"Do You Know Why I Am The Way I Am?" A Study of Masculinity in War Films

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ABSTRACT

Film is a relatively new and unique channel of communication, in that it expresses messages both visually and audibly. The purpose of this study was to explore the portrayal of masculinity in war films over the last forty years. The researcher used both a historical and feminist approach of textual analysis to analyze the texts through a broader lens. After analyzing three war films from three different eras and wars, *Patton*, *Platoon*, and *The Hurt Locker*, it was found that masculinity has changed considerably over the years. Findings suggested that the portrayals of masculinity are beginning to revert back to the hyper-masculine characteristics of traditional male characters. This research also suggests the emergence of a newer war film hero, one who is extremely complex and entangled in an inner personal battle.

INTRODUCTION

Feminist and cultural studies scholar bell hooks flawlessly expressed the importance and cultural relevance of film by writing, "Movies not only provide narrative for specific discourses of race, sex, and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these changed issues" (hooks, 1996, p. 2). Consequently, studying films is important because films are unique channels that relay various messages to an audience through visuals and narratives. More importantly, these messages have a tendency to reflect and suggest significant values and ideologies held by society (Bywater & Sobchack, 1989).

Turner (1988) argues that film not only holds a mirror up to society revealing values on race, gender, and politics, but that film creates these ideologies as well. Last year over 1.4 billion people in the United States went to the movies (NASH, 2010), watching the films for entertainment and ultimately unaware they were receiving ideological messages, and each walked away with a perception of society. Due to the increasing attention to a film's ability to reflect and produce cultural ideologies, feminist film scholars paid closer attention to the representation of gender and how genres affect to the representation of gender (Bywater & Sobchack, 1989).

Though there are three feminist movements in the United States' history, including the women's suffrage movement, second wave feminism that began at the end of the 1960s, and the current third wave feminism, scholars found significant affects of the latter two movements on film gender representations (Wood, 2001). Due to the affects of the second wave feminism movement on film, audiences began to observe stronger more independent female characters (Dow, 1996). Therefore, it is important to further the research on the feminist movements' affects on gender portrayals in current films and more specifically the effects of third wave feminism on gender portrayal in today's films.

One of the aspects that stems from third wave feminism is that scholars are beginning to pay closer attention to masculinity in films. In a study by Studlar (2001), it was found that masculinity began to shift from hyper-masculine men to a balance of sensitivity and toughness within male characters. In a similar study of masculinity in war films, Gates (2005), found that masculinity in the war film genre is changing and the once hyper-masculine hero is no longer acceptable

Genres are equally important in film criticism because they change conventions as ideologies change, much like gender portrayals. The war film has had some of the most significant changes throughout cinematic history, in that films are portraying war more realistically and less romanticized (Quart & Auster, 2002). The importance of studying genres in film also lies in the fact that genre films are viewed by large numbers of people and reoccurring themes are present within particular genres, thus creating another way to construct the ideologies of audiences (Bywater & Sobchack, 1989). Because of evidence of evolving gender roles in military films and the changing conventions in the war film genre, the purpose of this study is to explore the portrayals of masculinity in war films over the last forty years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will focus on gender in films and the war film genre. Each section will draw from previous research to illustrate the complexities of gender and genre as well as illustrate significant changes.

History of Gender in Film

Gender is difficult to define; however one way to define gender is through binary opposition. Binary opposition consists of two distinctive sets of categories that describe the difference between femininity and masculinity (Turner, 1988). For example, in film women were portrayed as passive characters, therefore men were portrayed as active characters (Basinger, 1993; Haskell, 1973). Though binary opposition provides a definition of gender, the definition is extremely simplistic and fails to highlight the complexity of gender. Therefore, many scholars define gender as "both an attribute and experience" (Pomerance, 2001, p. 3). Gender is further defined according to femininity and masculinity. In this study, femininity and masculinity will be understood via film portrayals.

Femininity. The complexities of gender are constructed and distributed through various means, including film. Consequently, film scholars noticed significant changes in gender representation in films over cinema's lifespan. Historically, stereotypes fueled female gender representation in film. Generally, these stereotypes revolved around passivity, in that female characters took no action and let men be the active characters (Basinger, 1993).

Through Powers, Rothman, & Rothman's (1993) research of gender roles in film from 1946-1990, it is clearly seen that women's gender roles did not begin to significantly change until the 1970s. Even during the sexual revolution and the women's empowerment movement in the 1960s, films failed to portray progressive gender roles. Due to this lack of evolution during a time of revolution, film scholar Molly Haskell (1973) declared the decade of 1963-1973, "the most disheartening decade in screen history" (p. 323).

Findings from Powers et al.'s (1993) research indicates that until the mid 1970's, female characters' main motivation for moving the plot forward was romance; self-interest and helping others were a distant second and third motivation. After this time period, researchers witnessed a dramatic shift in self-interest as a motivation. Although not surpassing the 44 percent of romance as the main motivation, self-interest held a close second at 40 percent (Powers et al, 1993). These findings are supported by the reemergence of feminism in the United States, which began to produce more progressive female characters in films during the 1970s (Kaplan, 2008). Audiences observed the surfacing of strong female characters in action films, a genre typically devoted to males. Some of the most memorable characters from this decade include Princess Leia from *Star Wars* and Ripley from *Alien* (Gauntlett, 2002).

By the time the 1980s rolled around, female characters were less concerned about supporting their husbands and the lack of dateable men, and increasingly concerned about facing the challenges of balancing and choosing between career and family life (Dow, 2006). In fact, many film scholars observed a backlash from second wave feminism in the female characters of the 1980s. One of the most controversial characters that stemmed from this backlash was Glenn Close's character in the 1987 film *Fatal Attraction* (Dow, 2006; Gauntlett, 2002). *Fatal Attraction* explored the dichotomy between motherhood and the career woman. Unfortunately, the career woman was represented as insane and immoral, and ultimately unable to choose between the two worlds. Another concern this film generated for feminists was that the conflict between sexes was no longer woman verses man, but rather woman verses woman (Dow, 2006). In *Fatal Attraction* the two main female characters fought over the same man, thus resulting with one killing the other.

The 1991 film *Thelma and Louise* created more controversy with the film's two main characters, who were arguably the most progressive female characters in cinematic history. In contrast to the women in *Fatal Attraction*, Thelma and Louise "reject the male world and reaffirm female friendship" (Welsch, 2001, p. 256). The significance of this film lies in the switching of gender roles. The female characters became aggressive, violent, and outspoken and the male characters could only stand by and watch these women run from the law (Welsch, 2001).

Though it took several years to begin changing female representation on screen, it is clear that the representations began to veer from the stereotypical norms. Women were no longer just housewives; they broke into genres that were typically male oriented, they became important factors in the narrative, and contributed to plot development. Finally women were finding their voice in cinematic history.

Masculinity. Over the years the female characters in film clearly became tougher and stronger, which begs the question of what happened to the male characters. Historically, men were the heroes in all the films and everything in the plot revolved around them and their actions (Basinger, 1993; Gauntlett, 2002; Haskell, 1973). Masculinity in culture revolved around body size of the man; the more muscular the man the more masculine the man (Leham & Lurh, 1999). However, according to Gauntlett (2002), the heroic characters in the top grossing films of the 1950s strayed from muscular masculinity and portrayed a "statesman-like" masculinity, which consisted of a thin, suit and

tie wearing, intellectual man. Those films included *Twelve Angry Men* starring Spencer Tracy, *North By Northwest* starring Cary Grant, and *Touch of Evil* starring Charlton Heston (Gauntlett, 2002).

It was not until the 1980s that audiences and scholars alike witnessed shifts in masculinity portrayals in films. By this time, second wave feminism had been in full swing for ten years and there were definite outcomes that proved the success in changing the female and male portrayals on screen (Dow, 1996). A study by Studlar (2001) illustrated a unique shift in masculinity, specifically in the films of actor Tom Cruise. Through the analysis of thirteen films, Studlar (2001) found a shift in what determines becoming a man. In each film, Cruise's characters transformed from boys to men. More importantly, Studlar (2001) noted that the boy representation of masculinity was stereotypical in that they were portrayed as dangerous, inauthentic, greedy, and self-absorbed. However, when the transition from boy to man occurred, the characters balanced their toughness with sensitivity, their physical skill with their professional skill, and their courage with self-control (Studlar, 2001).

This shift from hyper-toughness to a balance between toughness and sensitivity was seen among other films in the 1980s as well as the 1990's. In the second Indiana Jones movie, Indiana Jones becomes a father-like figure to a little boy, all the while maintaining his intensity as a male action hero (Gauntlett, 2001). Similarly, in Terminator Two, Arnold Schwarzenegger's character comes back as a protective father to his son (Gauntlett, 2001).

The change in masculinity representation is present in children's animation. A recent study on Disney/Pixar films indicates that the male protagonist in those films went through the same cycle that Cruise's characters went through. These characters strived to be the Alpha-male and ended up failing, reaching what Gillam & Wooden (2008) call "emasculation" (p. 3). In other words, the male characters of these films would fail at some activity they believe they are excellent at, and due to their failure, they are stripped of any pride that may be attached to their masculinity. Then through the relationships with other characters, both male and female, the character achieves this "new man" image consisting of being a kinder, gentler man (Gillam & Wooden, 2008). Gillam and Wooden (2008) observed this in the Disney/Pixar film *Cars*. In *Cars* the main character, Lighting McQueen, is a hot shot who is full of himself and after a heartbreaking loss at an important race, McQueen beings his transformation into a nicer more gentle man through helping others and learning form the other characters (Gillam and Wooden, 2008).

Scholars observed that this change in masculinity stemmed from the feminist movements and forced these male characters to change along with the female characters (Dow, 1996). This is no surprise, as Dow (2006) indicated that for women characters to make the changes from housewives to independent characters, the male characters also had to make some kind of change. As observed by scholars, this change consists of balancing toughness with sensitivity (Studlar, 2001).

Masculinity and femininity portrayals are clearly changing on the silver screen. Women are becoming tougher and more central characters and men are becoming more sensitive and caring. This study takes the research on masculinity and femininity to a new level in aiming to discover whether these changes in masculinity and femininity can also be observed in an extremely hyper-masculine film genre, the war film.

War Films as a Genre

Genre is defined as "a system of codes, conventions, and visual styles, which enables an audience to determine rapidly and with some complexity the kind of narrative they are viewing" (Turner, 1988, p. 83). Scholars noted how the changing ideologies of society in turn, change the conventions of a particular genre, especially one as politically charged as war films (Turner, 1988). As gender representation changed over time, so did the war film genre.

During the early stages of war films, from the 1940s through the late 1970s, a war film could be identified through conventions, including a plot beginning with training and following a specific unit into battle, troops depicted as heroes, and men concerned with the women back home (Litchy & Carroll, 2008). Typically war films during the 1940s were depicted unrealistically and in a positive manner due to the need to propagate patriotic uplift (Quart & Auster, 2002). These particular conventions stayed prevalent until the late 1960s, when the United States entered the Vietnam War (Quart & Auster, 2002).

Dubbed as the Vietnam Syndrome, the country was extremely torn morally, politically, and ethically on the issue of the Vietnam War (Quart & Auster, 2002). There was only one film about the Vietnam War produced during the actual war, which was the 1968 John Wayne film, *The Green Berets* (Gates, 2005; Quart & Auster, 2002; Litchy & Carroll, 2008; Whillock, 1988). It was not until 1975 that Hollywood felt comfortable producing a film about the Vietnam War, and even then there were only eight films total about the Vietnam War produced (Gates, 2005; Quart & Auster, 2002).

After the Vietnam War, film scholars began to notice a change in typical conventions that were once used to indicate a war film. The films about Vietnam failed to follow any of the conventions due to the need to express political statements and ideological emotions about the Vietnam War (Whillock, 1988). One of the most influential films to the war film genre was the 1986 film, *Platoon*. According to Gates (2005), *Platoon* was the first film to

portray war in a realistic and gritty fashion. This technique was used by other filmmakers like Steven Spielberg in *Saving Private Ryan* and Ridley Scott in *Black Hawk Down*, eventually becoming the recognizable convention in combat war films. Another aspect of *Platoon* that revolutionized the war film was switching the focus from a political war to a moral war (Gates, 2005). In other words, the tension in the film was no longer about the war being right or wrong; rather, the tension focused on whether or not the people were fighting the war for the right reasons.

Along with the new moral perspective on war arose a new type of war hero. No longer was the hyper-masculine hero acceptable; instead the hero was an idealist (Gates, 2005). The new convention was for young boys to make a vital decision as to whether or not to stay and fight. Audiences saw this convention in the film *Saving Private Ryan*, whose main character must decide to stay and fight with his unit after learning his brothers have been killed. The convention is also seen in *Black Hawk Down*, whose main character must decide whether or not go back for the fallen soldier (Gates, 2005). Gates (2005) indicated the new standards and conventions in the war films genres consists of a mission or big event in the beginning of the film, which than can be countered by heroic action near the end of the film.

Gender and the war film. Film scholars Gabbard and Luhr (2008) suggest that, "most genres establish strong presumptions about what consists of masculinity and femininity, and those presumptions differ with the genres" (Gabbard & Luhr, 2008, p. 2). This statement is verified when looking at the differences of masculinity over time. In many films of the 1980s, it seemed as though the definition of masculinity was changing; however, there were certain genres that reverted back to hyper-masculine representations of men. Jeffords & Davis (1989) declared the war films in the 1980s as an attempt to "remasculate American culture" (p. 87), meaning that the male characters were being presented as they were years prior to instill a nostalgic sense of masculinity. Scholars argue that this remasculinization stemmed from a notion of emasculinization of the American man during the Vietnam War due to the inevitable loss (Gates, 2005). Through their study, Jeffords & Davis (1989) observed that traditional values of masculinity and the patriarchal society were reestablished in many Vietnam films.

Gates (2005) argued that the new Hollywood war film produces a more feminine representation of the military due to the change in focus from political wars to moral wars. The moral choice of whether or not to sign up for war or go back for the fallen soldier was present in many films during the 1990s and early 2000s. The moral choice and self-sacrifice can be read as a feminine attribute and therefore straying from the hyper-masculinization during the 1980s. Audiences witnessed this change in the films *Saving Private Ryan (1998)* and *Black Hawk Down (2001)*, where both main characters were young idealistic boys who made a choice to stay and fight for his fellow man in the unit (Gates, 2005).

Over the years there has been a vast amount of research on gender roles among war films. Within the study of female gender roles in war films, one can see that gender roles are not as cookie-cutter as one may think. In fact, female gender roles can become very complicated when female characters are immersed in a masculine culture. Research illustrates that when a typically masculine culture in a film is challenged or threatened by the presence of a female, the female character fuels traditional stereotypes, thus making the military appear more masculine (Furia & Bielby, 2009). These findings are then juxtaposed to the findings that most of the women characters that were soldiers were stripped of any femininity, again preserving the masculinity of the patriarchal culture (Furia & Bielby, 2009).

Clearly the definition of masculinity and femininity become extremely complex in a genre that is based in a hyper-masculine patriarchal culture. Though there were slight changes in masculine representation in the war film over the years, the feminine representation still faces the inability to create a female character in war films that is not stripped of all femininity.

Research Question

Cinematic history witnessed many changes in genre and gender over the years. Audiences are viewing tougher women and more sensitive men and have been taught to look for a new kind of war film that is more realistic and gritty. Through the analysis of Gate (2005), one can see that the male war hero is much different than he was twenty years ago, in that he is potentially more feminine. Because scholars witnessed a significant change in gender portrayals in films and the how the war film genre significantly shifted its narrative style, the following question is raised to look at the affects of time on masculinity in war films:

> RQ: How is masculinity portrayed in the innovative war films of *Patton*, *Platoon*, and *The Hurt Locker*?

METHODS

The current study used cultural criticism in analyzing the selected text. A cultural criticism was the best approach for this study because it identified any changes in society's ideologies about masculinity. Criticism is defined as "an act of ordering, of organizing relationships, of identifying and observing patterns that make the cinematic experience meaningful as well as emotional, comprehensible as well as felt" (Bywater & Sobchack, 1989, p. xiii). Within this study the need to identify patterns was essential. Patterns of male behavior in the films analyzed indicated whether or not characters' masculinity had changed over the last forty years in the war film genre.

This idea of patterns was also essential in genre studies. Patterns witnessed in genre films by audiences become the accepted convention in those particular films. In war films, audiences witnessed shifts in the conventions of the films. This study aimed to discover whether or not these shifts in the war film conventions affected the portrayal of masculinity among those films. Therefore by doing a textual analysis on war films, the researcher was able to identify potential patterns of masculinity in the war genre, and ultimately contemplate what meaning those patterns and possible shifts in masculinity reveal about culture at large.

There are several critical approaches a researcher can take when analyzing a text. For the purposes of the current study, the researcher utilized a combination of both a feminist approach and a historical approach in order to identify potential shifts in the masculinity portrayals in war films. The combination of the two approaches permitted for a broader scope to analyze and understand the films' affects on society's ideology on masculinity.

Feminist Approach

According to Brock, Scott, and Chesebro (1989), communication is genderized and by using a feminist approach as a textual analysis, the researcher is able to "identify sex-related biases and the social implications" of those biases (p. 301). The feminist approach also helped the researcher in this study to "maintain, describe, interpret, and evaluate the power differences distinguishing male and female communication" (Brock et al., 1989, p. 301).

As stated earlier, it is clear that gender portrayals in films, more specifically war films, evolved over the lifespan of cinematic history. One of the driving forces of this evolvement is due to the progression of feminism. Research has indicated that feminist studies in the media advanced considerably since the 1960s women's empowerment movement (Dow, 1996). There have been three stages of feminism in the United States: the women's rights movement from the early 1800-1925, second wave feminism from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, and the current third wave feminism (Wood, 2001).

In general, a feminist approach aims to analyze the role of communication in the distribution of gender ideology (Dow & Conduit, 2005). During second wave feminism, film scholars focused on the woman's lack of opportunity within a patriarchal world. Feminists found women to be secondary characters who wanted nothing more than to aid their husbands (Dow, 1996). As the years progressed, audiences witnessed films starting to portray women in a more progressive light. Women were working nontraditional jobs; they were single and independent, and no longer in need of a man (Dow, 2006).

As the ideology of gender roles began to change, so did feminism; feminists began to see problems with the ideology of second wave feminism (Wood, 2001). Third wave feminism then, stemmed from the second wave feminist movement because women characters evolved so much that the problems the female characters encountered in the patriarchal society were also changing (Dow, 1996). Concerns for female characters during third wave feminism revolve around making decision of what job to choose, ticking biological clocks, and an array of unsatisfactory men (Dow, 1996).

Third wave feminist scholars began to view feminism in a new light; not only were women's representations important to study, but scholars found that the men's representations were equally important because male characters began to change as well (Dow, 2006). Through her study, Dow (2006) realized that the lack of study of masculinity in feminism was a "glaring omission" and that feminist scholars must look at the male as well as the female when studying gender in order to understand gender fully (p. 121).

Historical Approach

The other approach the researcher took in analyzing the texts for this study was a historical approach. The historical approach consists of analyzing the texts in a historical context, concentrating on the relationship between the texts and historical events (Brock, et al., 1989). Using the historical approach the researcher was able to observe "ideas presented as an integral part of their times" allowing a "genuine historical point of view when analyzing and interpreting" the text (Brock et al, 1989, p. 27).

The historical approach permitted the researcher to take into consideration the important events taking place during the production of the films selected, including the economy and current military affairs. Because the films

selected portray World War II, The Vietnam War, and the Iraq War. The historical approach also provided for useful evaluations of the films' representations of those wars as well as how the different wars may have affected the masculinity portrayals within the films. Using the historical approach as a textual analysis also allowed the researcher to understand how the changing feminist movements may have affected the masculinity portrayals in war films.

Text Analyzed

For this study, three war films were examined. Each film is considered a war film and has been popular among movie audiences. The first film analyzed was the 1970 World War II picture, *Patton*. In Franklin J. Schaffner's *Patton,* audiences learn about the famous General George S. Patton and his journey as a leader and soldier. The film begins in North Africa and follows his life through the fall of the Third Reich (IMDB, 2010). *Patton* was produced during the hey-day of feminism as well as during a time of great debate in the war film as a genre. Vietnam films were still not being produced, but this World War II film still found success. *Patton* won several Academy Awards including best picture, best director, best leading actor, and best screenplay (IMDB, 2010).

Another film analyzed was the 1986 Oliver Stone picture, *Platoon*. *Platoon* was released during the transition stage between second wave and third wave feminism and scholars have already commented on how its change in the representation of masculinity affected future films such as *Saving Private Ryan* and *Black Hawk Down* (Gates, 2005). However, there was a lack of evidence that illustrated whether or not the men in *Platoon* were less hyper-masculine than the other characters produced in Vietnam War films. *Platoon* was one of eight Vietnam War films produced after Vietnam and was the film that revolutionized the war genre (Gates, 2005). Scholars revealed a new type of hero in *Platoon*, one that was seen in many war films afterwards (Gates, 2005). *Platoon* revolves around the young naïve Chris Taylor who gave up college to fight in the war, and his two commanding officers, Staff Sergeant Robert Barnes and Sergeant Elias Grodin. As the film progresses, a line is drawn between the platoon about an illegal killing during a village raid. In the end, Taylor learns that to survive the war means to fight two separate battles - the one in Vietnam and the other among his platoon (IMDB, 2010). *Platoon* also received praise at the Academy Awards winning best picture and best director (IMDB, 2010).

The third film analyzed has recently received a lot of attention and falls under third wave feminism. The 2008 film, *The Hurt Locker* is about an elite group of soldiers whose job is to disarm bombs during the heat of combat. The film focuses on the new leader of the team, Staff Sergeant William James and his behavior towards death. As the film progresses the conflict between the men in the unit heats up and the soldiers' true characters reveal themselves (IMDB, 2010). *The Hurt Locker* is one of the first successful films about the war in Iraq, bringing in best picture and best director at the 2010 Academy Awards. An interesting aspect of this film is that Kathryn Bigelow directed *The Hurt Locker*. Kathryn Bigelow, the only female to ever win an Academy Award for best director, is known for "presenting tension between traditional representations of gender and examining the ideological bases of those representations" (Grant, 2002, p. 186).

Each film selected for analysis provided insight into three different wars, three different feminist movements, and three moments in our nation's past. All the films selected won best picture at the Academy Awards and were thus able to generate popularity among film audiences. Each film also was revolutionary for its time; *Patton* was a successful film during a time that condemned war, *Platoon* reinvented war films, and a female directed *The Hurt Locker*.

Once the films were selected the researcher viewed each film three times. The researcher watched to films for pure entertainment for the first viewing and then for second and third viewing took detailed notes. When taking notes, the researcher looked at masculinity and character traits that were obvious to any viewer as well as those that stuck out to the researcher. In order to critique the film and address the research question, the researcher then went through the notes and identified patterns and relationships among masculinity portrayals in each film. From those relationships and pattern the researcher was then able to provide useful feedback on masculinity in war films.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the three films *Patton*, *Platoon*, and *The Hurt Locker*, many interesting similarities and differences in masculinity portrayal arose among the films. Several characteristics of masculinity were found in all the films, including physiological attributes, sexual aggressiveness, emotional attributes, and family bonds. Though portrayed differently in each film, these characteristics of masculinity were juxtaposed in two types of male characters. One of the characters portrayed the hyper-masculine almost stereotypical representation of masculinity. In contrast to the hyper-masculine character the other character was portrayed as less hyper-masculine and with more feminine attributes, being more rational, moral, and often times, physically weaker than the hyper-masculine characters.

One important distinction between the three films was the overall complexity of the male characters, thus generating a complex juxtaposition between the different portrayals of masculinity. In *Patton*, General George S. Patton is very one-dimensional, portraying to audiences a man has no ability to change character traits or have complex emotions. In comparison, *The Hurt Locker* presents each character as multi-dimensional and with many interesting and contradicting sides to their personalities, leading not only to more convoluted characters but also a more convoluted portrayal of masculinity.

In the 1970 biographical film, *Patton*, audiences receive these juxtaposing representations of masculinity through the characters General George S. Patton, played by George. C. Scott, and General Omar Bradley, played by Karl Malden. *Patton*, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner, follows the career of the great General George S. Patton and his abilities as a military leader as well as his inability to keep his mouth shut (Caffey, MaCarthy, & Schaffner, 1970). In the beginning of *Patton*, General Patton walks onto a stage with a large American flag as a backdrop. At this time he speaks about fighting for American and what that means. At one point he states that Americans love to fight because they do not tolerate losing (Caffey et al., 1970). Because Patton was produced during the highly controversial Vietnam War, one can perceive this opening monologue as a political statement endorsing the Vietnam War and the need for military support. Perhaps the reason that *Patton* did so well among audiences during a time that condemned war was because it was about one of the United States greatest Generals and took place during a time of great unity among the county, thus *Patton* was trying to evoke a sense of nostalgia with its audience and create unity once again in a very torn country.

After General Patton's monologue, there is a cut to a quiet long shot of a field filled with dead and mangled American soldiers; illustrating the great defeat the Americans had in their initial battle with the German army. This horrible loss prompted the need for a strong, tough, and noteworthy General to be brought in as a leader for this unit. The commanding officers bring in George S. Patton, a narcissistic man who is feared by many and known for his great ability as a leader among the armed forces. Once in command, General Patton declares General Omar Bradley to be his second in command (Caffey et al., 1970).

As the film progresses General Patton clearly expresses his need to be a great conqueror and thus an unspoken race between General Patton and British General Montgomery to liberate Messina commences. Audiences observe through this race to Messina the need for General Patton to be a hero at any cost, even the lives of his soldiers. This need to be a hero then causes major tension between General Patton and the rest of the allied forces, including his second in command General Bradley. After slapping a mentally wounded soldier for being a coward, General Patton went under great scrutiny and almost lost all of his rankings and respect among the military committee. However, because he was such a great General, he was given one last chance to help conquer Europe and Germany, aiding in the efforts that forced the fall of the Third Reich (Caffey et al., 1970).

The juxtaposition between General Patton and General Bradley's masculinity portrayals illustrates two distinct views on masculinity. At one end of the spectrum, General Patton is a hyper-masculine character. At one point in the film a Moroccan political figure explains the affect of General Patton's presence stating, "The lions tremble in their dens at his approach" (Caffey et al., 1970). However, at the same time General Patton is portrayed as believing in God, recites poetry, and believing in reincarnation; illustrating a somewhat sensitive man. The German soldiers in the film describe General Patton as a Military Renaissance man, a description that is quite contradicting yet accurate (Caffey et al., 1970). Perhaps audiences like General Patton more because of these redeeming moments when he shows a little emotion.

In contrast to General Patton, is General Omar Bradley, who is a more rational, level headed, and common man. When analyzing the two characters in *Patton*, something as simple as riding in a jeep illustrates the immense differences between the characters. When General Patton rides in his jeep he is always standing looking over the top of the windshield making his presence known. When General Bradley rides in the jeep he is sitting down like any other soldier would do.

Another interesting contrast between the two characters is how they view their duty in the army. General Bradley clearly states the difference between he and General Patton by stating, "There is one big difference between you and me George. I do this job because I've been trained to do it. You do it because you love it" (Caffey et al., 1970). This juxtaposition illustrates the coming of a new convention of the war film explained by Gates (2005), when she said that the new war hero must make a decision whether or not to stay and fight. If General Bradley had the option to leave the war, he would probably take it; however, General Patton would definitely stay and fight because he views himself as a legitimate warrior.

Like in *Patton*, the 1986 film, *Platoon* includes juxtaposing representations of masculinity; however, one difference from *Patton* is the main character of the film is an impressionable character. The opening scene in *Platoon* is of a group of young naive men getting off a plane in Vietnam. The film is focused on the young Chris Taylor, played by Charlie Sheen, who is new to Vietnam and his journey as a soldier. The audience learns that

Taylor is a middle class college dropout who has volunteered for the war (Daly, Gibson, & Stone, 1986). Because Taylor is a volunteer soldier, one can argue that this characteristic is also an indicator of the new hero suggested by Gates (2005), where the hero of the war film faces a moral challenge and chooses to fight in the war, which is precisely what happens with Taylor. Gates (2005) also suggests the new war hero is an idealist, which audiences see in Taylor at the very beginning of the film. Taylor is this young naïve boy who volunteered to go to war to fight for his country and ends up on an emotional, life-changing journey.

As the film progresses Taylor learns the ways of the jungle and how to survive from two very different Sergeants, Sergeant Barns and Sergeant Elias. Sergeant Barns, played by Tom Berenger, confirms Jeffords and Davis' (1989) conclusion that Vietnam War films portray hyper-masculine characters to provide the remasculinization of American men during the Vietnam War. Barns is portrayed as a rough and extremely hyper-masculine man who does not care about Taylor or any of the incoming soldiers, and has no other sentimental side to his intensity. This is in contrast to General Patton and his love for poetry. In fact it is arguable that Barns is more one-dimensional that General Patton, in that Barns never changes his ways and is only seen as this tough masculine figure throughout the whole film.

When observing Barns' character attributes it is seen that the character is a result from the Feminist backlash observed during the 1980s from second wave feminism. Dow (2006) stated that female characters often were portrayed in a negative light because they had obtained more power. Perhaps Barns is this hyper-masculine character due to the society's struggle with the changing definitions of masculinity and their need and/or want for a more manly-man who is power hungry.

However in contrast to Barns, Sergeant Elias, played by Willem Dafoe, is more welcoming to the new soldiers. Throughout the film he helps them get acclimated to the life of a soldier, providing them with the knowledge he has acquired over the three years he has been in Vietnam (Daly et al., 1986). Sergeant Elias portrayal of masculinity would be considered by Studlar (2001) the new convention of masculinity in that he is both a tough man and a sensitive man.

As *Platoon* progresses, Taylor is initially very taken with Barns and holds him up on a pedestal because he is known as this great warrior. However at the turning point in the film, Taylor's perceptions of Barns change drastically. The platoon is outraged at the site of a fellow soldier who had been hung by the enemy. This outrage leads to an extremely horrible raid of a Vietnamese village. During the raid there were many Vietnamese women and children raped and killed, thus igniting a moral war dividing the platoon. From this point on there is severe tension among the platoon and thus, the intensity of the war escalates. Now the war is not just between the Americans and the Vietnamese, but between the platoon members as well. This escalation climaxes to the point of Barns killing Elias. Interestingly, the hyper-masculine character kills the less hyper masculine character. However, Taylor, knowing that Barns killed Elias, must decide how to react to the monstrosity of Barns' actions. Taylor, in the end of the film decides to kill Barns for killing Elias (Daly et al., 1986). This action suggests that Taylor has taken on the hyper-masculine characteristics of Barns, but at the same time holding onto his morality, which is a trait of Elias. Perhaps Stone was trying to allude to the fact that a soldier cannot be all hyper-masculine and cannot be all emotional, but rather a mixture of the two.

In 2008 film *The Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow, audiences also observe this tri-character paradigm. However in The Hurt Locker, the main character is not the impressionable young man as it was in *Platoon*, but rather the plot revolves around the hyper-masculine character Sergeant First Class William James, played by Jeremy Renner (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). It is also important to note that the film revolves around the most dangerous job in Iraq today, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), thus portraying an extremely high risk job which takes intense and focused people to carry out properly. Sergeant James is the leader of the EOD team. The juxtaposition between the two types of masculinity is between Sergeant First Class James and Sergeant JT Sanborn, played by Anthony Mackie. The impressionable third character is Specialist Owen Eldridge, played by Brian Geraghty. Both Sergeant Sanborn and Specialist Eldridge work under the command of the out of control Staff Sergeant James, creating tension among the unit.

The film begins with the EOD unit on mission to deactivate a roadside bomb. In the very first scene the audience realizes the intensity and the types of people that are needed for this job. Individuals need to maintain composure under extremely high-pressure circumstances. In this first mission, the head of the EOD unit Staff Sergeant Matt Thompson, played by Guy Pearce, is sent to manually lay the charge on the bomb in order to safely blow it up. However, after mass confusion and a phone call by an unsuspected Iraqi man, the charge detonates early, killing Thompson. The EOD unit is in need of a new leader so they get Sergeant James to lead the EOD unit (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). As the film progresses, the intensity and conflict between James and his other the unit members, Sanborn and Eldridge, amplifies. This conflict relies heavily on the juxtaposing masculinity portrayals between James and Sanborn.

James is initially portrayed as a tough, selfish, hyper-masculine man who is always looking for an adrenaline rush. However as the film progresses, the audience learn more about James and the perception of him begins to change. Though James maintains his hyper-masculinity throughout the whole film, there are many sides to James' personality; thus, audiences begin to view him in a more multi-dimensional manner as this man with many sides and attributes. James is different from any of the other characters analyzed among the three films because of this extremely complex portrayal of masculinity and character development.

These findings suggest that the new war hero may be going beyond what Gates (2005) initially suggested. James is not an idealist but rather more of the traditional masculine soldier, one with many facets. James does confirm Studlar's (2001) argument that male characters are becoming more balanced; however, James also exceeds this argument because he does not maintain a traditional character arc, meaning that his character never changes his ways. Instead, James is the same man in the beginning of the film that he is in the end of the film; the only difference is the amount of knowledge the audience has about James. These differences suggest a new type of hero in war films. The hero is now a tormented man who has many complexities to his personality, making him a more realistic man.

James' portrayal of masculinity is then juxtaposed with Sanborn's masculinity. Sanborn is considered a common man who is, like General Bradley from *Patton* and Sergeant Elias from *Platoon*, rational and typically level headed. Gates (2005) suggest that the war hero is becoming more feminized because of new attributes that these characters obtain. However there is a moment in *The Hurt Locker* when Sanborn yells at James for not talking to him and James' response was, "I didn't know we were on a date" (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). This response indicates a tension between the hyper-masculine characters and the characters that are less hyper-masculine. Because this statement by James feels very condemning of Sanborn's feminine traits, it is suggested war films have started to revert back towards a more complex hyper-masculine character.

Another aspect to masculinity portrayals that has changed over the years is the symbolism of masculinity through artifacts or in some cases, the lack of artifacts. In *Patton*, the more masculine the character, like General Patton, the more decorated he is as a soldier. In General Patton's beginning monologue, there are consecutive close-ups of all the metals pinned to his uniform (Caffey et al., 1970). These close-ups are portraying his authority and power while he speaks in a loud harsh tone about fighting for one's country.

Metals signify authority as well as masculinity in the scene where General Patton pins himself with a silver star, even though he was never officially awarded one. This action contrasts how General Omar Bradley receives his silver stars. The astute viewer will notice that by the end of the film, General Bradley goes from a two star General to a four start General. General Bradley receives his stars quietly and inconspicuously (Caffey et al., 1970). The contrast between the two Generals then, is that General Patton uses his metals as hubris and General Bradley is more humble. The difference between the two men and their uniform decoration also indicates that Bradley, because he is less concerned about his metals, is the less hyper-masculine of the two characters.

Another unique way in which *Patton* uses artifacts as a characteristic of masculinity is through the helmet. At one point in the film, General Patton is getting dressed into his uniform and one of his aids places General Patton's helmet on his head as if he were placing a crown on a king (Caffey et al., 1970). This illustrates the regard that the men had for General Patton and places him in the realm of royalty, as well as illustrating General Patton's greatness and power. General Patton is also adamant when he first arrives to his unit that the men wear their uniforms and "dress like soldiers so they can act like soldiers", suggesting that a "real" man take pride in what he wears (Caffey et al., 1970).

In *Platoon*, the use of artifacts is also apparent when portraying masculinity of the soldiers. Unlike *Patton*, *Platoon* illustrates masculinity through the lack of uniform that a character wears. Because the jungle is hot, it is to be expected that the characters wear less uniform more often. However, when analyzing *Platoon*, findings suggest that the lack of clothing was mainly to illustrate the wear and tear the Vietnam War had on the physiological aspects on the characters. Many of the soldiers in *Platoon* are extremely muscular, and the more muscular the man, the more hyper-masculine he is as a character (Lehmen & Lurh, 1999). This finding suggests that *Platoon* is reverting back to historical ways of portraying masculinity through body size.

An interesting aspect to the physiological portrayals of masculinity in *Platoon* is the use of the scar. Sergeant Barns has a large scar down the curvature of his face as well as other scars on his arms and chest. These scars portray an intense masculine figure that "was shot seven times and survived" (Daly et al., 1986). Barns is definitely portrayed as a masculine character through his physical appearance, but his lack of morals affect the other aspects of him as a man. Sergeant Barns is then physically juxtaposed to Sergeant Elias, who is an extremely muscular man though a little skinnier and has no scars on his body (Daly et al., 1986). Throughout the film Elias is much more rational and moral, illustrating a different more feminine side to masculinity.

Chris Taylor, the protagonist of *Platoon,* illustrates this transition from boy to man through his physical appearance as well. Taylor, being the young newcomer, spent the majority of the film trying to find himself amidst a morally torn platoon. By the end of the film, the audience observes that Taylor has physical attributes of both Barns and Elias. Taylor's body is badly burned and maimed after a horrific attack and he has a scar on his face that he received while fighting Barns (Daly et al., 1986). Because there is a clear physical transition through mutilation of Taylor's body, the audience may believe that Taylor has turned out more like Barns than Elias. However, Taylor also wears a red bandana throughout the latter half of the film, signifying a similarity to Elias, who also wore a bandana (Daly et al., 1986). By having Taylor have the physiological appearances of both Barns and Elias, Stone was illustrating that neither Barns, nor Elias was the correct man to follow, but that everyman is probably a mixture between the two. Therefore because Elias and Barns represent two different aspects of masculinity, perhaps Stone is suggesting that a "real" man is the mixture of the two.

The Hurt Locker also utilizes the use of the uniform and artifacts along with physiological aspects of the characters to portray masculinity. Staff Sergeant William James is an extremely buff and stocky man who always wore less gear than the other soldiers in the EOD unit. He constantly is showing skin, whether it is his forearms or his chest. Because of James skin exposure and scarring on his stomach he, like Sergeant Barns, could initially be considered this hyper-masculine portrayal of masculinity. Sergeant James also refuses to use the given technologies to destroy the bombs and prefers to dismantle them by hand. There is one point in the film when James strips himself of all protective gear stating, "If I am going to die, I want to be comfortable" (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). By wearing less gear, exposing more skin, and using his bare hands to deactivate bombs, James is portraying an extremely intense macho-man persona.

When observing how uniforms become sparser over the years, an interesting correlation between skin exposure and the feminist movements arises. It seems as though the more power the women gain in society, the less clothing the men wear in war films. During the 1970s, the second wave of feminism was just beginning and men still had more power over women. As stated earlier, female characters were not as progressive in the 1970s as one would expect (Haskell, 1973). It is no surprise then, that the male characters in *Patton* were more focused on medals representing masculinity than physical appearance. However, by the 1980s, second wave feminism had been in full swing and females were gaining equality with men (Wood, 2001). During this time, *Platoon* produced some exceedingly hyper-masculine characters, all of who exposed their muscles and battle scars to indicate their level of masculinity. Therefore, it can be suggested that the more power the women gain, the more skin the men expose. This exposure to skin could be seen as a physical reminder of masculinity because there are signs that masculine messages are in jeopardy. This argument can also be applied to the overall physical appearances in *The Hurt Locker*. Sergeant James is an extremely buff man and is clearly physically strong, indicating his overall masculinity. One can see a correlation between the physical appearance of male characters and the third wave feminist movement, due to the fact that women are being portrayed as equals to me with the ability to make their own life decisions (Wood, 2001).

Another way in which masculinity portrayals have changed in war films since the 1970s is through the need of physical force within military units. There is one scene in *Patton* were a young boy is hit by General Patton because he was a coward (Caffey et al., 1970). However, in both *Platoon* and *The Hurt Locker,* there are scenes where two characters have a physical confrontation. In *Platoon*, the fight stems from anger and pain on behalf of both Sergeant Barns and Taylor. Taylor attacks Barns, after Barns kills Elias. Taylor loses the fight after Barns pulls a knife in him and creates a scar under Taylor's eye (Daly et al., 1986). At this point in the film, the tension between the men had escalated and this was the way to channel that anger and frustration.

However, in *The Hurt Locker,* the fight starts out as harmless fun between Sanborn and James celebrating after a successful day out in the field. In this scene, the two men have been drinking and decide to play a punching game to see who can punch the hardest. Eldridge draws a circle on both their stomachs and then the two take their turns punching each other as hard as they can. However, after awhile James takes it one step further by physically restraining Sanborn and drawing a knife on him. After Eldridge and Sanborn react to the knife being pulled and there is a moment of hesitancy and fear among the group, James withdraws and says he was just joking (Mark & Bigelow, 2008).

These different fights illustrate to the audiences three different ideas about masculinity. *Patton* is suggesting that hitting a man because he is a coward is okay, and that being a coward is not a masculine trait. *Platoon* is portraying fighting between the two men as a power struggle and that the stronger man will always win, and in *The Hurt Locker* the fighting is merely a game perhaps illustrating that masculinity is beginning to shift back towards the more hyper-masculine characters.

Another way in which masculinity has changed in male characters in war films is the men's emotional reaction to fear. Portraying and showing fear has become increasingly accepted and even expected in war films today. In

Patton, being afraid in battle was not an option. In the film, General Patton explains to General Bradley that his first time out on the battlefield he was afraid of being shot in the nose, but that he overcame that fear. In the film it is clear that General Patton expects the soldiers to be fearful in the beginning, but that after training they should no longer fear battle, but always fear him. At one point in the film, General Patton illustrates his lack of fear when he steps into the line of fire shooting a pistol at the plane shooting from above. The low angle of the camera suggests that he had no fear what so ever and that the planes should have more fear of him than he of them. In fact, after General Patton shot at the German planes, they stopped attacking, to which General Bradley suggested that Patton scared them away (Caffey et al., 1970).

It is clear that being a coward is not on option in the eyes of General Patton. Again, audiences observe how being a coward is condemned in the scene where General Patton visits a hospital full of wounded men and strikes the soldier who is afraid and psychologically cannot handle battle. Instead of talking him through this tough time, General Patton slaps this young soldier for being a coward and telling him to get out of the hospital tent filled with brave wounded warriors (Caffey et al., 1970). Again, for audiences this suggests that being a coward is not a masculine trait and is frowned upon in facing war.

These ideas of being a coward and having fear are also present in *Platoon*; however, both the soldiers' fear and their cowardly actions are portrayed in a more accepted light. All of the men in *Platoon* break down in some way or another due to fear; some breakdown morally, some break down physically, and others break down emotionally. There is a horrifying scene in the film where the platoon raids a Vietnamese village and begins to unjustly murder the villagers. In this scene, Taylor breaks down both morally and emotionally. Taylor hauntingly taunts a young crippled and deaf villager, shooting bullets at his feet screaming, "Dance Mother Fucker Dance!" (Daly et al., 1986). Eventually Taylor comes to the realization that he has snapped and stops his actions. Another platoon members calls him a "pussy" and takes the butt of his gun and bashes the head of the young boy afterwards saying, "did you see the way his head fell apart?" (Daly et al., 1986). At this moment everyone but the man who killed the boy was streaked in blood horrified and crying at the sight of what just happened. From this moment, audiences begin to see a shift in Taylor from being less like Barns and more like Elias.

Another character in *Platoon* who illustrates this idea of being a coward is Sergeant O'Neal. Throughout the majority of the film, O'Neal is a big talker and always lighting the cigarette of Barns. One might go as far to say that he was sucking up to Barns. He talked a tough game but before the last battle scene he pleads with Barns, trying not to cry, to let him go on leave because he knows he is not going to make it through the next battle. Barns refuses to let him take leave, so during the battle when it is eminent that the platoon was about to be ripped to shreds, O'Neal hides in a foxhole covering himself with all the other dead bodies (Daly et al., 1986).

Stone does not necessarily condemn the immoral and cowardly actions by O'Neal and Taylor in the film, but rather the actions illustrate to the audience that even the toughest of men break. Under certain circumstances, that is to be expected. This portrayal of masculinity goes beyond what Gates (2005) and Studlar (2001) would consider feminization of masculinity, because there is nothing sympathetic and self-sacrificing about their actions and reactions. Rather, the portrayal of masculinity can suggests that the make characters are not perfect human beings who are sometimes portrayed on screen, but they are complex characters that react to fear differently.

In *The Hurt Locker*, each character has moments when he breaks down. Sergeant Eldridge actually goes to therapy while in Iraq due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and dealing with the death of Thompson (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). Having a masculine character attend therapy while in the midst of battle is definitely a new phenomenon, due to the influx of damaged soldiers from both the Vietnam and Iraqi War. It is clear that Eldridge is consumed by fear and this consumption affects the way that he functions as a soldier.

Sergeant James, on the other hand, puts up a huge front when it comes to fear. To Eldridge and Sanborn, James seems to be this careless adrenaline-seeking guy who does not care about anybody but himself. However, the audience sees moments of great vulnerability in James' emotions. The first time that the audience sees any real emotion from James is when the young Iraqi kid that James befriends is seemingly killed and used to make a body bomb. Though no one is really sure if the boy used for the body bomb is the Iraqi boy that James befriended, James is sure and takes it very hard. Initially James plans to just blow up the bomb and the kid with it, but then he changes his mind and pulls out the bomb from the dead child's stomach to deactivate the bomb (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). James' choice not to blow up the body illustrates that he has some reverence and respect for the boy and that he is ultimately unable to blow up the body of his dead friend. This illustrates an almost self-sacrificial attribute, in that James would rather put his life on the line than blow up a dead child.

Another moment when the audience observes James emotionally break down is after he gets Eldridge shot. In this powerful scene James walks into the bathroom in full uniform and gear and gets into the shower where he rinses all the blood off of his uniform. He then sits down in the shower surrounded by a pool of bloody water and cries (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). This scene indicates that even the hyper-masculine characters can cry and be sentimental,

thus confirming the suggestion by Gates (2005) that the war film hero is also showing more feminine characteristics. It is interesting that James keeps his uniform on, indicating he is vulnerable to his emotions. James' vulnerability to his emotions is furthered in the fact that James typically brakes down out of sight of the other men, suggesting an even more complex masculine character than perhaps Gates (2005) imagined is created. Again, the character of Staff Sergeant James goes beyond Gates' (2005) idea of the new hero in the war film, in that he is more masculine than the Gates' (2005) hero, and instead of embracing his more feminine side, he hides it while struggling to maintain is hyper-masculinity under intense conditions such as war.

Another compelling scene in *The Hurt Locker* takes place near the end of the film when Sanborn finally cracks under the fear and pressure to stay alive. In this scene, Sanborn cries and expresses his biggest fears and regrets to James. At one point he asks James how he goes out there to do what he does without being afraid. James simply says, "I just don't think about it." Sanborn keeps questioning James as to how he can "keep rolling the dice" when he has a son at home to think about? James replies to Sanborn, "I don't know. I don't know. Do you know why I am the way I am?" (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). Again, audiences observe this new hero through James' inability to address and recognize who his is not only as a man, but also as a person. The new war film hero begins to not only fight political wars and moral wars, but is now fighting a war with himself.

These findings also suggest that as time progressed, society learned more about the emotional battles soldiers face when they are at war as well as when they come back to the civilian world. It is clear through the progression of psychological attributes in films that society's ideologies on masculinity and a man's ability to recognize and deal with his emotions are changing. It is now socially acceptable for men, especially soldiers, to have emotional breakdowns.

In all of the films analyzed, another aspect in masculinity portrayal that has changed over the years would be how the man is portrayed as a fatherly figure. In *Patton*, one could argue that General Patton could be seen as a fatherly figure by the way he rides the troops to do the best and be the best. If that is the case than one can argue that the fatherly figure in films has changed considerably since the 1970s. However, there is one moment in *Patton*, when General Patton comes upon a field that was decimated in battle and a young man sitting distraught over what happened. To sooth the young man, General Patton kisses the top of his head as if he were a father consoling his son (Caffey et al., 1970).

This idea of the fatherly figure then progressed to a role of a teacher. A more obvious fatherly figure is also observed in Sergeant Elias in *Platoon*. Elias helps Taylor learn the ropes of the platoon and the ways of the harsh Vietnam jungle. He always gives Taylor advice and explains the horrors of what they witness in Vietnam. In one scene, when Taylor and Elias are talking about the war and whether it is right or wrong, Elias points to the stars and says, "I love them, because up there, there is no right or wrong" (Daly et al., 1986).

In *The Hurt Locker*, the fatherly figure takes one more step in this progression and becomes a more emotional and self-sacrificing character. The most obvious father figure among all the films is the unlikely Staff Sergeant James, who is actually a father and is also seen as a fatherly figure to the other men. Though James comes off as a tough and mean, there are several moments when he illustrates his ability to be a sympathetic and caring person. At one point the men are stuck in the desert for hours in a shoot out with an Insurgent sniper. James requests a juice packet and Eldridge hands him the last one. The men are covered in dirt and flies and are clearly thirsty. James then gives the juice packet to Sanborn who is manning the gun. In this same scene, James calms Eldridge down when he has to wipe blood off of bullets and when he must shoot a man in order to save the lives of the group (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). This act of selfishness really portrays the fatherly aspect in James. The self-sacrifice and calming indicates that James has aspects of what Gates (2005) identifies as the new war hero. Also, self-sacrifice indicates more feminine attributes to an extremely hyper-masculine character.

The Hurt Locker is the only one of the three films that shows the audience the difficulties soldiers have adjusting to civilian life after deployment. This portrayal adds to the complexities of the male characters as well as the war film genre in general. In the civilian world, the audience observes the interaction between James and his toddler. James is able to play with his son and also give him some fatherly advice about growing older and losing things you love, but in the end James always ends up back in the field disabling bombs (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). Because James is always leaving his son for battle, one may interpret this as abandoning his son for his adrenalin fix. The last line of the film is ambiguous as to what James is referring to when he says, "I think I only love one thing" (Mark and Bigelow, 2008). After he says this, the picture cuts from James playing with his son to him back in Iraq in full gear doing the job that he loves. This ambiguity sets up an interesting dilemma for audience members. It forces audience members to ask themselves whether being a family man or a soldier is more important and which one is more masculine. The answer to this question is as ambiguous as the question itself, and is illustrating the overall complexities of James' character.

Audiences witness the emergence of sexual aggressiveness over the years in war films as well. In *Patton*, the only reference to sexuality is when General Patton tells the British women that the American women will end the war once they realize whom their husbands are fraternizing with overseas (Caffey et al., 1970). In the other two films there are several sexually aggressive references. In *Platoon*, the new men to the platoon are called "cherries" because they are considered Vietnam virgins. More significantly though, in *Platoon* some of the men rape the women of the village they raid, illustrating their power over these harmless victims (Daly et al., 1986). In *The Hurt Locker* there are references to the male genitalia, when describing the inability for a machine to get a part into a specific hole. Thompson tells Sanborn to "pretend it's his dick," Sanborn replies, "what if I pretend it's your dick," and Thompson responds, "then it will never fit" (Mark & Bigelow, 2008). These portrayals of sexual aggressiveness in all three films illustrate that there has been little to no improvement in terms of masculinity and sexual superiority. Clearly in all three films, the male characters view their masculinity through their sexuality, whether it is through a joke or a forced sexual act.

An interesting finding from the texts analyzed was this idea of male bonding through play and joking. Wood (2001) describes that male bonding through activates and joking are ways in which male friendships and bonds are created. In *The Hurt Locker* audiences see many moments of male bonding through play fighting and through joking. These moments suggest that male characters are still creating bonds with one another in very different fashion than women, in that they do not disclose a lot of information.

Through the juxtaposing characters among all three films and evolution of both masculine and feminine characteristics, it is clear that a newer war hero is being defined. When comparing Staff Sergeant James to the hyper-masculine characters in the other films (Sergeant Barns and General Patton), audiences observe a more complex, multi-dimensional character. James' masculinity is portrayed through his physical appearance, physical ability, and his ability to act as a fatherly figure. However, the most significant finding is James' inability to handle and recognize his emotions. This finding is significant because it truly illustrates the complexity of the new war hero and the inner personal battle the new war hero faces, and it suggest film viewers should be on the look out for more of these new war heroes.

Limitations

Though there were significant conclusions about the changes in masculinity in war films, with any scholarly research there were many limitations on this particular research project. The main limitation to this research was the amount of time provided to complete a well-developed and analyzed conclusion for a broad topic. With more time the researcher could have investigated more aspects of masculinity in war films and could have been analyzed in more depth.

Another limitation to this study was subjectivity. All of the findings and correlations were from the researcher's point of view. If someone else were to conduct the same research, one might find different relationships among masculinity in the films.

Future Research

The current study suggests there is a newer war hero emerging in war films. An important extension of this research would be to confirm this claim. One would need to analyze all of the current war films and those that have been produced in the last five to ten years. When analyzing these films the researcher should look for correlations between the current research finds and the finds of the new research.

This studied aimed to find if the portrayals of masculinity had changed over the years in war films. An interesting extension of this topic would be to research how masculinity portrayals among different ethnic groups in war films are portrayed in contrast to the findings of this study. One could research if there was a difference between the masculinity portrayals among the different cultures fighting each other and among the different cultures among the people in a specific unit.

Another extension of this study would be to explore if the masculinity portrayals in other masculine films, such as action or adventure films has changed at all. One could simply follow the current study's protocol and then compare and contrast the findings between the two studies.

Another interesting topic to research in accordance with this research would be to analyze how the gender of the director influences the gender portrayals in typical masculine films. One could look at the extensive work of Kathryn Bigelow and analyze her films though either an extensive content analysis or a critical analysis. If one were to peruse this topic, the Auteur theory in film would be an interesting theory to ground this research in.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the portrayals of masculinity in war films over the last forty years. Through a cultural critical analysis the researcher was able to identify several important changes in masculinity among war films. Before the researcher could make these claims, an extensive process of analyzing the films had to occur. Once the analysis was finished it was found that through the years, masculinity has changed in films significantly. Men are no longer portrayed as one-dimensional characters in war films. Masculinity in war films has become extremely complex due to the intense masculine culture of the military, the excessive animalistic way of war life, and more feminine male characters due to the changing feminist movements.

After analyzing the three films *Patton*, *Platoon*, and *The Hurt Locker*, it was concluded that masculinity portrayals in war films are starting to revert to the traditional hyper-masculine male characteristics. This research also suggests the emergence of a newer hero in the war film genre. The newer war hero is extremely complex and multi-dimensional, in that he is no longer just fighting a political and moral war, but is also fighter an inner personal war. This emergence of the newer hero in the war film is significant because it may potentially change the conventions of the war film genre as a whole, and affect the way in which society views masculinity and gender roles in the future. Again, film is a unique for of communication, one that suggests and maintains society's ideologies. Because the war film is changing and new character traits are arising, it can be argued that society's ideologies on masculinity are beginning to progress.

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