

*STAR WARS: IMPACT ON CULTURE AND MASCULINITY*

by

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*STAR WARS: IMPACT ON CULTURE AND MASCULINITY*

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## **Abstract**

In America today, there is a problem. For a long time, this problem has been viewed as natural and unchangeable, and has been accepted as the norm in society. Because this norm is so ingrained into American culture, those who stand up against it often face social scrutiny and isolation. This social epidemic affects the well-being of every single member of society and it needs to be changed. This problem is the harmful way that men are socialized in America.

For many years, men in America have not felt able to openly express feelings of fear, sadness, or loneliness without judgement or banishment from their social groups. These emotions are encouraged to be suppressed while stoicism, anger, and physical dominance tend to be used instead as a route to validation and feelings of power. This societal expectation has been woven into the paradigms of all Americans and has set a shallow foundation for men to build their identities from. Using physical strength and emotional invulnerability is the dominant masculinity in America, “the most powerful celebrated, common or current form of masculinity in a given context” (Follett).

I would argue that this type of behavior has formed as a compensation for feelings of powerlessness or a general sense of not being in control. This lack of autonomy, a sense of control in one’s life, is one of the main reasons men turn to “hyper-masculine” behaviors, to try and reclaim a sense of control. Now some may say, “wait a minute, men have always been in control. We live in a patriarchal society; how could men not feel powerful?” While men have traditionally held power in the large scale (via a patriarchal society), on the individual level many men do not feel powerful. “when you say...men must feel powerful, they look at you cross-eyed. They say, “What are you talking about? I have no power. My wife bosses me around. My kids boss me around. My boss bosses me around...with men you have an asymmetry. All of the power

in the world has not trickled down to individual men feeling powerful” (Kimmel 4, 5). Men are searching for a way to feel in charge of their own lives, and one of the ways they learn how to claim that feeling of control is through the presentation of masculinity in the media.

In this paper, I am going to attempt to show how the depiction of masculinity in the *Star Wars* films in some ways perpetuates the dominant American masculinity. In the *Star Wars* saga, male heroes attempt to defeat their foes with the use of physical force, while at the same time being advised by their mentors to bury their emotions. In this essay I will reveal the ways in which American males are socialized to form the harmful dominant masculinity prominent today. I will then relate this framework to the socialization of the Jedi in *Star Wars*. More specifically, I will focus on Anakin Skywalker, and show how Anakin’s toxic upbringing in the Jedi Order led him to become Darth Vader. Next, I will more broadly examine how the movies use violence to resolve conflict, and how some fights use dramatic elements more effectively than others to justify the need to fight, which in turn can positively or negatively impact viewers’ concepts of masculine behavior.

### **American Masculinity**

What is it that makes a man? When asking about gender identity and how that identity is expressed, the answer to this question depends on the cultural context. In the history of sociology, Margaret Mead was the first researcher to propose that gender is not dependent on sex. Instead, Mead proposed that gender was a social construct, rather than a biological condition. In her research on the Arapesh, Mundugumor and Tchambuli of Papua New Guinea, she documented distinct differences in the ways separate cultures perform gender. In the Arapesh society of Papua, New Guinea, “both sexes [are] passive, gentle, unaggressive and emotional[ly] responsive to the needs of others” (Korie). This is opposed to the Mundugumor, a society where

both men and women are “aggressive and cruel toward children” (Korie). In the Tchambuli tribe of the same country, “women manage the business of life, while men gossip and [have] temper tantrums” (Korie). What the studies of the tribes in New Guinea show is that no matter what one’s opinion is on the socialization of men; the truth is that there will be variation between cultures. This is to say that there is no “natural” or “correct” expression of masculinity; each society has formed its view of men through the lens of its own customs and beliefs. When we look at the socialization of men in America, it is given that any behavior seen as the “norm” in America is present, not because American men are born to behave that way, but because they have been socialized to act that way. This is to say that there is no universal expression of masculinity; all cultures will vary when it comes to gender expression. This means that even though men’s behavior may be seen as toxic or hyper-masculine in some cases, it is possible to change this behavior and benefit both individual men and society as a whole.

What makes things so much harder for men today is the availability of the dominant masculinity thanks to mass media. In fact, “American adults spend over 11 hours per day listening to, watching, reading or generally interacting with media” (Nielsen). This means that almost half of the day, more than half if you consider sleep, is spent interacting with culture on a national level. In this hyper-connected age, the dominant masculinity norms are disseminated through media narratives. With media being so accessible, it is important to understand what kind of messages are being relayed about cultural masculinity. In the United States, the dominant masculine expression tends to include: “(a) physical force and control, (b) occupational achievement, (c) familial patriarchy, (d) frontiersmanship, and (e) heterosexuality” (Atkinson & Calafell 1, 2). Note, that this does not mean that every man prioritizes such things or that every man possesses each of these qualities. Rather, society expects these criteria to be the norm, and

therefore these criteria form the lens through which American men judge others and themselves, and it is taking a toll on their mental health.

When looking at possible representations of the dominant masculinity in media, one need not look further than the booming genre of superhero films. Since 2008 there have been 22 films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe alone. Add in the films made by DC and that is over 30 superhero films in the last 11 years – the quantity of films in this genre has never been so numerous. Why is this important? Well, for men, most male superheroes are depicted as incredibly physically dominating, both in size and in capability for violence. They also tend to have a stoic exterior in the face of conflict. This behavior is coupled with a plot that depicts these men as saviors or even gods, the tends to place them as the last defense humanity has against terrible evil. This teaches men young and old alike that these dominant behavioral patterns are accepted and are necessary to combat the greatest evils of the world. No wonder America’s dominant masculinity is stoic and controlling, the men in American films who act this way are shown to be the saviors of humanity.

The increased presence of these hyper-masculine superheroes may also have something to do with rising cases of “bigorexia”, also known as muscle dysmorphia, the feeling of never being muscular enough. In fact, it is suspected that 1 in 10 male gym goers in the UK suffers from this disorder (Newsbeat). While this is not a statistic for the United States, it does show that men are becoming more aware of their physical stature and physique, which is creating, in some cases, increased insecurity. These men are striving to fit the mold of the ideal male form, and those who do not conform to this standard, especially men who are openly gay or bisexual, are exposed to more harassment and physical violence than their heterosexual counterparts (“LGBT Youth”).

I fought against feeling too skinny all throughout high school, fueled by my football coaches saying I needed to “fill out my shirts” or that I needed to weigh x amount, or I’d be of no use to the team. When I gave up football to do theatre, my friends joked that I was gay, and I suddenly became hyper aware of how I spoke, walked, sat, everything. I had to prove to everyone, and myself, that I wasn’t “a fag” or a pussy. This internal struggle combined with my feeling that I couldn’t tell my mom or my friends that I didn’t like being called gay, because if they knew it bothered me, that would mean it was true. These were my formative experiences, and luckily, I turned out okay, but for many men, this kind of self-judgement combines with a social system that “polices them through this low-level of threat from other men if they’re not man enough” (Newsom). This can lead to incredibly damaging psychological problems, which can cause dire consequences.

“In 2017, men died by suicide 3.54x more often than women” (“Suicide Statistics”). Interestingly, this does not mean that men attempt suicide more than women, in fact the opposite is true. What is important though is that when men choose to attempt suicide, their methods tend to be more lethal, i.e. death by gun rather than by overdose. This can be equated to the gun culture that is present in America, a culture that values personal protection, but also consequentially promotes violent means of resolving conflict. Felson and Pare state that “Men are expected to defend themselves when threatened and to respond to insults with aggression” (qtd. in Lester 73). When men are socialized this way, it makes sense that men who feel like their lives are not worth living respond with lethal aggression towards themselves.

The culture that America has created has put men in a box, not only by prescribing a specific behavioral expectation for men, but also by telling men who do not act in such an aggressive way that they are deviant and less valued. Indeed, American culture demands that

men must *prove* they aren't gay, feminine, etc. (Newsom). Again, this is not to say that there is only one way that masculinity is practiced, rather, there is one dominant masculinity that subjugates and demands conformity from all other masculinities.

The aggressive masculinity seen as the norm in America is perpetuated in American films, especially in the Western films in the mid-twentieth century. These films are set in the American West, primarily between the Civil War and the early 1900s. Heroes of the Old West are stoic cowboys who police with a “shoot first, ask questions later” mentality. These masculine figures have created and reinforced an idea that men are meant to control and dominate their surroundings. These Western films happened to be a primary inspiration for George Lucas' *Star Wars* films, and in being so, the films in Lucas' saga also reinforce such masculinity standards. The Jedi in *Star Wars*, “like the upstanding lawmen from classic Westerns, are framed as rugged stoic warriors who bring order to a lawless land” (McIntosh). This stoicism can be seen clearly in Lucas' *Star Wars* saga beginning with the judgement of Anakin in *Episode I*.

### **The Flawed Jedi Order**

In *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, a young Anakin Skywalker is freed from slavery to become a Jedi. In doing so, he is leaving his enslaved mother behind. In their final goodbye, Anakin expresses his sadness to his mother about leaving. Anakin's mother tells him to “be brave, and don't look back” (Lucas, *Episode I*). While this on its own is not an egregious case of emotional suppression, it does set the foundation for all of the advice Anakin is given about sadness and fear. Unfortunately, all of Anakin's teachers offer the same advice: control your feelings. This comes straight from this section of the Jedi Code: “There is no emotion, there is peace” (Wallace 7). Students of the Force are taught that feelings lead to recklessness, and that they should view the world only through the “lens of the Force” (Wallace 7). Ironically, it is this

forced suppression of emotion that causes Anakin to turn away from the Order and to commit several reckless and cruel acts, including slaughtering children and asphyxiating his wife.

This is the paradox that appears in *Star Wars*. Emotions like anger, greed, and jealousy are depicted as leading to violence and cruelty, which initially seems like a perfectly acceptable analysis of such emotions. The problem with this assertion is that the actions themselves are not the root of the problem for the Jedi. Jedi are not only supposed to not *act* on their emotions, they aren't even supposed to feel them. Indeed, "In Star Wars, a Jedi's worst enemies are not agents of the Dark Side; his true enemies are his own emotions" (McIntosh).

Feelings of jealousy or fear are to be eradicated, creating a culture where students of the Force are shamed for feelings they cannot control. Of course, not all men react to their emotions in the visceral way that Anakin does, but it does underline an important message that bottling up fears only leads to turmoil, both for the man experiencing the fear and for the people around him. The Jedi treat Anakin like an anomaly, as if it is his personality that leads him to be reckless and impulsive. In actuality, the reason Anakin is seemingly an outlier within the Jedi Order is because he was raised by a mother who showed him love and did not stifle his emotions, at least not as intensely and as deliberately as the Jedi do. Indeed, if the Jedi did not indoctrinate students at such a young age, there would be multiple students struggling with their emotions. Some may use this to justify Jedi training. If Anakin is only unstable because he wasn't trained at a young age to control his feelings, then perhaps the rest of the Jedi are spared from the kind of torment Anakin feels, unfortunately, if our own society is much like the society of the Jedi, this is not so.

Young boys in America are taught at a very young age to stifle their emotions, at least the vulnerable ones. "[The] idea of being seen as weak, as a sissy in the eyes of other guys, starts in our earliest moments of boyhood" (Newsom). Boys learn from their "Jedi Masters" (their fathers

and other men in their community) what it looks like to be a man, which all too often means forming a hardened outer shell through which vulnerable emotions cannot be properly expressed. I remember as a child feeling like I couldn't tell other people about things that made me uneasy. I didn't want to be a "tattle-tail" or be speaking about something that should be private and "kept to myself". It is not the case that Anakin is wrong or somehow dysfunctional, it is the fact that the society he is in teaches their students to "bury [their] emotions deep down" (Kershner). In our own society as well as the society of the Jedi, young boys aren't given a framework to "feel secure in their own masculinity, so we make them go prove it all the time" (Newsom).

### **The Misguidance and Isolation of Anakin Skywalker**

When Anakin arrives on Coruscant, the Jedi Council is hesitant to take him on as a pupil. They sense that he fears for his mother's safety. Yoda says to the young boy that he must be wary of such feelings, because "fear is a path to the Dark Side" (Lucas, *Episode I*). On his first day at the Jedi Temple, Anakin has received the dogma that will lead him to his demise. For the rest of his life as a Jedi, Anakin will keep his fears to himself. He'll suppress them in hopes that they will disappear, but like with any trauma, when Anakin doesn't deal with his fear, it only compounds. His fears build until they consume him and ultimately lead him to the Dark Side, not because he is fearful, but rather because he has no outlet for his fear.

The documentary *The Mask You Live In*, states that this lack of intimacy comes from the fear that intimate male-to-male relationships will be viewed as homosexual. In our culture, homosexuality is perceived as being feminine, therefore straight men shy away from intimately relating to other men. Unfortunately for Anakin, The Jedi Order is largely made up of men. The characters with which Anakin interact with throughout his training are almost solely men. In fact, "all the Jedi speaking roles in both trilogies are filled by men" (McIntosh). The male dominance

of this group combined with the Jedi Code create an atmosphere that is devoid of intimate relationships. For Anakin, this problem is doubly true. Not only is male intimacy forbidden, but intimacy itself is completely banned by the Jedi. Anakin explains this rule to Padmé in *Episode II*, “Attachment is forbidden. Possession is forbidden. Compassion, which I would define as unconditional love, is essential to a Jedi’s life. So, you might say we are encouraged to love” (Lucas, *Episode II*). Anakin is pointing out a troubling discrepancy in the belief system of the Jedi. The Jedi are meant to be peacekeepers, and in doing so, they are expected to show compassion to all people. However, the code strictly forbids any attachment to said people, at least personally. This contradiction causes much conflict in Anakin, for he both loves and worries for his mother, and is in love romantically with Padmé. Scared for the safety of both his mother and Padme, he has no one to share his concerns with, in fear that showing such worry would expose him as not living up to the Jedi Code. This becomes a huge problem for Anakin Skywalker, with the internalization of these feelings leading him on a path of isolation and violence.

By the middle of *Episode III*, Anakin has suffered great trauma, both in his personal life and in the Clone Wars. Anakin is now married in secret to Padmé Amidala and is having visions of her death, similar to those he had before his mother’s passing. In a desperate attempt to overcome his fears, Anakin comes to Yoda in his time of need and describes the visions he has been having. He is once again advised by Yoda that “the fear of loss is a path to the Dark Side” (Lucas, *Episode III*). Yoda is telling this young man on the brink of emotional collapse, “If you are scared, you are on your way to becoming evil.” This is one of the key problems with the Jedi dogma. “They believe that young men are inherently volatile, and if they succumb to one intense emotion, it will spark an inevitably chain reaction that leads to hatred, like knocking over a set of

dominoes” (McIntosh). The being who is framed as one of the most enlightened Jedi of all time, Yoda, has basically doomed Anakin to be consumed by his fear and anger. If Anakin chooses to believe this, not only will he have to sit idly by as his wife dies, but he will also be doomed to become evil.

What follows is traditional for American men. Anakin replies that he “won’t let this dream become real” (Lucas, *Episode III*). Anakin feels that the only way to manage his fears is to control them. To have power over them. To force them to disappear. The Jedi forbid attachment, so admitting grief for a loved one would make Anakin seem untrained or immature, but he still needed an outlet for his grief, which left him, at least in his own mind, only with the option to lash out with rage and violence. Anakin’s feelings of fear and powerlessness lead him to see no other option than to stop what he fears, which in *Episode II* led him to kill an entire village of Tusken Raiders in retribution for his mother’s death. This sort of response is known as developing a “hard edge”, becoming calloused in response to fear or sadness (Newsom). Anakin refuses to believe Yoda’s terribly reductive view of human emotions, and instead turns elsewhere for help.

### **Anakin’s “Fall” to the Dark Side**

Darth Sidious, under the guise of Chancellor Palpatine, quickly becomes a confidant of Anakin. Sidious caters to Anakin’s feelings of powerlessness and promises him a method of control over death. Sidious manipulates Anakin by appealing to the stereotypical need of men to be in control (Atkinson & Calafell 1, 2). Anakin desperately wants to prevent his secret wife from death in childbirth, and the advice of the council has only been to let go, hardly the answer Anakin wants to hear. Concurrently, Palpatine also commends Anakin’s prowess as a Jedi Knight, responding to Anakin’s displeasure with his status, “it’s upsetting to me that the council

doesn't seem to fully appreciate your talents...they see your future, they know your power will be too strong to control" (Lucas, *Episode III*). Sidious insists Anakin should be put on the Jedi Council, catering to the need for "occupational achievement" (Atkinson and Calafell 1, 2). Here we see Palpatine manipulating Anakin in accordance to the tenants of American masculinity.

Since the framework of Anakin's worth is built on these aspects of masculinity, he is able to be manipulated by Palpatine and begin his transition from Jedi to Sith. Palpatine's assertions align perfectly with American masculinity norms. The reason Anakin turns to the Dark Side is because Palpatine is offering him not only a way to feel completely masculine, but more importantly a plan to save his wife "from certain death" (Lucas, *Episode III*). The Jedi on the other hand have told Anakin to "let go of all [he] fear[s] to lose" (Lucas, *Episode III*), a solution that not only reinforces Anakin's isolation and suffering, but also would close off Anakin from the one relationship that has brought him comfort and love, two things all human beings need. Instead, Anakin does what he believes he must do to save his wife and unborn children. He has been forced to believe that the love and pain that he feels is wrong, and that he is literally on the path to evil for having feelings. Anakin sees his only solution is to commit to be Sidious' apprentice, and betray the Jedi in order to save the ones he loves.

This is the society that George Lucas created. A group of emotionally detached, fear-mongers are somehow proposed as the protagonists against the "evil" Sith. If the over \$620,000,000 in ticket sales from *The Last Jedi* says anything, it is that these films have an incredibly large audience that they are delivering this message to. The behavior of the Jedi is glamorized as heroic and even-tempered, a more sophisticated kind of action hero, when in actuality the heroes of the Star Wars saga, especially in the prequels, are promoting the same kind of dominant masculinity that is taking a toll on American youth. Attachment to people is

seen as dangerous, for it could lead to recklessness, and indeed it does. The Jedi detach their members from society, using them as pawns for peace and justice, while at the same time forfeiting their member's sense of humanity. The Jedi created Darth Vader by denying Anakin basic human needs for love and friendship. Anakin grew up without his mother, and instead was adopted into a family that demanded stoicism and control in the face of war and death.

### **Star Wars' Perpetuation of Unmotivated Violence**

It was stated early in this paper that American has a gun culture, or more broadly, is a culture where violence is prevalent in life and depicted in American films. When it comes to *Star Wars*, the title implies that there will be violence taking place, but what sets some of the films apart is the way that they incorporate and motivate the violence. The movies in the original trilogy tended to use simpler choreography and more dialogue interspersed during fights. While this approach to choreography may not be as spectacular to watch, the story the choreography tells is motivated by the characters' feelings and decisions rather than the speed or complexity of the swordplay. This difference makes the fights in the original trilogy more humane, since it gives the viewer a human reason for the fight. The fighting characters always had a history, and therefore the build-up to a fight is justified – using the entire film to motivate the final confrontation.

For the original trilogy, this is especially evident for Luke's first encounter with Darth Vader in *Episode V*. From the beginning of the film, Darth Vader's intention is to capture Luke and use him as his apprentice to destroy the rebellion. Vader's ambush of Hoth failed to capture Skywalker at the beginning of the movie, so Vader devises a new plan to capture his son. Knowing Luke cares deeply for his friends, Vader hunts down and captures Han, Leia, and Chewbacca. Vader knows that Luke will sense that his friends are in danger and fly across the

galaxy to rescue them. Vader plans to trap Luke upon his arrival and freeze him in carbonite for transport to the Emperor. This entire storyline motivates the way that Darth Vader fights Luke. Vader does not want to kill Skywalker, and therefore he is primarily on the defensive for the first half of the battle. Vader only attacks to force a retreat from Luke, pushing him closer and closer to falling into the carbonite chamber. It is only when this plan is foiled that Darth Vader changes his tactics. After realizing that his trap hadn't worked, Vader attempts to persuade Luke to use his anger, claiming "only your hatred can destroy me" (Kershner). What is true throughout the fight is that the character of Darth Vader attacks and defends based on his agenda, which creates a fight that not only feels more dramatic, but at the same time infuses a humanity to the sword fight. The battle is founded in the personal difference between the combatants; Luke is motivated to save/avenge his friends, while Darth Vader is motivated by his desire to turn Luke to the Dark Side. In this way, both characters have a justification for the fight, and their actions during the fight reinforce their positions.

In the prequel trilogy that was released over twenty years later, the lightsaber fighting style changed. Instead of using relationship conflict to motivate violence, the prequels tend to skip very quickly to combat. The strikes are quick and sequential, with sword blows falling for long periods of time without any sense of contemplation or motivation. In *Episode I*, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn are attempting to escape the Separatist invasion of Naboo when they are cut off by Darth Maul. Well, in fact they are not cut off by Darth Maul, as Maul actually enters the hangar on the opposite side of the hangar's exit. The Jedi decide to engage with Maul anyway, perhaps to aid the escape of the Queen, though any justification for the continuance of the fight after the Queen has been ushered off to safety is lost. One may think that the fight could be justified not by the external circumstances of the Queen's escape, but by an inner conflict

between the characters; unfortunately, this is not true. The only other time that Darth Maul engaged with these two was a brisk altercation earlier on Tatooine, which also came out of nowhere. Both the fight on Tatooine and the coming fight on Naboo have no dialogue or any prior history between the characters. There is no impetus to begin dueling, or to continue dueling, other than the igniting of some lightsabers and glaring looks.

While better motivated in some ways than the fight in *Episode I*, the fight between Anakin and Obi-Wan in *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* also has some glaring motivational lapses. What should have been the culminating faceoff of the entire prequel trilogy was unfortunately a compilation of lengthy fight sequences with little regard for character motivation or basic survival instinct. This begins with the dialogue before the fight breaks out. Instead of exploring the intricate relationship between Obi-Wan and Anakin, and ultimately having that conflict be what brings the former Master and Apprentice to fight, Lucas has his characters squabble over universal themes of good and evil, completely neutralizing any specific grievances between the two characters. Some may say that this was Lucas' intent, to have the two men hide behind ideals and morals to shield from each other the true pain that they had inflicted on one another. For a movie with such popular appeal, and with a viewership made up in a large part by young children, a concept like this would likely not be received. Instead what happens is we see Anakin and Obi-Wan fight as agents of light and dark, instead of as individuals.

The lack of individuality and specificity carries over into the choreography as well. Lightsaber strikes come at incredibly fast speed, which by itself is understandable. These are two highly skilled swordsmen with telekinetic powers and a heightened connection to their environment. What pushes this fight over the edge of motivated storytelling is the kind of attacks the characters use, especially Obi-Wan. In a sequence in the middle of the fight, Obi-Wan finds

Anakin defenseless on the ground. Obi-Wan then proceeds to rear back for an attack that would surely kill Anakin. Would Obi-Wan really do this? If in this moment Obi-Wan thinks he has bested his former pupil, would he not instead attempt a non-lethal blow? One may argue that Obi-Wan has accepted Anakin's fall to the Dark Side, and therefore has foregone his care for Anakin's well-being, but this is not true. Obi-Wan declares that he loved Anakin at the end of their fight, which obviously means that Obi-Wan would not have been acting without Anakin's well-being in mind.

This is where this lightsaber fight becomes unmotivated. It uses attacks for how they look instead of the intention behind them. Take a segment later in the film, when Obi-Wan and Anakin begin to fight on a slender metal beam over a river of lava instead of on solid ground. This choice makes no logical sense. No experienced swordsman would intentionally put himself in an unnecessary, increased risk of danger. Later in the fight, the ridiculousness takes a sharper turn, as Anakin and Obi-Wan literally swing from ropes to take foolhardy swings at one another while they drift down said river of lava. The filmmakers obviously wanted the epitomizing fight of the prequel trilogy to be epic, but in doing so they lost sight of the reason that Anakin and Obi-Wan are fighting. When, finally, Obi-Wan cuts down Anakin and declares, "You were my brother Anakin. I loved you!" (Lucas, *Episode III*), the audience is left to reflect on an incredibly long fight sequence where no emotional tension is revealed. Instead the audience sees clever swordplay and fantastical special effects, bread and circuses, to distract from the lack of emotional motivation for the fight.

This delineation from the original trilogy has repercussions in regard to dominant masculinity. When a filmmaker chooses to include a physical altercation, he or she also is proposing the use of violence as a solution to a disagreement. This is not to say that physical

violence should never be included in a film, rather that usage of violence should come with the criteria that the violence was motivated and is continually motivated by human emotion and thought. If films continue to use violence as a special effect rather than a cause and effect relationship, then the culture is fed the idea that violence does not need any special justification; it merely happens as a way to resolve any problem, regardless of circumstance or possible alternate solutions.

### **Conclusion**

In this essay, the topic of toxic masculinity has been addressed in both American culture and the culture of the Jedi in *Star Wars*. Through analyzing the *Star Wars* saga, and specifically the prequels, it can be discerned that the way that Jedi teach and practice their culture is incredibly harmful to the members of its society. Just like American boys, Jedi younglings are taught to separate themselves from feelings deemed harmful or reckless and are therefore taught to never experience and healthily solve their emotional traumas. George Lucas' Jedi are framed to be the good guys in a battle against the evil Dark Side, when in actuality the Jedi themselves, and men in American society, harmfully reinforce repressive and damaging behaviors in their own communities.

The use of violence was also discussed as a way to understand American culture. Violence in film is often seen as a logical and expected solution to conflict, and therefore reinforces this idea throughout the culture. I have attached an alternate staging for the fight in *Episode III*, along with new dialogue that is intended to connect the emotional weight of the scene to the violence used. In the future, filmmakers and all people must be more wary of the impact they have on the men in society and find ways to break down the harmful construct that is today's dominant masculinity.

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## Anakin vs. Obi-Wan: Script and Choreography

The following is an altered script from *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. As noted above, I felt that the execution of this fight scene was done poorly, and so I took it upon myself to choreograph and rewrite the scene to depict a more motivated fight. I have also staged the fight for a proscenium theatre space, as opposed to a camera, so special attention has been given to planes of motion and the sightlines of the audience to attempt to most effectively simulate violence.

Key:

UR – Upper Right

UL – Upper Left

DR – Down Right

DL – Down Left

*We enter the scene just after Anakin has used the force to choke his wife, Padmé. She falls unconscious to the floor as Obi-Wan confronts Anakin.*

ANAKIN: You turned her against me.

OBI WAN: You have done that yourself.

ANAKIN: You will not take her from me!

*ANAKIN: Slice UR, Slice UL, Spin & Slice*

*OBI-WAN: Block L, Block R, Duck & Counter*

OBI WAN: Your anger is blinding you to reality. Can you not see what you've done?

ANAKIN: Don't lecture me Obi-Wan. I see through the lies of the Jedi. You lied to me!

*ANAKIN: Stab DL, Block R, Overhead Slash 5, Lock*

*OBI-WAN: Block DR, Slash UL, Block Reverse 5, Press Down, Hip Check*

OBI-WAN: You have allowed this Dark Lord to twist your mind –

ANAKIN: He showed me what you wouldn't! You're all so scared. I don't fear the Dark Side as you do!

OBI-WAN: You killed younglings! You slaughtered our brothers in cold blood!

ANAKIN: None of you were ever a brother to me!

*ANAKIN: Slash UR, Block UL, Parry DR, Stab UR, Force Push (Win)*

*OBI-WAN: Block UL, Stab UR, Dodge to R, Force Push (Loss), Back Fall*

*ANAKIN: Overhead Slash R, Overhead Slash L (Miss), Overhead Slash L*

*OBI-WAN: Block L, Roll UR, Block R, Bat & Kick*

OBI-WAN: I have failed you Anakin. I have failed you. Don't make me do this.

ANAKIN: You will try.

*OBI-WAN: Slash DL, Slash UR, Slash UL, Block R, Roll L, Slash DL*

*ANAKIN: Block DR, Block UL, Block UR, Stab L, Block DR (switch hands), Face Punch R*

*ANAKIN: Double Handed Stab*

*OBI-WAN: Block DR, Counter*

*OBI-WAN: Slash UL, Choked, Back Against Wall*

*ANAKIN: Block R, Choke L, Throw Against Wall*

*ANAKIN: Stab DL, Slash DR, Overhead, Back Fall and Roll*

*OBI-WAN: Readjust, Submit*

OBI-WAN: It's over Anakin! I have the high ground.

ANAKIN: You underestimate my power.

OBI-WAN: Don't try it.

*ANAKIN: Kick Lightsaber R, Overhead Slash, Knees Cut, Back Sliced*

*OBI-WAN: Hanging Parry L, Knee Slice, Back Slice*

OBI-WAN: You were my brother Anakin! I loved you!

ANAKIN: I hate you!

*end*