community is strengthened through comradery and brotherhood (Cavell, 1979, p. 47). The bond of comradery in WWII films is strengthened through the brotherhood of combat and working for the better of the team (Crim, 2014, p. 97; Sitter, 2013, p. 109). Brotherhood in the military and the accomplishments of creating a superior military and defeating the enemy are praised constructs of masculinity in WWII films (Meeuf, 2009, p. 97). In films depicting wars prior to 1970, the depiction of male bonding among soldiers is inherently masculine because there are only males with which to interact

(Clarke, 2006, p. 24). Thus, the “brothers in arms mythos” is the most important cinematic masculine narrative (Stegall, 2014, p. 168).

Comradery is depicted in *Megan Leavey* by portraying her as part of the team, even though she is a woman. This is seen when her fellow bomb squad members haze her on her first day. After raiding a house of weapons in Iraq, she and the other soldiers celebrate with beers, jokes, and rock music. Additionally, after being injured during a mission, Leavey retaliates with the other soldiers. Similarly, comradery is evident in *Stop-Loss* through the montage of videos of soldiers fighting together, which is portrayed through cinematography and acting. It is further evident through the soldiers watching over each other, even when they are not in combat situations, which is portrayed through the soldiers acting. Comradery is further evident in *Lions for Lambs* when the commander is getting his soldiers ready for battle and they all yell in unison, “Hooya!”. Finch and Rodriguez demonstrate brotherhood as they stay at each other’s side and defend the mountain top until their death, which is portrayed through their dialogue, acting, and the cinematography. In *The Hurt Locker*, the very first scene shows Thompson, Sanborn, and Eldridge on a mission to diffuse a bomb. As they defuse the bomb, they are making jokes and laughing as if they enjoy each other’s company. In *Green Zone*, Miller’s soldiers yell “Hooya” when he gives them commands before going out on their mission, which is similar to the soldiers in *Lions for Lambs*.

### ***Emotion is Not Acceptable for Men to Show***

A man who is showing emotion and is unable to control it is portraying womanly characteristics (Stegall, 2014, p. 3), and masculinity is typically defined in contrast or opposition to anything feminine (Adams, 2008, p. 8). Anything perceived as feminine is

typically seen as subordinate (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 12), and masculine identity has been defined as “I am not a woman” (Horrocks, 1995, p. 33).

In both *Stop-Loss* and *American Sniper*, to show emotion is antithetical to being masculine. This is evident in *Stop-Loss* when King is asked to give a speech after the military parade. When he shows emotion in his dialogue and Shriver steps in to help him out. Another example is when Michelle and King visit Rodriguez in the hospital. Rodriguez is missing a leg and an arm, is blind, and covered in burn marks. Yet, he appears happy in the cinematography and is lifting weights to keep his strength up. Even though he is injured, he is still strong like a man. In *American Sniper*, Kyle appears stoic and is emotionless when Taya is being emotional. This is evident when they are in the doctor’s office and Taya is stressed out that Kyle’s blood pressure is high and he says he is fine, which is portrayed through dialogue and acting. Similarly, he shows no emotion to the therapist when they discuss his episode of PTSD during the barbeque.

Masculine films traditionally depict men and women in contrast (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404), and culture characterizes the external appearance of emotions as inherently female (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). Therefore, expressing emotions is in contrast to what is traditionally masculine, is inferior, and should be avoided (p. 42). Rather than express emotions, soldiers are typically depicted as stoic, discreetly bearing their pain (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75).

### ***Violent Demeanor***

The *Essentialist* definition of masculinity is that men have attributes of “risk-taking, responsibility, irresponsibility, aggression, Zeus energy” (Connell, 2005, p. 68). These attributes parallel characteristics of violence, and violence emerges as a major

construct of masculinity in war films (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90) Violence makes it possible for the male protagonist to create a “positive masculine identity” (p. 91). This idea of violence and masculinity as interconnected developed when Hollywood started creating films about WWII (Sitter, 2013, p. 164). During WWII, violence and masculinity were recognized as a necessary part of manhood, portraying soldiers and their commitment in protecting the nation’s liberty; accordingly, “the violence associated with war was regarded as unavoidable and a point of sacrifice and bravery” (p. 76).

Having a violent demeanor is a common theme among all of the films analyzed for this study, except *Megan Leavey* for male soldiers and *Lions for Lambs*. Leavey does not show a violent demeanor as part of being a soldier, and Rodriguez and Finch only exhibit a playful violence between each other. In *Stop-Loss*, Burgess and Shriver are violent in wanting revenge for the enemy soldiers killing their friend Preacher, which is evident in their dialogue. Burgess is further violent when his wife, Jeanie, is hit on by another man and he decides to beat him up. King and Shriver exhibit a violent demeanor when they fight several times during the film. King further exhibits a violent demeanor when he fights other soldiers and the people who robbed his car. Kyle, in *American Sniper*, demonstrates a violent demeanor at times during the film, beating up the cowboy when he finds him sleeping with his girlfriend and being aggressive when the enemy has killed or injured his fellow soldiers, which is evident in his acting and the cinematography. In *The Hurt Locker*, James and Sanborn exhibit the most violence. Sanborn hits James in the face after a mission. A later scene shows Sanborn and James wrestling in their barracks. James is portrayed as aggressive in retaliation to a suicide bombing and for the enemy turning a dead boy into a body bomb, which is evident in his

acting and in the cinematography. In *Green Zone*, violence is depicted through actual war violence and through competition between government workers. Proudstone and Brown are aggressive and angry as they are competitive rivals throughout the film, which is evident in their dialogue and acting. Meanwhile, Briggs and Miller are portrayed as aggressive in the battlefield and when they fight each other, which is portrayed through their acting.

War is arguably the most violent of any human undertaking, where killing the enemy and protecting one's life and the lives of others, is the upmost and important goal of a soldier (Raskind et al., 2014, p. 701). It is to be expected then that soldiers, and those portraying them in war films, should possess a violent demeanor in order to carry out this goal. Additionally, it is to be deduced that violence would be inherently masculine since war films came to fruition when females were not allowed in the military (Sitter, 2013, p. 2).

### ***Cowardice is Not Manly***

Heroes in war films show their masculinity through how they face mortality. They fear death, but aren't afraid to die, and instead are defined by the way they face the threat of death (Grønstad, 2010, p. 129). In war films, the coward dies a thousand times in comparison to the brave soldier, and that fear of death or injury apparent to a soldier in the film states that they are unworthy of being true men (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 80). Courage is a quality of manliness and fear is the opposite of courage (p. 161). Hypermasculinity is used to reject cowardice and weakness through the sculpting and care of the male body (Williams, 2003, p. 223). A soldier who is unwilling to fight is a

coward (Stegall, 2014, p. 3), and the masculine war narrative glorifies one's killing capacity in combat while demonizing those who restrain from killing as cowards (p. 168).

Cowardice seen as un-masculine is evident in four of the films. In *Stop-Loss*, King portrays cowardice as un-masculine, but then changes his mind as he defects to Mexico. However, Shriver considers it un-masculine when he fights with King at the funeral, which is evident in the dialogue during the scene. In *American Sniper*, Kyle denounces cowards because he is presented as stoic and strong. He denounces his brother Jeff when he leaves the military and he denounces his friend Lee who questioned the war effort, saying that Lee was killed because of it. In *The Hurt Locker*, Eldridge and James have a drink, with James saying to Eldridge that he fought well. They both sit down, Eldridge admitting that he was scared out in the field today. James says that everyone is a coward at some time in their lives. In *Green Zone*, Proudstone comes in on the interrogation of a sweating and crying Qasim, which makes him look weak and cowardly, which is evident through his acting and the cinematography.

### ***Patriotism and Duty***

The war film uses “symbolic ideas of community, society, and values” as part of each film (Grotkopp and Kappelhoff, 2012, p. 37). Furthermore, Hollywood is an agent “to solicit American myth and nationalism,” and “mediates masculinities and masculinities' relationships to military violence” (McDonald, 2015, p. 238). During WWII, Hollywood constructed a masculinity that included recruitment and “males' patriotic duty to their nation and the necessity to kill in order to protect their families and democracy” (Sitter, 2013, p. 67). This was exemplified through the connection between men and their uniforms, with their uniforms becoming synonymous with the ideal soldier.

“The ideal soldier became synonymous with the ideal masculinity” (p. 76). In Vietnam-era films, “Masculinity is defined by allegiance to one’s country/nation-state and/or god and that to die for one’s country/nation-state and/or god is the highest honor a man can earn in his life” (Stegall, 2014, p. 3). Moreover, masculinity is a link with the “American soldier” as the defender of the defenseless, one who stands up against oppression, and the “savior of the world” (p. 3).

Patriotism and duty represent a masculinity theme in *American Sniper* through Kyle’s character. From the beginning, Kyle is groomed by his father to care about his family, god, and country. His father teaches him to hunt, to take care of those who are weak, and to defend the defenseless against the enemy. This parallels the U.S. and its war effort to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Kyle’s character fights and cannot be even present when home until the enemy is killed, which is evident through his acting, dialogue, and the cinematography. Additionally, patriotism is evident in *Lions for Lambs* through Finch and Rodriguez. They joined the military because there is no better thing that they can do to help with the cause than serve, which influences Hayes in his perceived decision to join the military.

Patriotism and war have been connected for centuries, and war has been the vehicle for which patriotism exhibits itself (Somerville, 1981, p. 568). The traditional visual image of patriotism ties it directly to masculinity, creating an image of “a man with arms in hand risking his life on the field of battle” (p. 568). The idea of risking one’s life to protect his country demonstrates “a supreme form of courage” (p. 568) and courage is a traditional masculine trait (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404).

### ***Anti-war Music and Dialogue***

Patriotism and war have been connected for centuries, and the traditional visual image of patriotism ties it directly to masculinity (Somerville, 1981, p. 568). Hollywood has used patriotism and duty to create a sense of nationalism (McDonald, 2015, p. 238), using the war film to instill these symbolic ideals of patriotism and duty as part of society (Grotkopp and Kappelhoff, 2012, p. 37). This is evident in WWII films (Sitter, 2013, p. 67) and Vietnam-era war films (Stegall, 2014, p. 3). Additionally, in *American Sniper*, being unpatriotic or having anti-war sentiments is portrayed as un-masculine. However, it is not portrayed in the same light in *Stop-Loss*. In one montage, soldiers are represented as being stoic and heroic, with the music denoting that the only way to get through the war is by being desensitized and using hate as their remedy. In another scene, when King and Michelle arrive in Memphis, King decides he needs to make a stop to Preacher's parent's house to tell them how their son died. While he is explaining how Preacher died, their other son, Michael, says to King, "is it standard operating procedure to lead your men into an ambush? His life was wasted over there."

Moreover, King breaks down to Michelle, saying, "I signed up thinking I was going over to help and protect my country. That's not what I signed up for. The enemy is not in the desert, they are in the buildings and you don't know who is who. All you can do is fight for survival. Protecting the person next to you. It's either kill or be killed mentality." King tells Michelle how he had to kill a father and son to be able to save Shriver in the building, adding that he is done being a soldier. Overall, it seems un-masculine for him to do this because he was afraid she would think less of him for doing it. However, she does not think less of him, so it is presented as normal to feel this way.

This whole scene portrays the emotion and the antiwar sentiments through dialogue, acting, and the cinematography.

### ***Emotion is Acceptable for Men to Show***

Men and women are typically portrayed in contrast to each other (Adams, 2008, p. 8), specifically portraying anything feminine as inferior in war films, such as emotional intimacy (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). These feminine characteristics, such as emotional intimacy, are to be avoided by a masculine individual at all costs (p. 42). Additionally, homosexuals are typically combined with females in the subordinate category to the hegemonic masculinity (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109). The *Positivist* approach to masculinity defines men for what they “actually are” (Connell, 2005, p. 69), and inclusive masculinity theory suggests that “emotional intimacy” is acceptable in a society with decreased homophobia. Although emotion is constructed as un-masculine and to be avoided, many of the films depict male soldiers’ emotion as acceptable (McCormack and Anderson, 2010, p. 855). In *The Hurt Locker*, fear, sadness, and nervousness are depicted through Thompson, James, Eldridge, and Sanborn at different times during the film, which are depicted through the soldiers’ acting and the cinematography. In *Lions for Lambs*, Rodriguez and Finch exhibited fear, nervousness, and emotion several times while they are stuck on the mountain in Afghanistan, which is exhibited through their acting and the cinematography. In *Stop-Loss*, emotion is evident through both Shriver and King, exhibiting emotion through crying at various parts of the film especially during and right after Burgess’ funeral. In *American Sniper*, Kyle exhibits emotion when he returns from his last tour, but it is portrayed as acceptable.

### ***War is the Place where Men Thrive***

In war films, men in uniform represent the men doing the work of the world. This work represents community, the myth that society is dominated by male hegemony, and that it is the natural state of things. The community is about brotherhood and comradery, portraying women as the anticomunity because they interfere with the comradery (Cavell, 1979, p. 48). For a man to thrive in war, “a man must show that he is rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done and ardently heterosexual” (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18).

In various films analyzed, masculinity is constructed through how the battlefield is a place where men thrive. This is evident in *American Sniper* when Kyle is unable to function when he is at home, but is perfectly capable when he is in the battlefield. Additionally, it is evident in the Burgess character in *Stop-Loss* when he is constantly drunk when he is home, but seems fine when he is in the battlefield. Furthermore, it is evident in *Megan Leavey* that when she is not with Rex, she suffers PTSD. Additionally, In *The Hurt Locker*, it is evident through James’ character, who is presented as in his element when defusing bombs and in the war zone. He is calm, stoic, and aggressive. When he returns home, he is portrayed as out of his element in the civilized world; however, he is right back in his element when he returns to the battlefield, which is evident through his acting, the dialogue with Connie and his son, the music and the cinematography.

### ***Leadership***

A true leader in a war film “must show that he is rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done and ardently heterosexual” (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18). WWII constructed sailors as being patriotic, defenders, and a

good husbands and fathers (Summerfield, 2011, p. 348). The sailors were portrayed as courageous and honorable, with the majority of films exhibiting heroic naval battles. Vietnam-era war films depict masculine leaders as “ideal heroes that understand their natural abilities as leaders and brothers in war” (Clarke, 2006, p. 22). Although being a leader can be portrayed as something inherently masculine, the female and male characters are aligned with each other in *We Were Soldiers*, with both exhibiting leadership roles (p. 23).

As a construct of masculinity, leadership is most evident in *Green Zone* through Miller’s character. The film portrays Miller as rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, and able to get a job done. This is expressed through his mission to find out where the WMD sites are and where the information came from. He is unstoppable when trying to complete his mission, which is portrayed through his acting, dialogue, and the cinematography. Kyle’s character in *American Sniper* is similar in that on his mission to stop Mustafa, he will not stop at anything to complete it.

### **Masculinity Constructs in Films where the Filmmaker or Screenwriter is Female**

#### ***Megan Leavey***

The film *Megan Leavey*, directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite and written by Pamela Gray, Annie Mumolo, and Tim Lovestedt, portrays women as just like any other soldier. They are not sexualized; they use obscenities; they are rough around the edges and uncivilized; and have problems returning to civilian life. The film portrays an accurate number of women in the military. Additionally, all of the drill leaders at boot camp are women, as are the soldiers in the boot camp. Jackie is portrayed as an average wife who thinks her daughter does not belong in the military, and that could follow

historical trends and opinions based on her age. The Marine veterinarian and therapist are portrayed as competent and professional. This portrayal of women is contrary to traditional masculine constructs. Women are typically portrayed in contrast to men instead of as equals (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

Leavey goes through boot camp like any other “warrior,” imagery which is typically reserved for male soldiers (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 109). The boot camp sequence is similar to other war films in which music and cinematography are used to portray it. Additionally, she is tough, stoic, and calm equal to any other soldier when she is in the face of danger. She overcomes pain and injury to complete her mission. These are all traditional masculine constructs typically reserved for men (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18). The sexual talk is what one would come to expect in any war film; however, it is directed at the male soldiers and is used to feminize the female soldiers. Comradery is an essential part of a war film (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109), and it is portrayed as normal to have a female soldier as the part of the team. Leavey is just like any other soldier. PTSD is portrayed in the film; and it is presented as normal and acceptable to exhibit it. However, toughness is expected to overcome it, so it falls under the traditional notion that it is acceptable as long as it's overcome (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89). Additionally, emotion is acceptable and not feminized in the film.

### ***Stop-Loss***

*Stop-Loss*, directed by Kimberly Pierce and written by Kimberly Pierce and Mark Richard, portrays women as sexual objects, civilized, emotional, weak, and dominated, which are traditional masculine constructs (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, there are no women portrayed in the military during the film. The warrior

image is evident when the soldiers fight the enemy in a calm and indomitable way (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 109). They are calm under distress, and when they are hurt, the “true soldiers” show no pain, and if they are injured, they brush it off (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). Even when they are disabled, their hopes are high and they are working on sculpting their bodies (Meeuf, 2009, p. 89). Sexual discourse is present in the film, prominently sexualizing Michelle. Brotherhood is prevalent throughout the film both in the battlefield and at home. Burgess, Shriver, and King are all portrayed as violent both at home and in the battlefield (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90). However, the violence at home is portrayed as unacceptable, falling in line with past war films (Sitter, 2013, p. 4).

PTSD is prevalent throughout the film in both King and Shriver. Michelle experiences it all and she sees it as a problem, but Shriver and King brush it off like a “warrior” would (Buchbinder, 1994, p. 75). Emotion and cowardice are portrayed as both masculine and un-masculine. Emotion is seen as un-masculine at the beginning of the film, where it is acceptable at Burgess’ funeral and after. Additionally, cowardice is depicted as un-masculine at the beginning of the film, but is deemed acceptable by the end. Perhaps the filmmaker was demonstrating the transition from what is acceptable in the uncivilized military world to what is acceptable in the civilized world at home.

In other films, such as *American Sniper*, anti-war dialogue is portrayed as un-masculine. However, it is acceptable in *Stop-Loss*. The best example is of King’s transformation from soft-spoken soldier to anti-war civilian when he vents to Michelle near the end of the film. He breaks down thinking she is going to think less of him for criticizing the military, but realizes that it is acceptable to have anti-war sentiments.

### ***The Hurt Locker***

*The Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal, portrays only one woman and another mentioned in dialogue. The women are portrayed as civilized (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49). The warrior image is glorified and the soldiers are portrayed as stoic and calm when faced with danger (Kiliçarslan, 2009, p. 109). The warrior image is further portrayed through feats of strength and the sculpted male body. Sexual talk is used to make innuendos about sex. Brotherhood is evident in the film as part of working as a team; however, it is fractured with the death of Thompson. James and Sanborn exhibit a violent demeanor when reacting emotionally to specific events (Grønstad, 2010, p. 90). PTSD is exhibited throughout the film as acceptable, and cowardice is portrayed as neutral. Throughout the film, emotion is portrayed as acceptable and evident in all of the main characters at different times.

Military soldiers depicted as uncivilized is major component in this film (Cavell, 1979, pp. 47-49). James is depicted as aggressive, yet calm, and in his element in the battlefield. He is so calm it even spooks his fellow soldiers. It is most evident that he is uncivilized when he returns home and seems out of his element. The second he returns to the battlefield, he is happy and in his element once again. The overall theme of the film is an anti-war atmosphere indicting this type of behavior, so this could be seen as un-masculine or looked down upon.

### **Portrayal of Women in Post-9/11 American War films**

As was examined in chapter two, Hollywood typically portrays a hegemonic masculinity where men dominate women through physical force and through “cultural and discursive practices” (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 12). This masculinity is dominate because it is “embodied in the history, economy, and personal and familial relationships”

(p. 12). Similarly, masculinity constructs in film depend on other factors, such as class, religion, race, and ethnicity (Gürkan, 2017, p. 403). Women are often only included in war films as love interests for men and to add sex appeal for the film (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). The cultural construction in war films of anything female is portrayed as undesirable, inferior, and to be avoided by men. Additionally, manliness is measured in the ability of how males can attract and seduce women (p. 45). In Vietnam-era war films, masculinity is portrayed in contrast to femininity (Jeffords, 1988, p. 527). The typical features of American femininity of the time were: “unpredictability, weakness, indeterminacy, indecisiveness, dependence” (p. 527). Women are portrayed in contrast to men in war films in which women are seen as civilized and men live in an uncivilized world. However, the men are part of a community that is strengthened by brotherhood. When men leave that community and return home to their wives, their life is over (Cavell, 1979, p. 49).

In *Megan Leavey*, the female lead (Leavey) is portrayed as gender neutral. This is illustrated through her dress, her use of obscenities, the way she deals with emotions such as fear, anger, nervousness, crying, and sadness, and the treatment of her by her fellow soldiers as just another person. She is portrayed as any male soldier would be in other films: as a tough (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18), rough around the edges (Clarke, 2015, p. 186), uncivilized person (Clarke, 2015, p. 186), and has problems returning to civilized life (Cavell, 1979, p. 49). The film portrays an accurate number of women in the military, with five soldiers being women out of a group of 18. Additionally, all of the drill leaders at boot camp are women and so are the soldiers in the boot camp. Women are not seen subordinate as they are treated the same throughout the film as their male counterparts

and they are not sexualized. Each of these portrayals are not traditional masculine constructs (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42-45). The supporting female characters are Leavey's Mother, Jackie, the Marine veterinarian, and the therapist. Jackie is portrayed as a average wife who thinks her daughter does not belong in the military. She thinks the military is for men, and that women who enter are going to come out as masculine. This could be seen as a result of the culture of her upbringing. The Marine veterinarian and therapist are portrayed as competent as any such person in that profession would.

In the film *Stop-Loss*, the female characters are portrayed in many ways, including sexual objects (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 4), civilized (Cavell, 1979, p. 49), emotional (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42), weak (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109), and dominated (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 45). They are sexualized during a celebration at a bar through their attire. Jeanine, the mothers at the party, and Michelle are portrayed as civilized, while their male counterparts are portrayed as uncivilized through their acting and the cinematography. Ida, King's Mother, is portrayed as emotional throughout the film when dealing with King's decisions. Michelle is portrayed as weak and needing a man to function at the beginning of the film; however, she is transformed into a strong female who stands up for herself and does not need a man to function. Meanwhile, dialogue is used to exhibit domination over women. For instance, Rodriguez talks about making "TexMex" babies with Michelle and her giving King "rides." Additionally, he talks about how a girl is cute "But-her-face."

In *American Sniper*, the female lead, Taya, does the opposite of Michelle in *Stop-Loss*, in that she goes from being portrayed as a strong, independent woman to weak and

needing a man to help her function. This places Taya in contrast with Kyle, which is a typical masculine construct (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404). Other women in the film are portrayed as competent and civilized, such as the doctor. The rest of the women are all seen only as mothers or wives. There is one instance in which there is an enemy woman who gives a boy a grenade to throw at some Marines. The boy gets killed and she picks up the grenade, but then is killed. This shows that a woman can be strong; however, the soldiers are disgusted with her and call her an “evil bitch,” which reinforces the masculine construct of females as inferior (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). Additionally, dominating women sexually is part of the film when Kyle wants to get his girlfriend in the mood for sex after he won the rodeo, which is evident in his dialogue.

In *The Hurt Locker*, there is only one woman portrayed and another mentioned in dialogue. Connie, James’ wife, is portrayed as an average housewife who is civilized and has no room for war in her life, which is evident in her acting and dialogue with James. While Sanborn discusses a girl that he likes, who is portrayed as demanding and wanting Sanborn to become civilized by settling down and having children. In *Green Zone*, women are mainly journalists and government workers. The main journalist, Dayne, is portrayed as competent and inquisitive as she tries to unlock the story. She is seen as intelligent as well when Miller goes to her for information about WMDs. However, she is talked down to by Proudstone and questioned by Miller at times. There are women working in the CIA and others in government roles. On the base, there is a woman in the communication room, and there are two other women during a briefing by the colonel. Later, Miller and his soldiers go into the Republican Palace and there are bikini-clad women who are sexualized by Miller’s soldiers dialogue.

In *Lions for Lambs*, there are women both in the military and in the civilian world. During a briefing at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, there is one woman present out of twenty men. Additionally, there is a woman soldier in the communication center who has some dialogue with the commanding officer. During the classroom presentation of Finch and Rodriguez, there are several women present. There is a heated argument between Finch and Rodriguez and the class; however, there is only one woman who is part of the debate. Additionally, the characters of Irving and Roth are constructed and paralleled in contrast to each other (Adams, 2008, p. 8). Roth is a civilized woman who is inquisitive, logical, willing to admit her mistakes, not aggressive, and emotional, which is portrayed through her costume, acting, and the cinematography. On the other hand, Irving is articulate, aggressive and violent, willing to admit his mistakes but has excuses, and has little regard for human life. For the most part, Roth is constructed as an equal to Irving; however, Irving is portrayed more as a typical masculine person. He is more aggressive, angry, and has little regard for the consequences (Connell, 2005, 68). Moreover, Irving talks down to Roth at times during the interview, and she is spoken to in a condescending manner by her editor when he pokes fun at her “female intuition.”

### **Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

As was illustrated in chapter two, films have the ability to influence perceived reality, and this reality can then become part of the collective memory of spectators. When this becomes part of a genre, creating a standard for what to expect in a film based on the rules and methods used, films are setting a standard for what represents reality – a reality that can have lasting effects on society for many years. Additionally, filmmakers can use automatism, which involves creating films without much thought to why they use

certain rules or methods, thus perpetuating a reality based on the film genre. Regarding the war genre and masculinity, this is the case. Since WWII films, violence has been glorified in war and has been used as a construct of masculinity, but this was because women did not serve in the military at the time (Sitter, 2013, p. 2). Moreover, masculinity is important to war film because they are interconnected. Hegemonic masculinity dominated the military and masculine ideals steeped into the film genre because of the lack of women serving. Even with more women entering the military, the masculine ideal continues to be the same in war films (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109).

This study found that the war genre continues to perpetuate masculine ideals from past eras of war films. Comradery, the warrior image, not showing emotion, having a violent demeanor, and the demonization of women and cowardice were all prevalent in one or more of the films. However, there were many nontraditional masculine ideals that were implemented, especially in films analyzed in this study that were directed by females. For instance, women were present and even took an active role in many of the films as soldiers. There were female soldiers depicted in four out of six films, with them being present in military briefings in *American Sniper* and *Green Zone* and playing an active role in *Megan Leavey* and *Lions for Lambs*. This would fall in line with the current demographics of the military, with twenty percent of officers and soldiers being female. Surprisingly, no women soldiers were depicted in *Stop-Loss* and *The Hurt Locker*, which are both directed and written by women.

Another major nontraditional construct involved depicting a woman in the warrior image. Leavey, in *Megan Leavey*, is portrayed similarly to male soldiers in other war films. She had to survive boot camp and did it without showing emotion. She is portrayed

as stoic, rough around the edges, and uncivilized like masculine soldiers in other war films. She is calm under fire, indomitable, tough, and disregards injuries in order to fight the enemy, just like other masculine soldiers in war films. She did all of this without being sexualized or turned into a “manly” woman. *Megan Leavey* demonstrates that women can be warriors, too, and that it is not inherently masculine to be a warrior.

Although films, such as *Megan Leavey*, feature a female as an average soldier, the feminine is being subsumed into the masculine, and the masculinity is overcoming femininity. The female soldiers are taking on characteristics that are considered to be normal behaviors for soldiers, but are still essentially being patterned after male soldiers. This is a dynamic that is taking place when you have a female soldier lead, such as *Leavey*, where the character is still taking on masculine ideals. According to Schippers (2006), typically when a female takes on masculine characteristics, they are portrayed as “pariah feminists” and inferior (p. 95). For example, they are called a “bitch” if they are authoritative, are a “badass” girl if they are physically violent, and are further a bitch if they take control and are not compliant. However, in *Megan Leavey*, *Leavey* is not portrayed in a negative light. This can be attributed to the idea that “there are no masculine characteristics that are stigmatized as contaminating or as subordinate” (p. 96).

The films *The Hurt Locker* and *Stop-Loss* used both traditional and nontraditional masculinity constructs. Traditional masculinity constructs were used, but were utilized as a way of indicting military masculinity. *The Hurt Locker* used the warrior image, comradery, and the idea that a masculine person is tough and calm under fire, resonating with the traditional constructs of masculinity. James is portrayed as this character and the focus of the indictment. The indictment focuses on how masculinity in the military is a

disease in which soldiers become addicted to adrenaline. They become desensitized to the fact that they can die, are devoid of emotion, and in this film, become a hazard to their fellow soldiers. The director criticizes this by using one character who is affected by PTSD, and with James learning to be a good leader, showing compassion to his fellow soldier who is suffering. Additionally, James is humanized by exhibiting emotion later in the film. In the end, he is not cured of his addiction and is incapable of living in the civilized world. Moreover, *Stop-Loss* uses similar tactics to indict military masculinity. The film begins with using comradery and the warrior image to construct masculinity of the soldiers; however, each soldier changes as the films unfolds, showing that they have PTSD, are uncivilized, or are inherently violent. They all reach a point of either death or accepting the fact that masculinity constructed by the military is unacceptable. The film portrays this through the expression of emotion and anti-military sentiments.

Auteur theory also plays a role in how each of these films construct masculinity. Each director has control over the visual elements of staging, cinematography, lighting, and dialogue. The director has control over the dialogue in terms of directing the actors. Additionally, each director has his or her own personal stamp that they can put on the film. For instance, *American Sniper* is directed by Clint Eastwood, who is the epitome of masculinity in film. Therefore, one would expect his films to exhibit a strong sense of masculinity, which *American Sniper* does. Additionally, it would be expected that female filmmakers would present a cinematic indictment about the problems with military masculinity, as well as soldiers being uncivilized when the war film genre portrays women as civilized, as exhibited in *The Hurt Locker* and *Stop-Loss*. Moreover, it is not

surprising that a film such as *Megan Leavey* that portrays a female soldier as gender neutral yet warrior like, would be directed by a female.

As was discussed in chapter one, film can be very powerful in the construction of meaning, identity, and truth. Social constructionism can explain how cultural concepts such as masculinity and other forms of identity are manufactured. People gain knowledge through growing up with guidelines of what is socially acceptable, and these guidelines in turn help create one's identity. Cultural artifacts such as war films can have major effects on the "rules" of what it means to be masculine, and can affect how the spectators internalize and act on these rules. Hollywood, through war films, creates a framework for the code to be masculine through visual images. These images give a sense of what it means to be masculine and glorify the battlefield experience (Kiliçarslan, 2009, pp. 106-107). The post-9/11 American war films analyzed in this study demonstrate that the war film genre is still depicting and therefore socially constructing masculinity in a way that was prevalent in WWII-era war films. However, the genre is slowly evolving as nontraditional masculinity constructs are starting to present themselves. As was illustrated in chapter one, films are both shaped by society's expectations and can shape society's view of war, making it difficult to pinpoint which is the driving factor behind this evolution of the war genre.

This dissertation examined six post-9/11 American war films, but more research on other contemporary war movies is a necessary next step to further document this evolution of the war genre. One potential research topic could involve examining the #MeToo movement's impact on contemporary war films and their constructions of masculinity. The #MeToo movement could lead to more female directors, screenwriters,

and producers creating films. This could lead to more films similar to *Megan Leavey* that focus on female subjects in the military. This could even lead to a film portraying female soldiers as part of a special operations team or even a female military officer. Another possible research topic could be to examine the current box office trend of films featuring females in roles traditionally reserved for men. Researchers could examine whether the film market or societal changes are the driving force behind this trend, and if it is creating an audience that is ready to support more films featuring female soldiers. Yet another potential research topic could involve examining films featuring homosexual characters in the military and how these movies construct masculinity, especially in light of how homosexuals and females are typically portrayed as inferior to heterosexual men (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13).

As a precursor to future scholarly examination of the war film genre, this researcher has developed a set of recommendations for how future filmmakers can more realistically portray masculinity and avoid the ongoing stereotypical depictions of masculinity in war cinema. In order to succeed in portraying masculinity in a more realistic manner, filmmakers should follow Gabriela Cowperthwaite's blueprint for *Megan Leavey*. In her film, Cowperthwaite is able to find a balance between traditional masculine constructs in the military, while introducing a lead female soldier who also exhibits non-traditional soldier characteristics. The following recommendations will be based on her blueprint on how to more realistically portray masculinity.

Firstly, anyone—female or male, heterosexual or homosexual—should be able to play the lead soldier in a war film, and a variety of people should be cast in these roles in the future. Traditionally, masculine identity has conveyed the message: “I am not a

woman” (Horrocks, 1995, p. 33), and has constantly portrayed itself in contrast to the feminine, bestowing the characteristics of courage, ambition, and revenge to the masculine (Gürkan, 2017, p. 404). In film, femininity is traditionally portrayed as subordinate and marginalized, often including homosexuals and the disabled (Kord and Krimmer, 2013, p. 13). Beginning in WWII, the rejection of the feminine became a motif of war films (Sitter, 2012, p. 168), and led to the culture of war films to portray anything female as undesirable to men and characterize it as “inferior” and to be “avoided” (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 42). Weight has been placed in “physical fitness, ability and efficiency, and competitiveness” (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109) in masculinity in war films, leading to women and homosexuals being portrayed as subordinate because of their perceived inability to complete such male tasks (p. 109).

In *Megan Leavey*, Leavey is a female soldier, but portrayed just like any other soldier. She is not sexualized; she uses obscenities; she is rough around the edges and uncivilized; and has problems returning to civilian life. Leavey is portrayed as a “warrior,” going through boot camp and succeeding at becoming a bomb-squad member, with it all being portrayed as exciting through music and cinematography. Additionally, she is tough, stoic, and calm like any other soldier when she is in the face of danger, overcoming pain and injury to complete her mission.

Research in physical education can help in understanding how creating more films similar to *Megan Leavey* can help portray masculinity realistically. Physical education favors the highly skilled and athletic male students, often leaving the female and lesser skilled males behind (Valley and Graber, 2017, p. 498), which is similar to war. In order to create equality in physical education, there needs to be “an environment

that is supportive, safe, and free from the biases associated with long-held cultural and gender expectations” (p. 498). Research has shown that “physical education has been designed by males for males” (p. 499). Meanwhile, feminist theory suggests that there is “a need to increase equality, expand human choice, and eliminate gender stratification” (p. 499), and in order to make that happen, “gender oppression must be challenged” (p. 498).

Additionally, there is a market for films that place females in roles traditionally reserved for men. Films, such as *Ghostbusters* (2016), directed by Paul Feig; *Ocean’s 8* (2018), directed by Gary Ross; *Bridesmaids* (2011), directed by Paul Feig; and *Captain Marvel* (2019), directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, grossed more than \$200,000,000 at the box office (“Ghostbusters,” 2016; “Ocean’s Eight,” 2018; “Bridesmaids,” 2011; and “Captain Marvel,” 2019). Although *Megan Leavey* (2017) only grossed \$13,406,883 and was released in 1,956 theaters (“Megan Leavey”, 2017), *Annihilation* (2018), directed by Alex Garland, which features a full female cast as soldiers in a science-fiction film, grossed \$32,732,301 and was released in 2,112 theaters (“Annihilation,” 2018). This trend leaves open the market for more films to be released that feature women in traditional masculine roles, both inside and outside the war genre.

Secondly, while sexual discourse will be evident in a war film, terms or phrases that have a feminine connotation should not be used to demoralizes soldiers. Sexual discourse is typical for a war film, as sexuality, masculinity, and the military are all interconnected. The military male hegemony glorifies and requires a sexual prowess in its male soldiers (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109; Wortmann et al., 2011, p. 2), and an un-masculine person as someone not interested in sexual conquest (Connell, 2005, p. 67). Culture

weighs a soldier's manliness by the ability to attract and seduce women (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 45). The military is male dominated and focuses, even today, on the need to "be a man," so one can be a successful soldier (Biewen and Headlee, 2018, p. 13). This focus on being a man continues to perpetuate the need to have sexual prowess, so sexual discourse would be expected to be present in current war films. However, less weight should be placed on the need to have sexual prowess and having one's masculinity be rated by their ability to seduce women. In *Megan Leavey*, sexual dialogue is evident, but it is only used once to feminize a female soldier. Additionally, there is little or no weight placed in a soldier's ability to seduce women or in his sexual prowess. This demonstrates that a film does not require a portrayal of one's sexual ability to have strong masculinity, but because it is part of the military culture, sexual dialogue will continue to have a place in the military.

Thirdly, comradery is an essential part of a war film and is a typical masculine construct (Buchalski, 2013, p. 109); however, it needs to be portrayed as normal to have a female soldier as part of the team. Comradery is strengthened through a community of male soldiers (Cavell, 1979, p. 47), and through combat and working for the better of the team (Crim, 2014, p. 97; Sitter, 2013, p. 109). In films depicting wars prior to 1970, the depiction of male bonding among soldiers is inherently masculine because there are only males with which to interact (Clarke, 2006, p. 24). Comradery is a major construct of *Megan Leavey*. Throughout the film, Leavey is immediately accepted by both male and female soldiers, even when she is the only female on base in Iraq. In Iraq, she celebrates with her fellow soldiers after completing a major mission and is treated throughout the entire film as just any other soldier.

Currently in the military, there is a major problem between male and female soldiers. Male soldiers feel as if they are being suppressed by women soldiers (Biewen and Headlee, 2018, p. 11). Women soldiers are looked down upon and seen as outsiders because they do not embody the ideals of a typical combat warrior—drink heavily, chew tobacco, and drive a truck (p. 12). Additionally, when female soldiers succeed, male soldiers do not like the idea of being out performed by a woman (p. 12).

As more women join the military, this ideology needs to change, and filmmakers can play a role in portraying female and male soldiers as part of the same team in a positive way. Research on homophobia in grade school can best explain how this would work. To remain overtly masculine in grade school, boys must “act in aggressive, homophobic and misogynistic ways if they wish to maintain heteromascularity among peers” (McCormack and Anderson, 2010, p. 855). However, research has found that heterosexual male students can openly associate with homosexual male students, be physical and emotional with them, and discuss “feminized” topics without being rebuked by their classmates (p. 855). The culture and ideology of the school was devoid of homophobia, and according to inclusive masculinity theory, this is an ideal environment to make physical and emotional “intimacies” acceptable (p. 855). If filmmakers can create an environment devoid of demonizing females by including them as part of the team, then the traditional masculine culture of the military can start to change.

Lastly, unintended consequences of war, such as mental-health illness, inability to assimilate back to civilian life, disability, and emotional expression for any reason, need to be presented as normal and acceptable to exhibit it. It could be argued that the majority of these unintended consequences is the result of violence and killing on the battlefield,

and war is arguably the most violent of any human undertaking (Raskind et al., 2014, p. 701). Soldiers are trained to be killing machines, with the goal of destroying the enemy and protecting one's life and the lives of others (p. 701). Hollywood has glorified and exalted the "warrior" image, portraying soldiers going through the ritual of killing in the battlefield (Donald and MacDonald, 2011, p. 5). The warriors are almost "superhuman" as they disregard their pain and loss on the battlefield.

Although soldiers need to be "rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get a job done" (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 18) when on the battlefield, they will one day return to civilian life. The need to eliminate a threat or perform a heroic act in combat is no longer acceptable, it is illegal, and the arousal and adrenaline from war is no longer available when home (Raskind et al., 2014, p. 701). Many factors can play into whether a soldier is exhibiting unintended consequences because of serving in war, such as witnessing someone killed in combat, alcohol abuse, history of violence, and PTSD. In *Megan Leavey*, Leavey exhibited PTSD after returning from war because she was hurt during an explosion. Leavey is portrayed attending therapy sessions and discussing her issues. She expresses emotion over her sadness from not being with her dog, Rex, and from her PTSD.

Moreover, there is a stigma among soldiers and veterans that seeking help from mental health providers is "career suicide," and the idea of stoicism on the battlefield by not admitting "the presence of a behavioral problem" is only creating more unintended consequences for returning soldiers (p. 703). If more soldiers and officers "publicly acknowledge" that they have pursued and benefited from mental health assistance, it would help to alleviate the problems of the unintended consequences of war. Filmmakers

could present these unintended consequences of war as normal and acceptable in their films, thus helping to overturn unhealthy and stereotypical masculine constructs in war cinema.

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APPENDIX A  
FILMOGRAPHY

*American Sniper* (2014)

Director: Clint Eastwood

Screenplay: Jason Hall

Produced by: Zakariz Alaoui, Bruce Berman, Bradley Cooper, Clint Eastwood, Jason Hall, Sheroum Kim, Chris Kyle, Andrew Lazar, Robert Lorenz, Jessica Meier, Steven Mnuchin, Tim Moore, Peter Morgan, and Kristina Rivera

Cinematography: Tom Stern

Production Design: Charisse Cardenas and James J. Murakami

Editing: Joel Cox and Gary D. Roach

Cast: Bradley Cooper (Chris Kyle), Kyle Gallner (Goat-Winston), and Sienna Miller (Taya)

Color. 133 Minutes

*Green Zone* (2010)

Director: Paul Greengrass

Screenplay: Brian Helgeland

Produced by: Zakaria Alaoui, Mairi Bett, Tim Bevan, Michael Bronner, Jo Burn, Liza Chasin, Eric Fellner, Kevin Flatow, Paul Greengrass, Debra Hayward, Lloyd Levin, Alvaro Ron, Christopher Rouse, Kate Solomon, and Tadeo Villalba

Cinematography: Barry Ackroyd

Production Design: Dominic Watkins

Editing: Christopher Rouse

Music: John Powell

Cast: Matt Damon (Miller), Greg Kinnear (Clark Poundstone), and Jason Isaacs (Briggs)

Color. 115 Minutes

*Lions for Lambs* (2007)

Director: Robert Redford

Screenplay: Matthew Michael Carnahan

Produced by: Matthew Michael Carnahan, Tracy Falco, Andrew Hauptman, William Holderman, Daniel Lupi, and Robert Redford

Cinematography: Philippe Rousselot

Production Design: Jan Roelfs

Editing: Joe Hutshing

Music: Mark Isham

Cast: Robert Redford (Professor Stephen Malley), Meryl Streep (Janine Roth), and Tom Cruise (Senator Jasper Irving)

Color. 92 Minutes

*Megan Leavey* (2017)

Director: Gabriela Cowperthwaite

Screenplay: Pamela Gray, Annie Mumolo, and Tim Lovestedt

Produced by: José Luis Escolar, Scott Holroyd, Robert Huberman, Mickey Liddell,  
Jennifer Monroe, Pete Shilaimon, and Nicole Stojkovich  
Cinematography: Lorenzo Senatore  
Production Design: Ed Verreaux  
Editing: Peter McNulty  
Music: Mark Isham  
Cast: Kate Mara (Megan Leavey), Ramon Rodriguez (Cpl. Matt Morales),  
and Tom Felton (Sergeant Andrew Dean)  
Color. 116 Minutes

*Stop-Loss* (2008)

Director: Kimberly Peirce  
Screenplay: Mark Richard and Kimberly Peirce  
Produced by: Reid Carolin, Sam Cassel, Michael Diliberti, Gregory Goodman,  
Kimberly Peirce, Mark Roybal, Scott Rudin, and Pamela Abdy  
Cinematography: Chris Menges  
Production Design: David Wasco and Judy Becker  
Editing: Claire Simpson  
Music: John Powell  
Cast: Ryan Phillippe (Brandon King), Joseph Gordon-Levitt (Tommy Burgess), and  
Abbie Cornish (Michelle)  
Color. 112 Minutes

*The Hurt Locker* (2008)

Director: Kathryn Bigelow  
Screenplay: Mark Boal  
Produced by: Kathryn Bigelow, Mark Boal, Nicolas Chartier, Jenn Lee, Tony Mark,  
Donall McCusker, Jack Schuster, Greg Shapiro, Kirk Shaw  
Cinematography: Barry Ackroyd  
Production Design: Karl Júlíusson  
Editing: Chris Innis and Bob Murawski  
Music: Marco Beltrami and Buck Sanders  
Cast: Jeremy Renner (Staff Sergeant William James), Anthony Mackie  
(Sergeant JT Sanborn), and Brian Geraghty (Specialist Owen Eldridge)  
Color. 131 Minutes