WHO'S THE LEADER OF THE CLUB THAT'S MADE FOR YOU AND ME?
SHAPING MASCULINE IDENTITY IN STANLEY KUBRICK'S *FULL METAL JACKET*

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ABSTRACT

It is often easy to view human interaction as a product of societal structure rather than the other way around. Social dynamics, systems of governance, and structures of power are not manifestations of civilization but rather its core components. The ways in which these concepts are addressed in popular culture provide important platforms for discussion and criticism of the nature of social organization. In particular, the medium of film has shown time and time again to be fertile ground for illuminating various aspects of societal structure that might otherwise go unnoticed. This thesis takes the example of gender as it relates to constructions of power through an examination of its portrayal in director Stanley Kubrick's film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). In turn, this thesis aims to analyze Kubrick’s portrayal of the role of masculinity in constructing and maintaining hierarchies of power in a wartime setting in order to uncover its criticisms of masculine power dynamics in greater American society.

This thesis intends to fill a gap between masculinities studies and film studies to demonstrate the important function of film as a means for contributing to a greater discussion of how Americans use gender to exert power and influence over
others. By consulting various texts in the fields of masculinities studies and film studies as they relate to the construction of hegemonic masculinities, definitions of what it means to be masculine, and their place in popular culture, this thesis will demonstrate that *Full Metal Jacket* provides both a criticism of current American societal structure, as well as methods through which Americans might find an alternative. In doing so, this thesis will show the important place of film as an impetus for large-scale societal change.
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INTRODUCTION

“Before God I swear this creed. My rifle and myself are defenders of my country. We are the saviors of my life. So be it ... until there is no enemy but peace. Amen.”¹ The above is an excerpt from the United States Marine Corps’ The Rifleman’s Creed, a brief and powerful piece of rhetoric that each Marine must memorize and recite during their time in boot camp.² Author and former Marine Marion Sturkey writes that The Rifleman’s Creed remains one of the most basic foundations upon which the Marine mentality is built.³ This is because the rifleman himself serves as the most essential and capable arm of Marine Corps power, with all resources serving to support and maintain his (or her) functionality. “Marine Aviation, Marine Armor, Marine Artillery, and all supporting arms and war fighting assets exist to support the rifleman.”⁴ The creed serves to remind the Marine that he or she is the arm through which the United States Armed Forces wield their mighty power and exercise their will. Indeed being a rifleman is a base level requirement for Marines – every enlisted member from cafeteria staff to high-level logistics


⁴ Marion F. Sturkey, Warrior culture of the U.S. Marines, 4.
planners are trained in the basics of being a rifleman.\(^5\) This broad requirement underscores the intense nature of order, discipline, and hierarchy in the United States Marine Corps: all Marines start from the bottom and work their way up.

This notion of starting at subordinate level of power and proving one’s worth is a typical trope found in many war-related films and it is precisely this phenomenon that is under scrutiny in director Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). However, the story of *Full Metal Jacket* is not the fantastic tale of a Marine grunt that proves himself to be a worthy soldier by getting down and dirty in boot-camp and demonstrating his heroics out on the battlefield. Rather, the story of *Full Metal Jacket* is one that focuses on and criticizes the ways in which those in subordinate positions of power are encouraged to elevate themselves above their peers. While many are correct in assuming success within the Marine Corps is contingent on one’s ability to demonstrate physical ability, follow orders, and adhere to a common creed, it can be easy to ignore the complex social mechanisms that make up the foundation of these benchmarks of success. At the center of *Full Metal Jacket* is an important idea: success in the Marines requires one to have power over another.

The acquisition and maintenance of power in organizations as large and entrenched in tradition as that of the United States Marine Corps generally takes the form of hierarchy based on rank and length of service. Historian John Tosh argues that power structures in politics and war find their roots in societal gender order as

promoted and promulgated by the state. He argues further that the gender order is such that the male is at the top of the hierarchy, and politics in government and subsequently politics in war serve to maintain this gender order that places men at the helm of power. These politics are intended to reinforce masculine societal norms through rewarding the male who engages in typical masculine behaviors. Tosh provides examples of policy that include the mandatory military conscription for males as well as tax incentives for those who marry, which was, until recently, an exclusively heterosexual institution enforced by law.

Founder and editor of the academic journal *Men and Masculinities* Michael Kimmel argues that these policies find their roots in the early American masculine desire to distance oneself from what was seen as the stifling position of women in the Victorian Era. To be a man was to be the opposite of a woman, and the position of women during the Victorian Era was one of constraint and limited power. Thus to be a man was to be self-made, successful, educated, hard working, and above all competitive. This, along with the popularity of slavery and the exclusion of black males from American society began to create the image of the ideal masculine American male, which sociologist Erving Goffman described as “a young, married, lifelong bachelor.”

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7 Stefan Dudnik, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, *Masculinities in politics and war*, 42.

8 Stefan Dudnik, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, *Masculinities in politics and war*, 43.


white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports,” claiming “Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior.”

The astute reader will recognize that such a definition of masculinity and its maintenance relies heavily on the ability of those in such a position to attain said status to exclude others from doing the same. That is to say, such a definition implicitly states that those who do not possess such characteristics are unable to be a man or at the very least are a lesser man than those who do possess such characteristics. This notion of exclusion lies at the center of nearly all subsequent predominant forms of American masculinity: either you can be part of the group that defines itself as masculine or you cannot. Furthermore, within the masculine group there exist an additional hierarchy that determines exactly how masculine one can be. Those who fulfill some but not at all of the masculine requirements may gain access to some forms of masculinity but not others, with certain masculine traits being viewed as more important than others. This phenomenon is known among masculinities studies scholars as hegemonic masculinities. Sociologist and Professor Jeff Hearn outlines another key aspect of hegemonic masculinities: “Hegemony involves both the consent of some men, and, in a very different way, the consent of some women to maintain patriarchal


13 Stefan Dudnik, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, Masculinities in politics and war, 42.
relations of power.”¹⁴ In addition, Professor of Sociology Dr. Mike Donaldson claims that “hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear “natural,” “ordinary” and “normal.”¹⁵ Key in its implementation too is punishments for non-conformity.¹⁶ To summarize, hegemonic masculinities function such that there are certain behaviors one must preform to be considered masculine, and some of these behaviors are more important than others. One must consent to this hegemony, and if one is insufficient in the performance of these masculinities, they will be punished by members of the group who are more successful in their performance.

However, consent is not always achieved through brute force or aggression – rather oftentimes it operates under the guise of acceptable and natural social behavior. In simpler terms, it gains consent because affected individuals do not necessarily understand they are consenting, rather they believe hegemonic norms (take, for example, that men should like sports) as an example of normal and natural behavior rather than behavior that is constructed.¹⁷ Furthermore, the presence of hegemonic masculinities in a given society does not necessarily benefit all men. The very idea of hegemonic masculinities stipulates that some men are who are better able to preform hegemonic masculine norms are to be considered more masculine


¹⁶ Mike Donaldson, “What is hegemonic masculinity?”, 644.

¹⁷ Jeff Hearn, “From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men,” 54.
than those who cannot.\textsuperscript{18} The status of men who are considered less-masculine than others is often one that affords them fewer opportunities and makes their lives significantly more difficult. This is because men who are able to preform hegemonic masculinities better than others will find it easier to attain power in the societies that operate under these structures. In turn, powerful men continue to reinforce these hegemonic masculine norms in order to maintain and even strengthen their hold on power over others. If this system were to fall apart, major power structures that govern the workings of society such as government, business, and war would face tremendous changes in their structure, something that is viewed as a threat by the men who maintain control over these power structures.\textsuperscript{19}

In \textit{Full Metal Jacket}, Kubrick is not as concerned with the advent of American masculinities as he is with how they manifest in American life. In particular, Kubrick uses \textit{Full Metal Jacket} to explore how hegemonic masculinity functions as a system for maintaining hierarchy and order within the armed forces, and its ability to coerce soldiers into acting oftentimes against their best interests. To do so, Kubrick portrays hegemonic masculinities in a dramatic and often unflattering manner that demonstrates how one's ability to excel militarily is often equally dependent on his ability to preform and adhere to hegemonic masculinities as it is on his basic ability to preform the functions of a soldier. It is through these depictions that viewer sees the primary hegemonic masculinities emerge: the ability of a given individual's ability to express violent tendencies, the ability of to express homophobic and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Jeff Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Jeff Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," 59.
\end{itemize}
misogynistic viewpoints, and the ability to demonstrate self-sufficiency, meaning
the ability to define oneself as a grown man rather than as a boy. These hegemonic
masculinities function through two primary means: the ability of men to contribute
to rhetoric that promotes these norms, and their ability to fulfill the physical
requirements that fulfill these norms.

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that, through his portrayal of
hegemonic norms in *Full Metal Jacket*, Director Stanley Kubrick demonstrates that
these norms are arbitrary, constructed, and serve simply to maintain a hierarchy of
power through which soldiers can be coerced into acting in ways that are oftentimes
against their best interests. In turn, Kubrick demonstrates via four primary
character arcs the detrimental, counterproductive, and artificial nature of this
system of hegemonic masculine norms, offering one character as a possible
alternative to how men can successfully subvert some of these norms without facing
significant backlash. This thesis argues that, in portraying a system of societal order
as relying on arbitrary and constructed hegemonic masculinities, Stanley Kubrick’s
*Full Metal Jacket* simultaneously critiques hegemonic masculine norms while
demonstrating to viewers possible methods for their successful subversion through
maintenance of personal identity.

While there are countless works that deal with the portrayal of masculinities
in film, it seems there is a gap in literature regarding film that functions as a
criticism of masculinity itself. In particular, there seems to be very little literature
that specifically analyzes Kubrick’s approach to portraying and critiquing structures
of masculinity. Gerri Reaves from Film Quarterly, with his article entitled From
Hasford’s “The Short-Timers” to Kubrick’s “Full Metal Jacket”: The Fracturing of Identity, discusses the ways in which Kubrick’s portrayal of his characters in FMJ differs from that of Hasford, the author of one of the novels on which the film is based. Reaves makes the argument that Kubrick distances viewers from his characters in order to create “a space which provides us [the viewer] with an objective position from which to examine the connections between violence, sex, and physical and psychological survival.”

However, Reaves fails to fully deconstruct the role that gender relations plays in the film as it relates to the role of masculinity in structure of powers. Focusing heavily on the idea that masculinity is participation-based, Reaves fails to realize that Full Metal Jacket functions as a platform for viewing multiple navigations of a masculine hierarchy of power.

The articles “Charlie Don’t Surf: Race and Culture in the Vietnam War Films” by David Desser, “Narrative Patterns and Mythic Trajectories” by Tony Williams, and “Male Bonding, Hollywood Orientalism, and the Repression of the Feminine in Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket”, by Susan White, begin to tackle the idea that there are multiple readings of the social dynamics seen onscreen. However, these articles seem to largely ignore the idea that Kubrick’s dramatic and oftentimes crass portrayal of masculine power structures function as a referendum on the idea as a whole, choosing instead to argue that the film’s portrayal of male interaction promulgates harmful ideas found at the center of hegemonic masculine

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groups. While they all explore gender relations and particularly the role of masculinity in these relations, they fail to provide a complete exploration of their implications. Author Loren Baritz’s *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did*, examines the role of moral superiority in masculinity as it relates to the war in Vietnam: “In countless ways Americans know in their gut – the only place myths can live – that we have been Chosen [sic] to lead the world in public morality and to instruct it in political virtue.” While it addresses the important notion of masculinity as a form of superiority, it does not explore its manifestations in popular media such as *Full Metal Jacket*.

*Manhood in the Age of Aquarius* by Tim Hodgdon provides an excellent study of the antiwar movement through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, though not as it relates to film. While *Manhood in America* and *Men’s Lives* by Michael Kimmel serves as a thorough and necessary study of general American masculinities against which one can compare those seen in *FMJ*, there was little literature the attempts to do so. Though articles such as Maricondi’s “Full Metal Jacketing, or Masculinity in the Making” and Susan White’s “Male Bonding, Hollywood Orientalism” focused on dynamics of masculinities in the film, neither provided analysis of the entire film.

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and instead spoke to specific scenes with analysis very limited in scope. Additionally, none spoke to the aspect of hegemonic masculinities in the film, and instead discussed masculinities in the broader context of social dynamics. While these articles occasionally cited well-known masculinities studies academics such as Kimmel, none attempted to ground their work in masculinities studies theories and instead only mentioned them as necessary to explain a broader point. The glaring examples of the harmful nature of masculinity in *Full Metal Jacket* seem too important to ignore. While authors such as Zivah Perel with his article “Joker’s Dual Narratives: Individuality and Group Identity in Stanley Kubrick’s Marine Corps” attempt to tackle the criticism of Marine Corps culture in *Full Metal Jacket*, it seems the role of masculinity is often passed over. Thus, this thesis attempts to fill an important gap in academia by merging the disciplines of masculinities studies and film studies to reveal a deeper understanding of the ways in which *Full Metal Jacket* calls into question the structure of hegemonic masculinities and their role in creating hierarchies of power. In turn, its goal is to demonstrate the important role film plays in illuminating important aspects of American culture. To do so, the thesis is broken into four chapters as well as a conclusion section.

The first chapter is titled “‘Gruntspeak’ and the Rhetoric of Masculinity.” The aim of this chapter is to outline the how hegemonic masculinities are constructed in *Full Metal Jacket* using the rhetorical devices spoken by Gunnery Sergeant Hartman. To do so, the chapter will first demonstrate the importance of rhetoric in establishing hegemonic masculinities, namely the rejection of the feminine, the denunciation of homosexuality, and repeated threats of violence. Through
highlighting this rhetoric and using masculinities studies theories to analyze its function, the chapter will demonstrate how masculine rhetoric allows for Hartman to gain and maintain control over the platoon during their time in bootcamp, while simultaneously forcing others to participate in the hegemony he constructs. In turn, this chapter will demonstrate one way in which order and hierarchy of power are reliant on the creation of an arbitrary system of hegemonic masculinities.

The second chapter is titled “Let’s Get Physical: Manifestations of Masculine Rhetoric” and aims to establish an additional manner in which the hierarchy of power in Full Metal Jacket is dependent on the creation of an arbitrary system of hegemonic masculinities. To do so, this chapter will examine the physical manifestations of the masculine rhetoric discussed in chapter one. The chapter will discuss and analyze examples of cleanliness, physical fitness, and physical violence as a means for instituting and maintaining hegemonic masculinities. In doing so, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which recruits are forced to actively participate in a system of hegemonic masculinities, and punish those who do not do the same.

The third chapter is titled “Failed Control: The Downfall of Pyle and Hartman” and aims to demonstrate a failure in the system of hegemonic masculinities discussed and analyzed in the previous two chapters. To achieve this, the chapter will discuss the repeated failures of the character Private Pyle as an example of a recruit who is unable to participate properly in the constructed system of hegemonic masculinities. In turn, it will highlight the destructive nature of this system and how it eventually leads Private Pyle to murder Gunnery Sergeant
Hartman and later commit suicide. Through discussion of the role of the system of hegemonic masculinities in the death of Private Pyle and the murder of Hartman, this chapter will demonstrate how a system of hegemonic masculinities as means for maintaining order and hierarchy is an inherent flawed system that poses considerable dangers to the group as a whole.

The fourth and final chapter is titled “Successful Subversion and Fear of the Female” and aims to demonstrate how the character arcs of Joker and the female sniper serve to challenge conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. To do so, the chapter will highlight and discuss the ways in which Joker successfully subverts hegemonic masculinities without facing typical backlash from the group of which he is a part. In analyzing Joker’s actions through techniques of film analysis and masculinities studies analysis, this chapter will demonstrate how his character serves as a possible alternative course of action for those who live in a society governed by hegemonic masculinities. In analyzing the character of the female sniper through film analysis and masculinities studies analysis, this chapter will demonstrate the illogical nature of hegemonic masculinities and their rejection the female in an effort to show how Kubrick critiques these systems in broader society. The intention of these four chapters in total is to provide the reader with an understanding of how hegemonic masculinities are created and function, how and why they fail, and how they may be approached differently in the aims of explaining director Stanley Kubrick’s critiques of hegemonic masculinities in broader American society.
‘GRUNTSPEAK’ AND THE RHETORIC OF MASCULINITY

There are two primary methods Kubrick employs to establish the hegemonic masculinities that determine the hierarchy of male dominance within the groups of men seen onscreen: masculine rhetoric and masculine action. In turn, these methods determine the state of control for a given character in relation to the hierarchy of masculine power. Those at the top of the pecking order experience the most control in their day-to-day lives. They are able to influence the actions of other men, command respect from both subordinates and superiors, and achieve relative success in their endeavors in a military context. Those at the bottom of the pecking order generally face severe consequences. They have trouble influencing or commanding respect from others, face profound obstacles in achieving military success, and are forced to change their ways or risk eventual death, bodily harm, or complete exclusion from the hierarchy of power. This chapter will highlight the important role verbal rhetoric plays in establishing benchmarks for success as well as the ways in which performance of this rhetoric allows for those in positions of subordinated masculinity to gain a better foothold in the masculine hierarchy.

The opening scene of Full Metal Jacket begins with close-up and steady shots of the faces of the new recruits as they have their heads quickly and aggressively shaved. By showing each recruit in sequence as they have the same act performed on them, the viewer of the film is left with the impression that these men are being stripped of their identities. They are no longer individuals but rather pieces of a collective whole. The effect this has on the masculine hierarchy of each soldier is to place them all in a position of equality at the bottom rung. Among masculinities
studies scholars, this is known as temporary masculinity as it is a product of rank and order rather than an action that is within the control of the individual. While this an example of subordinated masculinity, it is not considered to be a hegemonic masculinity as it is a product of an external force beyond the control of the masculine group in question rather than a construction of necessary behavior. It is important to keep in mind that hegemonic masculinities are constructed within a given group, in this case the group of recruits and Hartman. While they may draw upon external influences, their role as means for preforming masculinity is confined to in-group dynamics, which is a fundamental aspect of hegemonic masculinities. This demonstrates the arbitrary and constructed nature of the hegemony shown in Full Metal Jacket. By showing that these hegemonic masculinities serve no purpose except to determine success within the group, Kubrick exposes how they serve no purpose other than to aid in the acquisition of power. In simpler terms, the rank of private in the Marines is a subordinated masculinity simply because it is below the rank of any other position. The way a private is expected to act and compose himself is a hegemonic masculinity as it is a set of behaviors deemed acceptable by the group of which he is a part.

Following the haircut scene the first example of dialogue occurs with the voice of Joker explaining to the viewer what they are seeing: “Parris Island, South Carolina, the United States Marine Corps Recruit Depot, an eight-week college for

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An additional example given of subordinated masculinity that can help with understanding this classification is that of an apprentice in a trade. His rank is below his superior, however the rank itself does not determine the manner in which he comports himself beyond the nature of his work.

the phony-tough and the crazy-brave.” Immediately Joker establishes the two qualities expected of the Marine recruits: toughness, whether it is genuine or faked, and a level of bravery that exceeds that of the normal person. These are qualities to be demonstrated and proven, thus it should follow that the group will create a system in which those who possess those qualities will excel. This phenomenon is further explained and simplified by anthropologist Lionel Tiger: “All individuals have some talent for the solution of problems and the accomplishment of tasks. Each community will have a set of appropriate tests and standards in terms of which individual ability can be applied.”

Thus enters the dominant figure who is in charge of creating such standards: Sergeant Hartman. Hartman can be thought of as the propagator of the hegemonic masculinities that Kubrick wishes to highlight in *Full Metal Jacket*. While he has not necessarily determined these norms himself, he is in charge of instituting them and ensuring his recruits adhere to the hegemony. Though Kubrick uses Hartman’s onscreen action to demonstrate his role in propagating hegemonic masculinities, his primary role in constructing the hegemony is through his verbal rhetoric.

Make no mistake; the dialogue onscreen is not simply intended to immerse the viewer in the life of a Marine grunt. It is a figural device used to demonstrate the way in which masculine rhetoric is used as a means for controlling the thoughts of subordinates and maintaining an established social hierarchy within the group of recruits. Such rhetoric is referred to generally as “gruntspeak,” and scholars contend such rhetoric deals principally with themes of misogyny, violence, and

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homophobia.\textsuperscript{27} The first example of gruntspeak as a means for social control that this thesis will address is its explicit and complete denunciation of all things feminine in order to create a more cohesive group. By expunging the feminine, Hartman attempts to ensure that his recruits will view all things female as an external threat against which they must protect themselves by proving their ability to preform masculine norms.

It does not take long before Hartman expresses the importance of being a male and the negative associations with feminine qualities. Indeed in his second line of dialogue he commands his recruits to “sound off like you got a pair,” and moments later addresses them as women. “If you ladies leave my island, if you survive recruit training ... you will be a weapon, you will be a minister of death, praying for war.” In his addressing the recruits as women during their first interaction, Hartman immediately associates a position of subordinated masculinity with displaying feminine characteristics. Asking recruits to address him like they “got a pair” indicates that a weak or insufficient response is akin to lacking a defining phallic component of masculinity. More than that, it presupposes that the men are not only lacking testicles and in turn their ability to procreate, but that by through their rhetoric and response to Hartman they can prove that this is incorrect.

The effect of these short lines of dialogue is twofold: it simultaneously excludes women from the process of completing training and becoming a Marine, while also outlining the manner in which recruits can prove their avoidance of

femininity. Implicit in Hartman’s rhetoric is the notion that if the recruits are able to successfully complete boot camp, they will no longer be in the same position of subordinated masculinity and in turn will no longer be considered “ladies”. In turn Hartman sets up the framework for successfully proving one’s masculinity within boot camp: physical strength, endurance, orderliness, and above all, submission and obedience to superiors. However, it is not adequate to simply perform the expected physical function of a soldier: you have to both act like a man and talk like a man. In portraying Hartman as the ideal for masculine behavior within boot camp, Kubrick designates masculine rhetoric and the disparagement of women as a foundational aspect of the hegemonic masculinity demonstrated in the early scenes of the film.

This style of excluding women is referred to as “negative integration,” a term coined by sociologist and philosopher Theodore Adorno. The function of negative integration is to create an out-group, a negative ideal against which the recruits can define themselves. This rhetoric is intended to avoid in-fighting and displace anger within the group onto the female other. To do so, discussion of women and femininity is done in a manner that presents them as an object of lesser worth. In addition, masculinities scholar Joseph H. Pleck makes a case for that such rhetoric also functions to allow Hartman to make his recruits feel as if they are not being dominated by him, but rather led by him in a crusade against an external feminine enemy. This crusade serves to reassert the dominance of men in the face of dependency on women. The recruits’ inability to have any sort of contact with

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28Ray Bourgeois Zimmerman, "Gruntspeak", 68.

women poses a dangerous problem to the Marine Corps: men who desire to have any form of contact with women will be unable to do so, and in turn may become restless and resentful of their current situation. This poses a threat to the hegemony, and in turn a threat to the control of Hartman, whose success and status as a male depends on his ability to successfully lead the group of recruits to complete training. Thus the denunciation of women and their classification as a symbol of failure and weakness allows for Hartman to maintain order and discipline among his recruits while maintaining his own masculinity. Implicit in the systematic denunciation of women is the lack of a sexual outlet for the recruits, which may possibly lead members of the group to search for sexual satisfaction with other men. Thus, some of the first flaws in this system of hegemonic masculinities are revealed and Hartman must continue to denounce homosexuality as vigorously as he denounces women lest his recruits the subvert the norm of heterosexuality.

This leads to an additional manner in which denunciation is used to maintain order and create in-group cohesiveness: encouragement of non-sexual male-bonding. Male-bonding is a complex dynamic in masculinities studies. The general consensus among masculinities studies scholars maintains that male relationships ride a fine line between expressing mutual affection while avoiding what is defined as a “homosocial” relationship. Dr. Scott Kiesling contends that the desire for male relationships in combination with the stigma surrounding homosexuality within

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30Ray Bourgeois Zimmerman, "Gruntspeak", 70.

typical male social groups forces men to become emotionally close through indirect means.\textsuperscript{32} In essence, men can become close with one another through developing shared notions of solidarity that can take the place of more typical concepts of mutual affection.\textsuperscript{33} Relationships between women are generally conceptualized among men as revolving around shared emotional experiences, acts of sharing rooted in conversation.\textsuperscript{34} In turn, men tend to avoid creating bonds through similar means and instead attempt to create their bonds between adherence to or avoidance of external phenomena.\textsuperscript{35} One such example is adherence to a common group:

Fidelity and friendship are thus pledged to a group, and this loyalty is evaluated quite different from individual homosociality vis-à-vis masculinity: Loyalty, as can be seen in the powerful masculinities associated with patriotism, is a powerful trait. ... these speech events [acts of bonding between men] are not arbitrary connections that license the expression of homosociality; they are events the facilitate the indirect expression of homosociality through prescribed speech or through participation frameworks in which there is no single addressee.\textsuperscript{36}

In order to achieve this, the recruits pledge their adherence to the group, which in turn requires them to denounce women in order to forge successful bonds amongst one another. Indeed this renunciation of women extends even to family members as Hartman further attempts to encourage his recruits to view their mothers and sisters as objects of sexual exchange: “Well ... no shit. What have we got

\textsuperscript{32} Scott Fabius Kiesling, "Homosocial desire in mens talk", 697.

\textsuperscript{33} Scott Fabius Kiesling, "Homosocial desire in mens talk", 721.

\textsuperscript{34} Scott Fabius Kiesling, "Homosocial desire in mens talk", 722.

\textsuperscript{35} Scott Fabius Kiesling, "Homosocial desire in mens talk", 721.

\textsuperscript{36} Scott Fabius Kiesling, "Homosocial desire in mens talk", 722.
here, a fucking comedian? Private Joker? I admire your honesty. Hell, I like you. You can come over to my house and fuck my sister.” In this brief exchange Hartman’s rhetoric defines female family members as objects for sexual gratification and in a perverse sense offers up his sister as a means for strengthening his friendship, his homosocial bond, with private Joker. Not only does Hartman denounce women, he does so in a way that makes it seem as if a woman, in this case his sister, is something to be exchanged. By offering her to Joker, he makes the implicit claim that she is his to offer. In her article, “The Traffic in Women”, anthropologist Gayle Rubin underscores the role exchange of women plays in establishing a male bond: “If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it.”

In turn, the exchange of women becomes just as important as their denunciation in establishing a masculine bond. It does not take long before the recruits adopt this rhetoric. The impetus behind the bond between Joker and Cowboy, a friendship that lasts throughout the entirety of the film, is again made clear during a scene in the bathrooms during which Joker says “I want to slip my tubesteak into your sister. What’ll you take in trade?” Cowboy does not miss a beat, responding “What have you got?” In this case, Joker quite literally asks Cowboy to engage in a transaction in which one of the goods is his female family member. By responding in kind, Cowboy solidifies his bond with Joker and confirms that they are both able to have dominion over women should they please.

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However, the expunging of the feminine alone is not adequate rhetoric for the maintenance of order and hierarchy within boot camp. Marginalization of all dynamics or behaviors that upset the hegemony within the group as they are potential sources of disorder that will impede the ability of Hartman to successfully groom the recruits to be successful Marines. While there is certainly rhetoric that is insensitive towards racial dynamics and is in most respects downright racist, it is in a similarly indirect way that attempts to establish a bond between recruits of difference races through its use. Indeed, Hartman adopts racial slurs as a part of his rhetoric in order to normalize them and in turn ensure that their use is couched in a harmless and joking approach: “there is no racial bigotry here! I do not look down niggers, kikes, wops, or greasers. Here you are all equally worthless!” When first addressing a black recruit, Private Brown, Hartman decides to call him Private Snowball and asks if he likes that name. When he replies that he does, Hartman responds: “Well here’s one thing that you won’t like, Private Snowball! They don’t serve fried chicken and watermelon on a daily basis in my mess hall.” By deeming all men to be in a subordinated positions regardless of their race, Hartman uses his rhetoric in a similar manner to his misogynistic rhetoric: he calls for homogeny within the group that accepts racial slurs as a form of bonding rather than as a form of aggression. In turn, he attempts to prevent the possibility of racial prejudices causing disorder and discontent among the recruits. He further achieves this aim when it is later revealed that he has made Private Snowball the squad leader, and in turn places all other recruits in a position of subordinated masculinity relative to a racial minority.
However, Hartman’s claim that there is no *racial* bigotry turns out to be very apt: he has no problem and indeed heavily encourages the disparagement of homosexuality. Indeed in his first interaction with Cowboy he makes clear that homosexual behavior is unacceptable:

HARTMAN: Only steers and queers come from Texas, Private Cowboy! And you don’t look much like a steer to me, so that kinda narrows it down! Do you suck dicks?
COWBOY: No sir!
HARTMAN: Are you a peter-puffer?
COWBOY: Sir, no, sir!
HARTMAN: I’ll bet you’re the kind of guy that would fuck a person in the ass and not even have the common courtesy to give him a reach-around! I’ll be watching you!

Implicit in this denigration of homosexual behavior however is the maintained precedence placed on helping out one’s fellow man. Even in an act deemed to be unacceptable Hartman stresses the need to serve another man, which is a far-cry from his advocacy for the treatment of women as an object intended for male sexual satisfaction. He continues this theme when addressing Private Lawrence, later known as Private Pyle:

HARTMAN: Lawrence? Lawrence, what, of Arabia?
PYLE: Sir, no, sir!
HARTMAN: That name sounds like royalty! Are you royalty?
PYLE: Sir, no, sir!
HARTMAN: Do you suck dicks?
PYLE: Sir, no, sir!
HARTMAN: Bullshit I bet you could suck a golf ball through a garden hose!
PYLE: Sir, no sir!
HARTMAN: I don’t like the name Lawrence! Only faggots and sailors are called Lawrence! From now on you’re Gomer Pyle!

The place of homosexuality and in turn homosexual relationships within all male groups is far less complicated than that of homosocial groups and friendships.
In the most basic sense, typical hegemonic masculinities including those portrayed in *Full Metal Jacket* deem homosexuality to be an entirely unacceptable behavior and indeed in many respects is the most highly stigmatized behavior within male groups.\textsuperscript{38} Social scientist Deborah David and Robert Brannon contend there are four basic themes of American masculinities that shape what is acceptable male behavior and in turn govern the way in which men can express feelings of sexual and emotional intimacy:

(1) *No Sissy Stuff*: anything even remotely hints of femininity is prohibited. A real man must avoid any behavior or characteristics associated with women.
(2) *Be a Big Wheel*: masculinity is measured by success, power, and the admiration of others. One must possess [relative] wealth, fame, and status to be considered manly.
(3) *Be a Sturdy Oak*: manliness requires rationality, toughness, and self-reliance. A man must remain calm in any situation, show no emotion, and admit no weakness.
(4) *Give’em Hell*: men must exude an aura of daring and aggression, and must be willing to take risks, to “go for it” even when reason and fear suggest otherwise.\textsuperscript{39}

In following these guidelines, sex should be seen as something to be taken by a man. Aggressive actions, taking what is believed to be rightfully theirs, and showing no emotion are core components of going about things in a masculine way. If a man is to ask for sex, or to be emotionally engaged in sex, he is failing to fulfill these core tenants of American masculinity. In particular, attraction to other men is something viewed as strictly feminine and to be avoided at all costs. Kimmel argues this fear is borne out of a “homohysteria” phase that swept the United States during the mid


20th century. Attachment to the mother was seen as the cause of effeminate behavior in young men, and young men who acted effeminately were seen as being far more likely to be gay. Due to the negative associations with effeminate behavior as well as being dependent on a female figure, homosexuality was viewed as the outcome of a failure to raise and educate a child properly. Rumors about homosexuality leading to deviant and criminal behavior added to this hysteria, and any form of casual acceptance of homosexuality in American culture was quickly abandoned by the end of the 1930s. Parents and authority figures were instructed to keep boys and girls separate, and to punish effeminate or homosexual behavior in order to main a homogenous and heterosexual society that its advocates believed would create a safer and better-organized society overall. “Contact with girls could dilute boyhood purity, and idleness would breed evil thoughts and deeds. Strenuous exercise was thus even more vital to healthy boyhood”. By playing on this bizarre notion of avoiding homosexuality by keeping boys and girl separate, Kubrick highlights the counterintuitive and illogical nature of the creation of masculine norms: one would think that discouraging homosexuality would require boys and girls to be in close contact with each other rather than separated.

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Hartman promotes this exact dynamic among his recruits, discouraging homosexual behavior under threat of punishment, expelling any sort of female presence or influence, and instead advocating for exercise, toughness, and male friendships rooted in adherence to a shared set of common values encouraged by the Marine Corps. The possibility of homosexual relationship forming is a serious one for Hartman – the men are unable to gain any sort of access to women including in photos, film, or literature, they are surrounded by other men constantly, and this will largely continue to be the case for most when they are sent overseas to Vietnam. The worry that such a relationship would disrupt his hegemony is bigoted and insensitive, however Hartman inevitably views such an event as a grave threat to the established hierarchy of power over which he wishes to maintain control. In the context of hegemonic masculinities, a homosexual relationship between recruits is an extremely subversive act and one that would potentially disrupt the hierarchy of power Hartman has worked to establish. His ability to maintain order hinges on his ability to ensure his recruits adhere to the hegemony and avoid in engaging in intimate thoughts unless they are purely of a sexual nature. Thus, Hartman uses his rhetoric to set up such a framework that denounces women, encourages physical prowess, denounces homosexuality, and stipulates male friendships in the form of indirect bonds rooted in adherence to the Marine Corps and the hegemony. In turn, the recruits quickly learn they must follow these rules if they wish to be successful within their group and in the broader context of the United States Marine Corps.

Important in these scenes is that the behaviors put forth by Hartman – the derogation of women and their exchange, the promotion of physicality, tactics for
male bonding, and the avoidance of homosexuality – is that they are being learned and repeated by the group. These norms, which are seen on smaller scales in greater American society, are distilled and elevated in importance within the platoon. With language and threats of physical punishment, Hartman has begun the process of shaping the recruits in his ideal masculine image. In turn, Kubrick demonstrates that language is just as important as action, and that it is possible to condition a group to act in a way that is abhorrent and harmful towards those who do not meet the benchmarks of their power hierarchy through verbal means. Thus, the truly constructed and arbitrary nature of this system of power is revealed without delegitimizing its ability to successfully fulfill the aims of those in charge of its creation.
LET’S GET PHYSICAL: MANIFESTATIONS OF MASCLINE RHETORIC

As the expression goes, “monkey see, monkey do,” and it’s no different in the case of *Full Metal Jacket*. Establishing the proper rhetoric for maintaining hegemonic masculinities is only half the battle. In meeting Joker for the first time in the Vietnamese jungle, the hyper-masculine character “Animal Mother” poses a poignant question: “you talk the talk, but do you walk the walk?” Bravado and participation in masculine rhetoric are certainly viewed as fundamentally important components of being a man. They are equally critical in establishing the hegemony to which men must adhere within the group, however implicit in this rhetoric is the necessity of actions that are in line with the rules of hegemony. If Hartman is unable to get his recruits to act physically in the manner he views as appropriate, he has in turn failed as a drill sergeant. The necessary physical actions of recruits are generally manifestations of the rhetoric put forth by Hartman during the time he spends with recruits. The aim of this chapter is to address, explain, and analyze these manifestations of masculine rhetoric and in turn show the additional means through which Hartman attempts with general success to establish hegemonic masculinities as a means for control and order to maintain the hierarchy of power within the group of recruits. In turn, this chapter aims to explore the ways in which verbal rhetoric manifests in physical action, and how this relationship leads to the establishment of hegemonic masculinities within the platoon.

Hartman often uses his rhetoric as a means for expressing his intent to punish those who do not successfully adhere to hegemony he sets forth. When Joker
makes an ill-timed joke during role call, Hartman delivers an impassioned burst of violent threats:

Who said that? Who the fuck said that? Who’s the slimy little communist shit twinkle-toed cocksucker down here, who just signed his own death warrant? Nobody, huh?! The fairy fucking godmother said it! Out-fucking-standing! I will P.T. you all until you fucking die! I’ll P.T. you until your assholes are sucking buttermilk.

This piece of dialogue demonstrates Kubrick’s multilayered approach to subtly critiquing masculinities. In short, it is crass, off-putting, and downright comical. Hartman’s vocabulary is significantly more colorful than one might expect, and he continually finds new and outrageous ways to threaten recruits with physical violence. The effect this comedy is twofold: in its diegetic form, it allows Hartman to express physical violence in a way that is viewed as perhaps less threatening, while at the same time it allows for Kubrick to make a joke of hegemonic masculinities as a whole. If his audience responds with laughter, he has succeeded in pointing out some of the absurdities of constructing hegemonic masculinities. Though in many respects hilarious for its vivid and crass imagery, this short piece of dialogue is crucial in establishing the hegemonic masculinities to which the recruits must adhere. Hartman compares the individual who disobeys him as an effeminate communist and homosexual who in turn must be punished physically, even killed, for his defiance. He equates those who show signs of disobedience to his established order as being the very enemies against which the War in Vietnam was supposedly fought. By describing this individual as feminine, Hartman too continues to reinforce the notion that women and effeminate men are enemies who must be punished. The
same is true in his use of the phrase “cocksucker”, which continues to designate homosexuals as an enemy of the recruits.

However, rhetoric is not adequate in demonstrating to his troops how they must respond to such perceived threats to the hegemony. Hartman punches Joker in the stomach, dropping him to his knees, ensuring all recruits see that disobedience will be met with swift verbal and physical retaliation. This theme continues when Hartman addresses Private Pyle. Following their exchange discussed in the first chapter, Private Pyle seems unable to stop laughing at Hartman following his tirade about the homosexual nature of his name “Lawrence.” Hartman threatens him, saying: “Private Pyle, I’m gonna give you three seconds – exactly three fucking seconds – to wipe that stupid-looking grin off your face, or I will gouge out your eyeballs and skull-fuck you! One! Two! Three!” Again, in this rhetoric one sees the threat of violence, however violence that is curiously sexual in nature. This violent sexual act however can still be viewed as being in line with Hartman’s established hegemonic notions of acceptable sexual behavior. In this case, Hartman threatens to use sex as a means for domination and punishment. There is no affection or emotional connection between the two; rather Hartman wishes to demonstrate his superiority to Private Pyle by making clear that he is able to degrade him in any way he pleases, in this case sexually.

Hartman instead forces Private Pyle to his knees in a similar manner to how he did Joker, demonstrating to other recruits his status as dominant male and his ability to enforce the hegemony. All those in positions of masculinity subordinated to that of Hartman must act in an accordingly submissive manner. He then offers his
outstretched hand to Private Pyle, instructing him to choke himself using Hartman’s hand. As he continues to choke Pyle Hartman forces him to sound off, saying “Sir, yes, sir” again as a means for demonstrating to other recruits that they must obey his commands. He ends this encounter with an additional threat of violence” Private Pyle, you had best square your ass away and start shitting me Tiffany cuff links … or I will definitely fuck you up!” Private Pyle’s continued inability to follow instructions and perform his role properly as a soldier causes him to fall victim to similar punishments.

Later in boot camp Private Pyle fails to place his gun on the correct shoulder during a morning exercise. Upon noticing this, Hartman asks, “Private Pyle, what are you trying to do to my beloved Corps?” and argues that Private Pyle’s error was intentional: “Then you did that on purpose! You want to be different!” In this exchange Hartman classifies failure to perform an action correctly as a direct assault on the United States Marine Corps, and in turn states that wanting to be different is an equally egregious act. Through this, Hartman classifies disobedience and failure to preform as a threat to the group as a whole and punishes Private Pyle accordingly by alternately beating the left and right sides of his face, asking Private Pyle to say aloud which side is receiving the blow.

Ultimately Hartman proves to be successful in his teaching when he begins to punish the entirety of the group for Private Pyle’s wrongdoings rather than Private Pyle himself. Following a discovery that Private Pyle has been hoarding food from the mess hall in his locker, Hartman describes how the failure of Private Pyle to obey to the hegemony is in turn a failure of Hartman himself:
Private Pyle has dishonored himself and dishonored the platoon! I have tried to help him, but I have failed! I have failed because you have not helped me. You people have not given Private Pyle the proper motivation! So, from now, whenever Private Pyle fucks up, I will not punish him, I will punish all of you! And the way I see it, ladies, you owe me for one jelly doughnut! Now, get on your faces!

Hartman has designated his inability to enforce the hegemony and maintain order as a failure of his own, lending credence to the idea his success and subsequently his masculinity are contingent on the strict enforcement of hegemonic norms within the group, exposing the flawed nature of this power hierarchy. Keeping in mind that a system of hegemonic masculinities requires willing participation on behalf of group members, Kubrick uses Hartman’s failure to function as sole enforcer of the hegemony to show that the entire system is prone to crumbling should those affected choose not to participate. To counteract this, Hartman has established that group participation in enforcing the hegemony is necessary, and refusal to do so will result in group punishment. Notice as well how he again characterizes the members of the platoon as women due to their failure to enforce the hegemony. Given that the members of the group have learned from Hartman that the best way to enforce the hegemony is through physical punishment, they respond accordingly that evening. In a pivotal scene, the platoon members fill socks with bars of soap, gag Private Pyle, hold him down with his blanket, and beat him mercilessly in order to punish him for his transgressions.

Thus, the troops have learned from Hartman a crucial lesson: rhetoric is not enough to enforce the norms of the hegemony he has set forth. Instead, they must punish those with physical violence as means for ensuring their adherence to group norms. It is not enough to simply succeed on an individual level in performing the
hegemonic norms Hartman has established as necessary for success. Others who are unable to find such success pose a direct threat to the group and the hierarchy of power. As such, they must be encouraged through violent rhetoric and action lest they be expelled from the group entirely, something that would be unacceptable for Hartman as it would constitute a failure on his behalf.

An additional physical manifestation of the rhetoric of the hegemonic masculinities Hartman has set forth for the platoon is closely related to Private Pyle’s initial errors: being groomed and in good physical shape. The notion of cleanliness is an extremely important one in the masculine rhetoric of Hartman. Filth, being unkempt, and being in poor physical shape are equated with failure and in turn are viewed as being harmful to the hierarchy of power within the platoon. Indeed in his opening address to the recruits Hartman establishes this by designating uncleanliness as being associated with the initial subordinated masculinity of the group members: “I am Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, your Senior Drill instructor. From now on, you will speak only when spoken to, and the first and last words out of your filthy sewers will be ‘Sir!’ Do you maggots understand that?” The characterization of their mouths to “filthy sewers” along with the denunciation of the subordinated recruits as “maggots” indicates that being dirty or unclean will be considered to be a violation of the hegemonic masculinities.

Hartman frequently addresses the new recruits by names that evoke feelings of filth or disgust, such as claiming that, in the case of Cowboy, “It looks to me like the best part of you ran down the crack of your mama’s ass and ended up as a brown stain on the mattress!” He also evokes similar notions about sexual acts between
men and women, telling recruits “Your days of finger-banging old Mary Jane Rottencrotch through her pretty pink panties are over!” Using the words “old” and “Rottencrotch” evoke feelings of disgust for this sexual act. Instead of making sex out to be something pleasurable, Hartman literally refers to the female sex organ as “rotten” and subtly implies that such a sexual act is a gross behavior. Routine checks for cleanliness are mandatory as well and done are in great detail, with Hartman even checking the individual length of toenails and fingernails to make sure they are up to his standard. The barracks themselves are held to a similar standard, as Hartman tells Joker “I want that head so sanitary and squared away that the Virgin Mary herself would be proud to go in there and take a dump!” Being organized and clean are presented as necessary hegemonic masculinities due to their utility in ensuring the group does not fall ill and is well disciplined. Uncleanliness and disorder are viewed as detrimental to the performance of the platoon and in turn pose a threat to Hartman’s success as drill sergeant. However, the cleanliness standards imposed by Hartman are nothing short of extraordinary. Rather than simply functioning as a means for avoiding potential illness or injury caused by mess, Hartman uses this incredibly detailed level of order to exert as much discipline as possible over the group. Even their own bodies no longer belong to themselves. They have become a subject of Hartman’s scrutiny and in turn something that is under his control. By adding these stipulations to the hegemony, Hartman ensures group participation and group punishment for those who fail to follow these rules.
However, implicit in this advocacy of cleanliness and orderliness is the most important physical requirement of the hegemony and in turn the platoon: their physical fitness. Hartman frequently equates being out of shape and physically unfit to perform the exercises required of the platoon to being unclean and disorderly. Due to Private Pyle’s weight, Hartman often refers to him as “fat-ass” and uses his stature to demean him, calling Private Pyle a “fucking walrus-looking piece of shit” and “disgusting fatbody”. During multiple scenes in bootcamp, Kubrick has Private Pyle appear onscreen shirtless while other recruits remain clothed. (figure 1). In doing so, Kubrick forces his viewers to be continuously aware of Private Pyle’s poor physique. He is pale, overweight, and carries a dull look on his face that is reminiscent of an infant who is still in the pre-verbal stage. In turn, Kubrick uses Hartman’s continual critiques of Private Pyle’s physique to reinforce the notion that his lack of physical ability is a severe detriment to his ability to be a successful soldier, and subsequently a detriment to the group as a whole. Indeed he characterizes Private Pyle’s lack of physical fitness as being to a disease that will contaminate his group and in turn the rest of the world: “I’m gonna rip your balls off so you cannot contaminate the rest of the world!” It is not adequate to contribute to rhetoric around physical fitness and toughness, one actually has to demonstrate these attributes or risk being deemed unclean and disgusting, something that is in direct conflict with the established hegemony.

The notion of physical fitness is one that is often discussed among masculinities studies scholars as being of great importance. Barry Glassner contends that the importance placed on physical ability in the context of American hegemonic
masculinities finds its roots in the lore that the United States was built by male muscle.\textsuperscript{45} He further argues that men who are physically unfit or small in stature are more likely to be associated with boyhood and femininity, claiming that the term “sissy” is frequently used to denote such individuals.\textsuperscript{46} Due to the public perception that men are generally stronger than women, being a weaker male is equated to being more feminine, which as explained previously is the most destructive trait to a given male’s perceived masculinity. In turn, group denunciation of unfit males is extremely common in American society, with a study showing that every single member of a 256-strong group on non-muscular and physically fit adolescent boys suffered from some form of mood or behavior problem that stemmed from feelings of inadequacy in comparison to their more physically-fit peers.\textsuperscript{47} Kimmel further supports this notion, arguing that in the initial stages of the formation of American culture, having a strong physique was viewed as indicative of a hardworking and successful man.\textsuperscript{48} “The ideal of the Self-Made Man gradually assumed increasingly physical connotations so that by the 1870s the idea of “inner strength” was replaced by a doctrine of physicality and the body.”\textsuperscript{49} Similar to American fears regarding homosexuality, weakness and poor physique was believed to be a result of feminization caused by young boys spending too much time around

\textsuperscript{45}Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, \textit{Men’s Lives}, 286.

\textsuperscript{46}Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, \textit{Men’s Lives}, 286.

\textsuperscript{47}Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, \textit{Men’s Lives}, 287.

\textsuperscript{48}Michael S. Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 103.

\textsuperscript{49}Michael S. Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 103.
other women and in turn failing to grow into the American ideal of a man. Strength and physical ability were indicative of a man capable of fending for himself, being able to physically best other men in the arena of sports or general physical contests, and perhaps most important, as being stronger and more powerful than women. Thus weakness was and continues to be associated with femininity, boyhood, and inability to provide for oneself and maintain control of the surrounding environment, things that are all considered by masculinities studies scholars as being the antithesis to masculinity.

In Full Metal Jacket, the story is no different, as one sees inability in the physical realm as a failure on behalf of a given member of the platoon. This physically manifests in a number of ways. The first and most easily noticeable is simply the ability of given platoon members to navigate obstacle courses and exercises successfully. Those who cannot are punished by Hartman in ways that call into question their very masculinity. Pyle, upon failing in a number of physical exercises, is made to walk behind the rest of the platoon with his pants around his ankles, sucking on his thumb with his rifle pointed downwards (see figure 2). This is intended by Hartman to be a physical demonstration of inadequacy, an argument that being physically unfit is akin to being a young boy who cannot care for himself. By physically portraying Private Pyle in such a way, Kubrick visually demonstrates the need necessary physical aspects of being a male. In this scene, his weight is highly apparent, his gate reveals awkwardness and lack of agility, and his sucking

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50 Michael S. Kimmel, Manhood in America, 104.
51 Michael S. Kimmel, Manhood in America, 168.
his thumb with his pants down is an implicitly sexual image. Furthermore, it is akin to being as helpless if not more helpless than the average woman. The notions of breastfeeding and needing to have his diaper changed portray Private Pyle as still be reliant on the female figure of his mother. This, combined with his grotesque physique casts him as the antithesis of masculine. Indeed the majority of training in bootcamp centers on the abilities of the recruits to perform physically demanding tasks with success. Those who are unable are deemed less masculine, and as failures.

The final physical manifestation of the masculine rhetoric used to establish the hegemonic masculinities put forth by Hartman is the physical removal and replacement of women and sexual acts. As demonstrated earlier, Hartman frequently uses rhetoric to disparage and denounce women and in turn often compares incapable recruits who are not in line with the norms of the hegemony as being effeminate or being actual women. However, there are several physical manifestations of this as well. The first is the introduction of weaponry to the platoon, an important moment for all that is considered by many as a right-of-passage. However, more than being a sign of their continued ascent towards manhood, the rifle is intended to serve as a physical replacement for the lack of women.

Tonight ... you pukes will sleep with your rifles! You will give your rifle a girl’s name! Because this is the only pussy you people are going to get! Your days of finger-banging Mary Jane Rottencrotch are over! You’re married to this piece, this weapon of iron and wood! And you will be faithful! Port... hut! Prepare to mount! Mount!
The use of the word mount is no mistake nor is it a coincidence – there is an implicit sexual connotation in the troop’s act of mounting their bunks and sleeping with their rifles. By discussing this “weapon of iron and wood” in a sexual light, Hartman again distances the idea of sex from the idea of female contact. Following their mounting, the recruits recite the rifleman’s creed:

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it, as I must master my life. Without me my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will. Before God I swear this creed. My rifle and myself are defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life. So be it … until there is no enemy … but peace. Amen.

In this moment, Hartman successfully completes the physical removal of women from the platoon by forcing the recruits to view their rifle instead as the only object of feminine connection. In Hartman’s claim that the rifles are “the only pussy” the recruits are going to get, he again classifies sexual contact, even with the feminized rifle, as something to be attained, won, or taken. This scene can be viewed as the complete physical replacement and removal of any legitimate feminine presence within the platoon. In turn, sexual release is replaced with violent release and continues to physically encourage the violent and anti-female rhetoric put forth by Hartman in order to establish the hegemony.

Hartman further attempts to reinforce the expulsion of women and the adherence to the rifle by forcing the platoon to march in their underwear in their barracks clutching their rifles in one hand, and their genitals in the other (see figure 3). They are then made to repeat the phrase “This is my rifle! This is my gun! This is for fighting! This is for fun!” This bizarre scene has a touch of comedy as well as
sexual tension. The absurdity of such an exercise again highlights the constructed and nonsensical nature of the construction of hegemonic masculinities. By normalizing such acts within the platoon, Hartman addresses idea of sex head-on and does so in a way that strips sexual pleasure of its emotional meaning. Through chanting, repetition, and group exercise, Hartman continually reinforces the notion that sex is something that does not belong in the platoon. The implicit homosexual nature of performing such an act with other men functions as a means for Kubrick to highlight the illogicality of such exercises as a means for asserting emotionless heterosexual dominance. Again, Hartman is encouraging the recruits to abandon sexual desires as they take on the role of fighters and protectors of their country. In turn, sex is characterized as an activity intended purely for physical fun and enjoyment. There is no encouragement of emotional connection or respect, rather it is considered to be a frivolous activity that has no place in the lives of Marines. Their guns are all they need.

Thus Hartman has largely successfully demonstrated and enforced his methods for enacting a maintaining the set of hegemonic masculinities necessary to maintain the hierarchical order of power within the platoon. Through the threat and use of physical violence as form of punishment, Hartman has conditioned his troops to respond in the same manner to members of the platoon that are unable or unwilling to successfully participate in the hegemony. Through the denunciation of uncleanness and lack of physical fitness, Hartman has ensured that all but one of his troops are successful in staying clean and organized, and are capable of achieving the level of physical fitness required to complete bootcamp. Those who
initially are not are again punished physically, ostracized, and deemed to be
effeminate or little boys, something in conflict with the hegemony. Finally, Hartman
successfully eradicates and replaces women and sexual desire with the physical
object of the rifle. In doing so, he ensures his platoon consists of a group of violent
and physically fit men that have no desire for and indeed outright hostility towards
a feminine presence. In turn, his success is contingent on his ability to ensure that
the men preform the hegemonic masculinities he has set forth during their time in
bootcamp.
FAILED CONTROL: THE DOWNFALL OF PYLE AND HARTMAN

In the previous chapter, there was limited discussion surrounding examples of the failure of various members of the platoon to perform the hegemonic masculinities put forward as a means for maintaining the hierarchical structure of power within the group. The aim of this chapter is to further address these failures and analyze them in the context of what these failures say about the broader idea of masculinities and more specifically hegemonic masculinities in American society. In doing so, it is important to remember the roots of hegemonic masculinities themselves and the purpose they serve in both establishing and maintaining these hierarchical structures of power. It is widely accepted by genders studies scholars that in nearly every society, and particularly in American society, there is an imbalance of power that places men at the top of the hierarchy. In turn, hegemonic masculinity is in essence a social mechanism employed either consciously or unconsciously by the males in power in order to maintain their hold on power and further its formation.

However, at face value, the typical manifestations of hegemonic masculinities do not necessarily appear as deliberately constructed social norms that function as a means for excluding others. Indeed, a significant aim of hegemonic masculinities is to reinforce the notion that their existence is not only acceptable, but indeed a natural and organic process that is central to human nature. Remember Donaldson

52 Jeff Hearn, “From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men,” 51.
53 Mike Donaldson, “What is hegemonic masculinity?”, 643.
54 Mike Donaldson, “What is hegemonic masculinity?”, 644.
claims “hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear “natural,” “ordinary” and “normal.” The idea that hegemonic masculinity is propagated via popular media and therefore portrayed as normal to broader society has given rise to slew of misinterpretations regarding *Full Metal Jacket* that claim the film plays a part in the normalizing of these potentially destructive and exclusionary societal dynamics. Author Susan White, for example, contends in her journal article *Male Bonding, Hollywood Orientalism, and the Repression of the Feminine in Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket* (1991) that *Full Metal Jacket* tells the story of a group of men who are successfully conditioned to be rough and tough killing machines that expunge the feminine entirely from their lives in order to focus on their passion for bloodshed and wartime glory. However, this view ignores entirely the destructive aspects of the hegemonic masculinities that are shown in the film and serve to underline their negative impact on the lives of those who are affected by them, namely men.

Such a reading of the film seems to ignore the fact that, due to the way in which these hegemonic masculinities are cast as normal and indeed expected social dynamics within the platoon, the recruits are unable to have much agency in choosing to participate. Arguments such as these portray hegemonic masculinities as being the product of wants and desires of the group as a whole rather than the

55 Mike Donaldson, ”What is hegemonic masculinity?”, 645.
product of a select few who wish to enforce a hierarchy of order. It is important to remember that a system of hegemonic masculinities requires some members of the in-group to remain at a subordinated status, something that is obviously not very desirable. To view the hegemonic masculinities in *Full Metal Jacket* as a means for excluding women is ignoring a much larger idea: that such a system of hegemonic masculinities serves to benefit no one but those at the very top of the chain. Furthermore, the reward for being the most masculine and in turn a successful soldier is an oftentimes one-way ticket to Vietnam. Kubrick demonstrates that the successful performance of masculinities is simply met with more conflict and a perpetual position of subordination as the Marines are expected to fight for their country overseas. In doing so, Kubrick further promotes the idea that hegemonic masculinities are constructed purely as a means to an end rather than arising naturally. They are a system of control that allows for one to exercise power over another, regardless of gender.

To fully understand the negative impacts of hegemonic masculinities that are portrayed in *Full Metal Jacket*, it is helpful to be acquainted with the basic tenants of sociological group theory. In its most simplified and distilled sense, group theory makes three basic claims: there are acceptable behaviors within a given group or society known as “norms”, there are behaviors that are in conflict with these norms known as “deviant” behaviors, deviant behavior will be punished in proportion to the level of deviancy.58 In less severe cases, a society might punish deviant behavior

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through social exclusion, withholding certain opportunities such as steady employment or pay, or punishment such as jail time of community service. In its most severe cases, a society punishes extreme deviancy by removing the deviant from the group, either by permanent incarceration or by capital punishment.

In *Full Metal Jacket*, Private Pyle is one of the characters used to explore and portray the destructive effects hegemonic masculinity can have on deviants whose behaviors are in conflict with the established hegemony. The separation and “othering” of Private Pyle begins immediately with the introduction of his name. His name “Gomer Pyle” is shared with that of the 1968 television show in which Private Gomer Pyle is portrayed by actor Jim Nabors who was subject to pervasive rumors regarding his potential homosexuality. In the removal of the name Leonard and the introduction of Private Pyle, Kubrick immediately foreshadows Private Pyle’s deviancy through subtle allusion to his potential homosexuality. Recall that homosexual behaviors and desires are in grave and direct conflict with the established hegemony. This effect is embellished by the abundance of group-oriented shots in which Kubrick generally refuses to focus on the face of any one recruit, instead often placing them next to or in relation to Hartman, suggesting that the latter’s presence is almost omniscient and has an effect on each and every behavior of the recruits. As a result, any examples of individuality or deviancy stand in stark contrast to the rest of the film. Thus, the continued singling out of Private

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Pyle by Hartman and the abundance of shots that focus closely and solely on Private Pyle serve to underline his deviance from the rest of the group.60

Private Pyle is frequently portrayed not just as different, but also as incredibly daft and incapable of understanding or following basic instructions. His facial expressions are frequently deviant in nature as they are generally inappropriate as a response to his surroundings. Take, for example, the initial source of his woes: his inability to stop smiling as he is being berated by Hartman. His dazed grin hints at a lack of understanding of his transgression and indeed prompts Hartman to ask Private Pyle the question “Did your parents have any children that lived?” His incompetence and his almost pre-verbal nature hints at a theme of infantile cognitive function: his mental ability seems to be in line with that of a child rather than a grown man. Private Pyle’s unintentionally infantile behavior is viewed by Hartman and in turn the rest of the platoon as flagrant disregard for the hegemonic masculinities in place and in turn he is punished accordingly. Take, for example, the previously discussed punishment of being forced to suck his thumb with his pants around his ankles: Private Pyle is treated as being little more than a boy among men.

This idea of infantile incompetence is explored further when Hartman designates Joker to be in charge of Private Pyle. “Private Pyle, from now on Private Joker is your new squad leader, and you will bunk with him! He’ll teach you everything. He’ll teach you how to pee.” The implication is that Pyle is at such underdeveloped stage that he needs to learn skills mastered by two-year olds. This

is reflected in the rhetoric between Private Pyle and Joker, who treats Private Pyle as he would a young boy to whom he is a mentor. Joker is gentle and patient with Private Pyle, and forgoes the use of his nickname and instead calls him by his given name, Leonard. Take, for example, the interaction between the two as Private Pyle struggles to complete and obstacle course:

Just throw your other leg over … that’a boy. That’s it. Now just pull the next one over and you’re home free. Ready? Just throw it over. That’a boy. Just set it down. All right? There you go. Congratulations Leonard, you did it.

His patience for and treatment of Private Pyle is not dissimilar from how one might act with a young child. In turn, his use of the name Leonard shows a compassion and concession that is not necessary for other recruits. Private Pyle is treated as special and different because of his incompetence and infantile disposition, something that the rest of the group including Hartman comes to resent and punish.

In designating Joker to be in charge of Private Pyle, Kubrick continues to show how Hartman’s system for maintaining the hierarchy of power through hegemonic masculinities is contingent on the willingness of other members of the group to participate. Should the members of the group somehow unanimously choose to reject this system, Hartman would have little recourse except to expel the entirety of the platoon from bootcamp. Through this, Kubrick demonstrates that that a key aspect in the system of hegemonic masculinities is to make members of the group believe that they possess little to no agency in choosing to participate. This requires Hartman to normalize and encourage to participate in behaviors that Kubrick portrays as absurd and borderline comical. This is why normalizing this system is inadequate – it must include the some type of punishment, which in this
case takes the form of physical abuse. Hartman punishes Private Pyle harshly and encourages others to do the same. His repeated threats and acts of physical violence seem to be less of an intention to motivate or reform Private Pyle as they are an example to other platoon members of what happens to those who fail to conform the hegemonic masculinities set forth. This in turn becomes a self-perpetuating cycle in which Private Pyle’s performance continues to decline as a result of his continual isolation and singling out by Hartman. Hartman responds by isolating him even more from the rest of the recruits and the problem only gets worse.

Perhaps the most notable way in which Private Pyle differs from the other members of the platoon is his large stature and lack of physical fitness. Private Pyle repeatedly shows his incompetence not only through his odd and infantile behavior, but also through his lack of physical ability. Kubrick chooses to highlight this simply by having a majority of the bootcamp scenes consist of troops being tested on their physical ability. Over the course of these shots we see the continued progression of Private Pyle’s failures. In turn, the punishments, both physical and verbal, continue to worsen. As Private Pyle gasps for air and is unable to support his own weight during a marching exercise, Hartman follows alongside him and berates him the whole way:

Are you going to fucking die, Pyle? Are you going to die on me!! Do it now! Move it up! Hustle it up! Quickly, quickly, quickly! Do you feel dizzy? Do you feel faint? Jesus H. Christ, I think you’ve got a hard-on!

While criticizing his physical ability Hartman continues to hint at the notion that Private Pyle has latent homosexual desires. In turn he continues to further the idea that Private Pyle is different and indeed inferior to the rest of the group in almost
every possible way. As stated previously, this is demonstrated visually by
continually contrasting his failures to the success of other recruits. During training,
Kubrick frequently shows recruits handling various tasks successfully before
providing shots of Private Pyle failing. This, combined with frequent insults and
threats of violence continues to single him out as deviant.

This rhetoric is soon picked up by the rest of the group who refer to him in
ways that demean him for his weight and large stature, calling him “fatboy” and
cheering when he is beaten in physical contests. Kubrick continues to play on this
theme of isolation within the group as a form of punishment: when Private Pyle is
captured hiding the doughnut in his footlocker, he stands and eats the doughnut while
his fellow recruits do push-ups (figure 4). In turn, his failures are put on a pedestal
for all to see for all the criticize. This separation and special treatment eventually
turns to resentment on behalf of the platoon. Following the incident of the jelly
doughnut, Joker begins to contribute more and more to this rhetoric as he loses his
patience for Private Pyle. “You really look like shit today, Leonard”, he says as he
attempts to straighten Private Pyle’s uniform and cap. Following the nighttime
beating known as a “blanket party”, the transition to near-total exclusion from the
group is complete as even Joker, the one ally of Private Pyle, beats him more
mercilessly than any other member of the platoon. Finally his difference from the
rest of the group is beginning to manifest with severe physical and emotional
repercussions. As film studies scholar Dr. Zivah Perel writes of Private Pyle, “his
body is literally beaten into conformity” as the group turns to the barbaric methods advocated for by Hartman in order to punish Private Pyle for his deviant behavior.61

The moans and sobs of Private Pyle following his beating are unpleasant both for the viewer and the characters onscreen. Private Pyle is depicted alone on his bed holding his stomach in pain as the camera cuts to Joker, who sits alone in bed with his hands covering his ears. In this clear moment of discomfort, Kubrick demonstrates that despite Joker’s participation in the punishment of Private Pyle and the role he plays in maintaining the hegemonic masculinities of the group, the experience is still a profoundly unpleasant one of which Joker can be viewed as a victim. The turning point of the blanket party does not serve as a promotion of the effects of hegemonic masculinities but rather an example of their harmful and insidious nature that can have detrimental effects on those who still are able to fulfill them, let alone those who are not.

Following this incident Kubrick is more direct in the ways he portrays Private Pyle’s separation from the platoon. It is no longer necessary for the recruits to actively ostracize Private Pyle as he begins to do it for himself. His behavior becomes almost entirely non-verbal and he sits facing forward, with a glazed-over look on his face as the camera often zooms in directly on his dead expression (figure 5). This silent, menacing, look hints at the notion that Private Pyle has been fundamentally changed by his experience in bootcamp. Instead of conforming to the standards of the hegemonic masculinities, he begins to remove himself entirely from the group. Kubrick demonstrates the insidious nature of the hegemonic

masculinities by showing how Private Pyle’s previous failures overshadow his later successes as the recruits move on to target practice. Private Pyle is shown to have an uncanny ability in this arena and receives praise from Hartman for his success. “Outstanding Private Pyle! I think we’ve finally found something you do well!” Hartman continues to mistakenly believe that his methods for instituting the hegemonic masculinities have been successful in conditioning Private Pyle to become an adequate and capable soldier, declaring him reborn in the proper masculine mold: “Private Pyle, you are definitely born again hard! Hell, I may even allow you to serve as a rifleman in my beloved Corps.” This exchange following the shots of Private Pyle’s glazed over facial expression demonstrates a disconnect between Hartman’s understanding of the situation and reality. The viewer is made aware that Private Pyle has been changed by his interactions with Hartman and the Platoon, but in a way that differs from the other recruits.

These scenes clearly demonstrate that Private Pyle has already been pushed too far. His previously eccentric and infantile behavior takes on a more sinister and deluded air as he finds comfort in talking to and cleaning his rifle, Charlene. “It’s been swabbed … and wiped. Everything is clean. Beautiful. So that it slides perfectly. Nice. Oiled. So that your action is beautiful. Smooth, Charlene.” Private Pyle’s love and obsession for his rifle is indicative a sort of regression dependency on the only female presence he is allowed to have. The rifle, intended to be a replacement for the feminine, becomes his only comfort and solace and in turn Private Pyle fixates on it and his ability to shoot accurately. Joker states his alarm to Cowboy, saying “Leonard talks to his rifle … I don’t think Leonard can hack it anymore. I think
Leonard’s Section Eight.” Due to his progress Private Pyle successfully graduates from bootcamp and as such is deemed to be a man by Hartman.

Today you people are no longer maggots. Today you are marines. You’re part of a brotherhood. From now on, until the day you die, wherever you are, every marine is your brother. Most of you will go to Vietnam. Some of you will not come back. But always remember this: marines die, that’s what we’re here for! But the Marine Corps lives forever. And that means you live forever!

Implicit in this dialogue is a reverence for masculinity and its role in group hierarchy. With this, Hartman argues that success in the system of hegemonic masculinities, and in turn success within the Marines is akin to godliness: he promises immortality to the platoon. However, this ascent to manhood culminates in disastrous fashion for Private Pyle as he shows his inability to conform to the hegemony. The long lasting nature and extent of his punishments have been too much. Rather than causing him to conform to the hegemony of the group, he shows himself to be too deviant in nature.

This ending comes in the form of Private Pyle's self-removal from the group by way of suicide. The pressure he has faced to conform proves to be too great to bear, and Private Pyle responds with violence and aggression. When Joker happens upon Private Pyle in the head holding a weapon, he expresses his fears, saying that if Hartman catches them, they will both be “in a world of shit.” Private Pyle makes his opinion of the world Hartman has constructed quite clear, saying “I am ... in a world ... of shit!” However, before the downfall of Private Pyle Kubrick highlights the violent and senseless nature of hegemonic masculinities as Hartman is murdered by Private Pyle following his entering the head. Instead of changing his methods and attempting to appease Private Pyle, Hartman continues with his ‘gruntspeak’, his
final words being, "What is your major malfunction, numbnuts?!! Didn't Mommy and Daddy show you enough attention when you were a child?!!!" Following his shooting Hartman, Private Pyle commits his final act of deviancy, ruining the clean and orderly latrine by splattering the walls with his blood and brains.

The scene that composes Private Pyle's murder of Hartman and his subsequent suicide is a direct indictment of the system of hegemonic masculinities as a means for maintaining order, and is in many respects the most overt criticism of this system in the entire film. Private Pyle's menacing grimace has escalated to a crazed and dangerous glare (figure 6). His posture, the sheen of sweat covering his face, and his slurred speech all serve to highlight various aspects of his physical inadequacy. He is out of shape, stupid, and unhygienic. Important to is the response of both Joker and Hartman. Joker, who speaks soothingly to Private Pyle and attempts to reason with him is spared. Hartman employs his typical technique with threats of physical violence, and insults of a highly personal nature, mockingly asking Private Pyle if he did not receive enough love from his parents as a child. Private Pyle responds in kind, shooting Hartman in the chest and killing him. Private Pyle has rejected Hartman's proposed system of order and has upset rank by killing a superior. Given that this act is in direct response to the treatment Private Pyle has endured at the hands of this system of hegemonic masculinities, Kubrick indicates the failures of attempting to maintain order in this manner. In his final subversive act, Private Pyle sprays blood and brains across the walls of the latrine that Hartman wanted to be “so sanitary and squared that the Virgin Mary herself would be proud to go in there and take a dump.” In doing so, Kubrick further demonstrates that the
system of order as a product of hegemonic masculinities is inherently flawed and prone to subversion. In maintaining his personal agency, Private Pyle is able to disrupt the system of power despite the best efforts of other group members.

The life of Private Pyle within the platoon is one that is in no way intended to show a positive progression or positive growth of a character. Rather it highlights the ways in which hegemonic masculinities function as an imperfect means of control. The continually violent and abusive behavior the Private Pyle faces due to his inability to conform to the social norms put forth by Hartman and engendered by the rest of the platoon serve to push him further to the edge the group. The more he is ostracized, the more he behaves in deviant ways. It too demonstrates a monumental failure on behalf of Hartman to maintain order and discipline within the platoon by way of adherence to hegemonic masculinities. In turn, it is Hartman’s own methods for control and maintenance of the hierarchy that lead to his death and his subsequent failure to prove his own masculinity. Private Pyle serves as an example of what occurs when a member of the group is unable to conform at the most extreme level: he is removed from the group and subsequently becomes a threat to its hierarchy and order.

As such Kubrick demonstrates the flaws in this system while subtly advocating for a different approach. Before turning the gun on himself, Private Pyle aims the gun at Joker, who says “Easy, Leonard. Go easy, man.” Throughout their time in bootcamp, Joker has been the only one to show any sort of affection or compassion for Private Pyle. His more patient and caring approach is not only the impetus behind Private Pyle’s brief improvement, but it is also the reason why
Private Pyle spares his life following the murder of Hartman. Joker and his actions stand in stark contrast to those of Hartman, and his being spared seems to be an implicit lauding of his ability to subvert some of the hegemonic masculinities set forth by Hartman during their time in bootcamp. The next chapter will explore these subversions as a means for Kubrick to advocate for a different approach to constructing and participating in a system of hegemonic masculinities.
SUCCESSFUL SUBVERSION AND FEAR OF THE FEMALE

The system of hegemonic masculinities created and enforced within the platoon is one that, by the end of the first half of *Full Metal Jacket*, reveals itself to be deeply flawed. Though it does seem to be relatively successful in its aim of maintaining order and hierarchy within the platoon, the death of Private Pyle and Hartman in contrast to Private Pyle’s choice to spare Joker’s life seems to suggest there is a better or more well-rounded approach in dealing with the hegemony.

Professor of sociology Dr. Sharon Bird argues:

> When personal conflicts with ideal masculinity [hegemonic masculinities] are suppressed both in the homosocial group and by individual men, the culture imposition of hegemonic masculinity goes uncontested ... the presumption that hegemonic masculinity meanings are the only mutually accepted and legitimate masculinity meanings helps to reify hegemonic norms while suppressing meanings that might otherwise create a foundation for the subversion of the existing hegemony.\(^6\)

In simpler terms, it takes a group belief in the supremacy of hegemonic masculinities along with an individual belief in order to avoid possible subversions of these masculinities. If the individual understands the oftentimes counterproductive and dangerous nature of a system of hegemonic masculinities, it is possible for them to subverted. The aim of this chapter is analyze the characters of Joker and the female sniper and in turn to argue that they are both portrayed as examples of subverting hegemonic masculinities in order for Kubrick to advocate for a more measured approach to existing within an oppressive and dominant patriarchal system.

Following his graduation from bootcamp, Joker quite literally enters the jungle – he is thrust into the wild and hectic world that is Vietnam, colloquially known among soldiers as “being in a world of shit”, standing in contrast to the United States which is referred to simply as “the world.” It is through this entry into a new environment that we see Joker being forced to interact with new all-male groups and in turn his ability to perform hegemonic masculinities is put to the test. However, the manner in which Joker subverts hegemonic masculinities is often subtle. For example, before even graduating bootcamp he requests to be a correspondent for *Stars and Stripes*, a military newspaper that reports on the United States armed forces.⁶³ While correspondents working with *Stars and Stripes* still spend time out on the battlefield, it is implied in *Full Metal Jacket* that they see significantly less action than do their fellow soldiers in combat units. Hartman considers this to be a waste of potential, viewing those who choose not to fight but to be a member of the press as being in a position of subordinated masculinity, saying “Jesus H. Christ, you’re not a writer, you’re a killer!” This view is shared among his comrades and in particular his friend, Rafterman, who laments the fact that “a high school girl” could do his job, and saying he wants “to get out into the shit. I want some trigger time.” Joker responds in typical humorous fashion, dissuading Rafterman by saying his mom would kill joker if he were to be killed. In doing so, Joker subtly expresses his antiwar sentiments without doing so in a way that might draw attention to him as someone who fails in performing the important

hegemonic masculinity of being willing to perform violence. This is one of many examples in which Joker uses humor to diffuse a situation in which he might be forced to perform an undesirable hegemonic masculinity.

As evidenced by his name, Joker frequently uses humor and witty rhetoric in his conversations and interactions with fellow soldiers. Joker frequently refers to his desire to kill throughout the film as being his motivation behind joining the Marines, wearing the handwritten slogan “Born to Kill” across his helmet and speaking of his competitive and bloodthirsty nature in an interview with a press correspondent:

I wanted to see exotic Vietnam, the jewel of Southeast Asia. I wanted to meet interesting and stimulating people of an ancient culture and ... kill them. I wanted to be the first kid on my block to a confirmed kill.

His delivery is dripping with sarcasm and it is clear from similar interactions earlier in the film that Joker’s disposition is one of distance and contempt for his environment and the people around him. To contrast the slogan on his helmet and hint at his distaste for such examples of hyper-masculinity, Joker wears a button with piece sign on his chest. The gung-ho, violent, masculine rhetoric that is fostered and propagated by Hartman throughout the first half of the film is regurgitated in a satirical and sardonic manner by Joker when he is required to perform the hegemonic masculinities expected of him. Joker participates in the rhetoric that is considered necessary of a masculine soldier, but does so in a way that leaves those around him unsure of whether he is being genuine in his enthusiasm.

This detached and oftentimes mocking approach to performing hegemonic masculinities is a central aspect to Joker’s character and functions as a means for Kubrick to demonstrate that he retains a certain level of personal identity in the face
of an oppressive environment. In turn, his ability to understand the system of hegemonic masculinities as constructed and imperfect allows for him to play both sides to an extent, facing little ostracization from his peers while still being able to maintain an identity separate from the group. Joker reveals this understanding in several instances, the first of which comes during the confrontation with Hartman over cleaning the latrines. Joker claims he does not believe in the Virgin Mary to which Hartman responds by slapping him across the face, and saying “you had best sound off that you love the Virgin Mary or I’m gonna stomp your guts out!” When Joker refuses, he states: “the private believes that any answer he gives will be wrong! And the Senior Drill Instructor will beat him harder if he reverses himself, sir!” In this exchange, Joker makes clear that he understands there is no legitimate reasoning behind Hartman’s rules and subsequent punishments other than to maintain order and punish those who attempt to subvert the nature of the hierarchy of power. In essence, he suggests that he is aware of Hartman’s aims and admits he is largely powerless to change them in any significant way. To combat this, Joker often resorts to mocking the norms of the hegemonic masculinities in ways that point to their absurdities. For example, when Joker faces criticism from his peers for his lack of fighting experience, he responds by mimicking the voice of John Wayne, saying “A day without blood is like a day without sunshine,” mocking the hyper-violent and bloodthirsty rhetoric of the group. As the tension in the room seems to heighten, the other soldiers use Hartman’s technique of diffusing the situation by telling racist jokes to a black soldier. This technique stands in contrast to that of Joker, who does not seem to be willing to disparage anyone for their race or sexual
preferences, and instead mocks the hyper-masculine environment through humor while still maintaining friendly relations with his fellow soldiers.

Joker employs the same technique when he first meets a new platoon under the command of his old friend from bootcamp, Cowboy. The initial moments of the meeting between Joker and Cowboy reflect their admiration of one another, and Joker repeatedly asks how Cowboy is doing, showing a genuine interest in his feelings. When Cowboy responds jokingly and asks Joker if he’s “been getting any?” it seems Joker remembers the need to act compassionate from a distance and through the use of insults, responding “Only your sister.” Upon being introduced to the group, one man in particular, Animal Mother, challenges Joker and his lack of combat experience. Animal Mother seems to be testing Joker and his ability to preform required hegemonic masculinities, using Hartman’s technique of violent and threatening rhetoric, saying “I’m gonna tear you [Joker] a new asshole.” Joker responds in typical fashion, mimicking John Wayne and telling Animal Mother he can “eat the peanuts out of my shit!” His refusal to engage in outright threats and responding to violent and aggressive rhetoric and action with humor and detachment allows Joker to avoid performing hegemonic masculinities and instead subvert them in a way that goes unpunished.

Joker continually demonstrates his seemingly unique ability to engage with hegemonic masculinities in a way that does not force him to adopt the rhetoric and behaviors of his fellow soldiers and still avoid being socially ostracized. When questioned by a colonel about his wearing a peace sign button while still having the slogan “Born to Kill” scrawled across his helmet, Joker claims he is trying to suggest
something about “the duality of man. The Jungian thing.” Many film scholars in their analysis of *Full Metal Jacket* have argued that this is a reference to Joker’s internal conflict between wanting to be a good soldier and therefore a killer, and between his desire for peace and his distaste for his hyper-masculine and violent environment. However, in viewing the film and its portrayal of hegemonic masculinities through the lens of masculinities studies, it can be argued that the duality of man discussed by Joker is done so in the same distanced and mocking manner in which Joker discusses nearly every other experience he has in the Marine Corps. Joker does not appear to have any legitimate desire to kill, but rather understands that his individual identity is viewed as a threat by the group of which he is a part, and in turn he must act in a way that masks the true nature of his beliefs. It is his genuine desire to be a killer and a soldier, but rather an indictment of such a notion that causes Joker to halfheartedly masquerade as a bloodthirsty killing machine. Joker understands that in order to survive he must participate in the hegemonic masculinities to some extent, but through retaining his own identity he is often able to subvert these masculinities without facing severe backlash.

Another such example is Joker’s actions when out in the field. He and Rafterman join Cowboy’s platoon in a mission that proves to be a failure, with a number of the platoon members being killed seemingly with ease by a hidden sniper. Joker follows the orders an apparently shaken Cowboy, whose fear and disorganization as a leader causes him to lose control over his platoon. His poor decision making and confusion causes him to lose his leadership role to the tougher

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and more masculine Animal Mother. Upon being shot, Cowboy realizes he is going to die. Joker, in a decision that subverts hegemonic masculinities of showing emotional and physical affection for another man, cradles Cowboy in his arms like he would a child, showing a level of compassion not seen elsewhere in the film. Due to the surrounding chaos and fractured hierarchy of power within the group, Joker's tender actions go unnoticed and unpunished. He is able to show affection and care for a friend under the guise of attempting to save his life, even though it is clear Cowboy is going to die.

In his final subversive act, Joker is forced to make a decision as to whether he should kill the sniper, who upon being ambushed and wounded is revealed to be a teenage girl. As the young woman writhes in pain, it becomes clear that she is not going to survive. The other soldiers, and particularly the hyper-masculine Animal Mother have no desire to kill her, saying “Let her rot.” It is Joker who refuses to leave her, knowing that she is in pain. After praying, she can be heard saying the words “shoot me,” a plea for the men standing over her to put her out of her misery. The onus falls on Joker whose uncertainty and fear of killing the girl is made clear by the 2-minute long shot of his face that is half-covered by a shadow. When he pulls the trigger, similar to his reaction to beating Private Pyle with soap, it is clear that Joker receives no pleasure from doing so and is instead motivated by a sense of duty and compassion. In this case, his duty is not as a Marine but as a fellow human who sees someone in pain and desires to help them.

The killing is not motivated by any sort of desire to be a good soldier and bloodthirsty killer, but rather to fulfill the girl’s dying wish of dying quickly. This is
evidenced by Joker’s dialogue in which he states “we can’t just leave her here.” He is not fearful of her posing any sort of threat to the group, but rather is clearly uncomfortable with her suffering. This is reinforced the camerawork in the scene during which Kubrick spends a full minute focusing in Joker’s face. Half of his face is lit, the other half covered by a shadow, and his facial expression clearly reveals that he is distressed (figure 7). Harkening back to prior scenes in which Joker sarcastically boasts of his desire to be a “killer”, Joker’s reticence to pull the trigger when he is in a perfect position to fulfill his previous aims suggests that his talk of wanting to be a killer is simply another way for him to use humor as a way to engage in masculine gruntspeak without doing so seriously. When he finally pulls the trigger, he closes his eyes, unable to look at the now-dead sniper. This action is of course interpreted by his fellow soldiers as an ultimate act of manliness, and they claim he is a cold-blooded killer. “Joker … we’re gonna have to put you up for the Congressional Medal of … Ugly! … Hard core, man. Fucking hard core.” It is unclear whether his fellow soldiers did not wish to shoot the sniper because they feared killing a woman, or because they wanted her to suffer. Animal Mother, who is consistently portrayed as the embodiment of masculinity, says they should “let her rot”, however as Joker has proven, rhetoric is not always reflective of one’s genuine feelings. What is clear, however, is that Joker is the only soldier willing to empathize with the sniper enough to take action. Again, Joker is able to successfully play both sides and subvert hegemonic masculinities in a way that goes unnoticed and unpunished. He acts compassionately towards a young girl, an ultimate defiance of the governing principles of the hegemonic masculinities he learned in bootcamp. In
turn he retains his own identity while still being considered a member of the group and indeed one that is tougher and more cold-blooded than the ultimate masculine character, Animal Mother. As such, Kubrick subtly suggests that there is room for compassion and individuality in a social structure built around hegemonic masculinities, despite being limited in many respects.

In these scenes there is an additional subtle rebuke to the nature of the hegemonic masculinities put forth by Hartman. The sniper is the greatest source of bloodshed of Americans that is seen during the entirety of the film. Where there are several instances of Vietnamese deaths, there are very few instances of American soldiers being killed. Thus, when Cowboy’s platoon begins to be picked off, the deaths seem to be more significant and intense in nature. They are filmed in slow motion, with special focus on bloodshed and the agonized faces of the soldiers as they are shot and realize they are going to die. Indeed the sniper strikes fear into the hearts of these supposedly fearless and bloodthirsty men so much so that Cowboy loses control of his group. In other words, the sniper is the first truly out-group individual who is able to impose a direct threat to the group and in turn destroy its hierarchy and the subsequent masculinities of its members. In a perhaps ironic twist of fate, it seems that Hartman was right when he portrayed women as a threatening external enemy when it is revealed that the sniper is a woman.

However, rather than legitimize the hegemony and its goals of excluding all things feminine, Kubrick uses the character of the female sniper in a manner similar to those of Private Pyle and Hartman: to underline its failures a system to maintain order and control. This is executed through a number of masterful techniques that
allow the audience to view the men for the first through the eyes of a woman. The scenes of the Marines being shot are done so from the point of view of the sniper and in doing so the viewer feels as though they too are an outsider looking in, perhaps alluding to the exclusive nature of all-male groups and the need to violently intervene as a means for breaking up their leadership hierarchy. Upon watching his fellow platoon members be murdered by the sniper Animal Mother, the toughest and most masculine character in the film, shows genuine fear and distress for the first time, indicating that a female threat is serious enough to challenge even the most masculine men. Upon viewing the sniper and learning that not only is she a female, but indeed a young girl, it seems that the masculinity of all platoon members has been shattered at the hands of their antithesis.

In addition, the success of the female sniper calls into question the very definitions of a successful soldier that, up until this point in the film, seemed to be rooted in masculinity. The female sniper is used to undermine the entire system of the hegemonic masculinities upon which Hartman and his soldiers relied, and shows that they are truly constructed and arbitrary in nature. While perhaps Hartman is correct in viewing the female as a threat, they are not viewed as a threat to the physical safety of the soldiers but rather as a distraction from their duty as a killer. It is almost unthinkable to the men that their demise could come at the hands of a woman, let alone a young girl who is acting alone. It is only because Joker is able to maintain some of his own personal identity separate from that of the group and its hegemonic masculinities that he is able to act in a compassionate manner towards the girl. While many film scholars argue his killing the sniper is intended to
demonstrate his ascent to manhood, it is the opposite that takes place. Joker subverts the expectations of his masculinity and does what he believes to be the right and compassionate thing by granting the final request of the sniper. Though he is not necessarily creating great change within the hierarchy of the group, he is demonstrating that one can successfully navigate such a situation in a manner that does not engage with more toxic aspects of hegemonic masculinities through maintaining a sense of personal identity.

The film ends with Joker expressing his happiness merely to still be alive:

> My thoughts drift back to erect-nipple wet dreams about Mary Jane Rottencrotch and the Great Homecoming Fuck-Fantasy. I am so happy that I am alive, in one piece and short. I’m in a world of shit ... yes. But I am alive. And I am not afraid.

His final piece of spoken dialogue alludes to a sort of regression or at least rejection of the hegemonic masculinities he has been forced to perform. Against the counsel of Hartman, Joker daydreams of his younger self and fantasizes about being with girls after homecoming. He escapes to a time when he thought freely of girls and sharing intimacy with them. In bringing up his wet dreams he speaks to a period of his life where he was still a boy and did not have the masculine expectations placed on him that he does now. Joker’s embracing of this time shows a continued embracing of himself and his own identity – a refusal to conform the group norms and the knowledge that this is okay. As the film fades out the platoon members sing the theme song to the children’s television show “The Mickey Mouse Club”: “Who’s the leader of the club that’s made for you and me? ... Boys and girls from far and near you’re welcome as can be. M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E,” Joker and his fellow soldiers seem to embrace their childhood and even embrace the presence of the

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feminine through their chanting of the song. It is difficult to ascertain whether Kubrick intends this ending of the film to signal a return to childhood, an advocacy for more inclusivity, or perhaps as a way for indicating that even in situations as unpleasant as that of Joker and his platoon's, sentiments of empathy and care for others can still endure. It seems Kubrick intends this ending as a way to reinforce the notion that even those who are subjected to the harmful dynamic of hegemonic masculinities still possess aspects of positive and inclusive humanity. By evoking feelings of childhood and a more carefree time, Kubrick indicates that engendering these enduring aspects of humanity is not a lost cause.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Full Metal Jacket tells a much more nuanced story than simply one of disdain for a perceived system of order within the military. The build-up is slow and deliberate, and its criticisms and suggestions are subtle and in many ways easy to miss. The character of Gunnery Sergeant Hartman is one that has transcended film and has become a pop-culture icon, with lines of dialogue such as “Only steers and queers come from Texas, Private Cowboy! And you don’t look much like a steer to me so that kinda narrows it down!” are instantly recognizable for their brazenness and over-the-top delivery. The dead-faced and sometimes comically-overweight Private Pyle remains a symbol of military and masculine failure, an example of what not to be for men looking to join the armed forces.

Kubrick made no concessions in his choices for these characters – Vincent D’Onofrio (Private Pyle) gained 70 pounds for his role and Ronald Lee Ermey (Hartman) actually served as a drill instructor in the United States Marine Corps.\textsuperscript{65,66} However, their role in pop culture differs greatly in many respects from the role of these characters, as well as that of Joker, as a vehicle for the plot of Full Metal Jacket.

The highly charged and violent rhetoric is almost overwhelming, and it comes so fast that it is easy to miss the common themes that are found throughout its delivery. The consistent disparaging of women, homosexuality, boyhood, and the physically unfit serve more than to simply give the viewer the impression that


Hartman is a tough and unfeeling character. Rather these calculated lines serve to highlight the dominant themes of masculinity and give the viewer a rare glimpse into the intentional and constructed nature of hegemonic masculinities. As Zimmerman argues, the purpose of this dialogue is to demonstrate the ways that social norms can function as a means for controlling others and allows those in charge to consolidate and maintain their power. Its implementation serves to promote the idea that resisting these norms is either dangerous and unwise, or even altogether impossible.

Key in this rhetoric known as ‘gruntspeak’ is urging of those to whom it’s directed to band together in opposition to a perceived threat. Rather than band together against a foreign and generally intangible communist regime, the group finds unity in rejecting the feminine and finding pride in their membership in the United States Marine Corps, as well as their own masculine behaviors as required by the hegemony. Hartman teaches his recruits to measure their self-worth on qualities that only serve to turn the recruits into mindless and violent warriors who will risk death without question. Key in this mindlessness is an outright rejection of the qualities that would serve to be its impediment – the feminine, showing emotion, physical weakness, and distraction by sexual urges. In showing his audience the process of this creation, Kubrick demonstrates that it serves no purpose but to maintain order and hierarchy within a given cause. By defining the performance of these norms as the primary means for assessing one’s military success and placing recruits in competition with one another while simultaneously diminishing their

quality of life, Hartman ensures that his recruits will attempt to fit his prescribed role of the ideal soldier without question. In portraying contrasting examples of those who preform these norms successfully, those who are unable to do so, and Joker, whose approach to dealing with masculinity occupies a different space altogether yet remains largely successful, *Full Metal Jacket* provides a narrative that encourages its audience to reflect on the motivations behind actions in society. In this specific instance, it demonstrates the power of rhetoric in influencing the actions of others and the ways in which it can help to engender harmful behaviors. This can perhaps function as a criticism of the ever-increasing incidence of political rhetoric as a means for coercion of the public.

Political rhetoric as a means for coercion has become relatively commonplace in American politics. Ronald Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson in their article “Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric” contend that political rhetoric that mirrors that seen in *Full Metal Jacket* functions on a societal scale in a manner similar to how it functioned within the platoon:

> Employing an expansive definition of rhetoric that includes all speech acts — whether they are oral or written, whether they take place under conditions approximating Habermas’ ‘ideal speech situation’ or not — we argue that rhetorical maneuver can prove critical to success in political contests even when one’s opponents have not internalized the promoted values.68

In this statement, Krebs and Jackson argue that, similar to the recruits in *Full Metal Jacket*, members of greater American society can be greatly affected by rhetoric to

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the point that they can adhere to beliefs that are not necessarily congruent with those held prior to being exposed to such rhetoric. The unpopular public perception of the War in Vietnam and its role as the backdrop for *Full Metal Jacket* is consistent with the idea that it is not only possible but also commonplace for individuals to be influenced by superiors to engage with actions and behaviors that go against their true beliefs. When Joker is asked why he wanted to become a Marine, he responds by stating his desire to kill. However, as is evidenced by the film’s final scenes, Joker’s response is simply a sarcastic rebuke of what he believes his superiors want to hear. These moments that expose the power of rhetoric on a societal scale allow *Full Metal Jacket* to serve as a reminder of the need to question the motivations behind societal dynamics that are oftentimes viewed as natural rather than constructed. In turn, it advocates for the construction of norms that encourage more positive behavior.

However, rhetoric alone is not the only culprit behind potentially harmful norms. The idea of diminishing the quality of life for the recruits and placing them in competition with one another is key. Thus, the system of hegemonic masculinities is born – a hierarchy within a hierarchy that defines success as being more violent, more homophobic, more unfeeling, and more fit than your fellow group member. This is achieved through constant verbal and physical abuse, along with mandatory physical activity under the threat of beatings and humiliation. If recruits do not preform these norms both in their language and in their physical actions, they are deemed failures and are punished further in an effort to enforce conformity. Under constant threat from both leadership and fellow group members, the environment
that arises is one of hostility and intolerance. However, Kubrick does not simply scrutinize the method of maintaining power and order through hegemonic masculinities by highlighting its toxic and destructive nature, he also uses the character arcs of Private Pyle, Hartman, Joker, and the female sniper to underline its flaws and potential methods for its subversion.

Through the death of Private Pyle and his murder of Hartman, Kubrick shows the terrible price that is paid when one fails to conform to a system of prescribed hegemonic masculinities. Rather than beating Private Pyle into submission, Hartman drives him to the brink of insanity where he views his only option of relief as suicide – the most complete and permanent method of removal from the in-group. However, rather than demonstrate the overwhelming power of the hegemony to mold men and in turn society into a masculine and idealized hierarchy, Kubrick too shows the destructive effects it can have on a system of leadership. By having Private Pyle murder Hartman and in turn undermine his masculinity, Kubrick suggests that the system of hegemonic masculinities is one that is deeply flawed and does not always achieve its aims.

Through sparing Joker’s life multiple times over and chronicling his relative success as a Marine, Kubrick subtly suggests that even in the midst of an oppressive and dominant patriarchal society, there are methods to subvert hegemonic masculinities without facing the same fate as that of Private Pyle and Hartman. Joker consistently demonstrates behaviors that are not in line with idealized male actions – he is affectionate towards his fellow men, does not embrace violence, refuses to reject the feminine entirely, and largely avoids the more grotesque and typical
masculine rhetoric seen in the film. The ending of the film and his counter-intuitively compassionate act of killing the female sniper does not serve as a metaphor for his rejecting the feminine, but rather for his embracing it. However, his participation in beating Private Pyle, his forced acceptance of authority, and his occasional participation in masculine rhetoric shows that there is only so much one can do to subvert the hegemonic expectations placed on them in a patriarchal society. This, combined with the portrayal of the female sniper as the greatest threat to masculinity and group hierarchy suggests that Kubrick intends for *Full Metal Jacket* to highlight the deeply flawed nature of this method of societal organization, and in turn portray methods for subverting it without facing more significant punishment. Joker’s frequent references to being “in a world of shit” support the idea that these problems are endemic to society, at least to some extent. However, his ability to successfully navigate this unpleasant environment by using humor, compassion, and individuality suggests that Kubrick intends to provide a narrative that suggests the utility of such positive qualities in the face of adversity. While perhaps societal framework is too slow-moving to change at the hands of one individual in one lifetime, the ways in which one responds to and operates within this framework still allows for individual agency.

Kubrick’s choice of using the example of the American military during a time of nationwide identity crisis seems to imply that he intends for *Full Metal Jacket* not to serve as an example of an alternative means of societal organization, but rather as a reminder of its inherent flaws and downfalls. Through its characters *Full Metal Jacket* seems to advocate for different approaches to solving this problem while
demonstrating that outright rejection of societal norms serves no purpose but to create chaos and disorder. Instead, Kubrick and in turn *Full Metal Jacket* advocate for maintaining one’s individual identity with greater society, and doing so in a way that does not engage with some of its more toxic social dynamics. At its core, *Full Metal Jacket* is a story that urges its viewers to question their world around them and understand their individual role within it. Furthermore, it encourages its viewers to believe in the power of possessing and performing acts of humor, compassion, and autonomy. The success of Joker seems to argue that at its core, successful subversion and change of these norms relies on the ability to feel compassion for one’s fellow man or woman. In turn, it shows that successful subversion of harmful norms through humor and compassion is possible as long as one is aware of their constructed nature and maintains a sense of individual identity. The first step to great societal change is to understand that it is possible, and that it begins on an individual level. Joker reminds viewers that even if one feels the weight of the world on their shoulders, they must not succumb to fear, and instead find comfort in their individual beliefs.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Figure 1

Figure 2