

**Jackie Chan: Redefining What It Means to be a Man in Film**

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**Table of Contents**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Abstract</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Introduction: Masculinity on the Screen</b>             | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Methodology</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 1: Defining/Constructing Masculinity</b>        | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 2: Jackie Chan In Focus</b>                     | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Chapter 3: Masculinity, Age, and Violence</b>           | <b>33</b> |
| <b>Chapter 4: Masculinity, Emotions, and Vulnerability</b> | <b>48</b> |
| <b>Conclusion</b>  | <b>59</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | <b>61</b> |

### **Abstract**

When we first think of Jackie Chan, the thought of an male action super star pops into our head. However, we know he is not like the others, like James Bond, Mel Gibson or Jason Statham. Rather than relying on objectification of women, and flashy over the top action scenes using stunt doubles. Chan brought a refreshing perspective on masculinity when he stepped into Hollywood. The point of my research is to observe how Chan formulated his own definition of what it means to be a man on the silver screen due to his own unique philosophy.

## **Introduction: Masculinity on the Screen**

When I first found out about the page requirement for my senior thesis, I was shell shocked. The first question I thought was, what can I write about for that long without being tired of it? When I was told that the thesis topic should be something that we have a personal attachment to because we will have to eat it, sleep and breathe it for the next 9 months, it took me a while to think of the topic.

I first started by thinking back on my life and seeing if I can find a source of inspiration there. I was born in San Francisco, California then traveled to Guangzhou, China, as an infant to be raised by my maternal relatives until the age of 8. I did not have the upbringing of a nuclear family; my grandmother and my aunt were the ones dictating the major decisions in the household as they were the ones “bringing home the bacon” so to speak so I never understood what the “traditional family roles” were. Both of the prominent female figures in my life held positions of power when I was growing up. My grandmother was the director of the communications department of a large telecommunications company at the time and my aunt was the manager of her team. My grandmother was the second oldest of her family and was the only one of nine to go to college, which was virtually unheard of during that time period. I have always wrestled with the idea of gender stereotypes because what I experienced was anything but. In Chinese T.V. shows and movies, men were the ones that held positions as C.E.O.s, the head of the households, and were the authority figures. The daily experiences and structure of my family were contradicted by the norms circulated in the

media. At a young age, I started thinking about the idea of gender norms and roles without putting a name to the idea.

When I was brought back to America, I was privileged enough to be raised in Fremont, California, a region of predominantly people of color. Living in Fremont was a bubble in the sense that the majority of my high school consisted of East and South Asians which meant that I never had the impression that we were actually considered minorities in America. In 2010, the percentage of the Asian population in Fremont was 50.4% (Bay Area Census). I came to this realization only after watching a *Business Insider* youtube video as a senior in high school, which stated Asians made up less than 6% of the United States' population (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCTaiKxpWSA>). I never had to question my identity as an Asian American due to the privilege of my surroundings and my upbringing. But the more I ventured away from my neighborhood and the more I was exposed to the media, the more I became aware of the standing of Asian-Americans in the US.

As I researched more into this, I started to see how representations of Asian Americans, particularly men, were depicted in the media. For instance, during my time in high school, I was addicted to the show, "Heroes," about individuals with superhuman abilities while some are working to prevent a dystopian like future, some are trying to create it. One of my favorite characters was "Hiro Nakamura," who had the ability to control time and teleport to any location he wanted to. Hiro was portrayed as the exact opposite of how typical male leads would be in the same Superhero T.V.

genre such as Oliver Queen in *Arrow* (2012-2018). He was short, chubby, nerdy, and extremely introverted. The deeper I delved into the show, the more I uncovered how popular media portrayed Asian males. For example, in the show, Nakamura is always portrayed as spineless and weak despite being one of the most powerful characters. I always wondered why someone with the ability to manipulate time and space was so underutilized in the show. It was only later as a freshman in college that I realized that it wasn't Nakamura's abilities that held him back, but it was something he did not have control over, something that superseded his powers; he was both Asian and male.

This triggered my initial interest in studying how movies produced by Hollywood depict Asian males. However, instead of an analysis of Asian male actors and their characters, I wanted to focus on a single actor and analyze how he is portrayed in both the Chinese film industry and Hollywood. When I thought of this, one name popped into my head, Jackie Chan. Chan is considered one of the most influential/prominent actors not only in China and America, but also the world which is why I chose him to be the subject of my study.

This thesis explores the portrayal of masculinity, more specifically masculinity in films through a comparative analysis of Jackie Chan films. Jackie Chan is an interesting character because he occupies an in-between space. In China, he is well-loved and respected as a Chinese actor who will go down in history being known as a pioneer for action films. He is most famous for the underutilization of stunt doubles, which allows the camera to get shots of his face that would be impossible to get otherwise. In *Police Story 4: First Strike*, Chan is shown snowboarding off the cliff of a mountain and clings

onto the ski of the helicopter, if either Chan or the helicopter were off in their timing, Chan would have fallen off the mountain. In the United States, the films that include Chan are usually comedy and action where he plays the role of a supporting character such as the ancient master guiding the male protagonist or a police officer from Hong Kong to rescue a diplomat's daughter. However, my analysis will show that through his own unique approach to his characters, he constructs his own sense of masculinity.

## Methodology

Since the objects of my research are the movies featuring Jackie Chan, I utilize Sarah Pink's visual ethnography method "to explore the relationship between visual and others (including verbal) knowledge" (Pink 2001: 119). Visual ethnography allows the researcher to utilize the visual aspects of the culture as a part of their study. This project is done under the assumption that "we recognize the sociocultural significance of film, television, video, and radio as part of everyday lives in nearly every part of the world, and we bring distinctive theoretical concerns and methodologies to our studies of these phenomena" (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 1). The world is becoming an ever decreasing space allowing information to be spread faster than ever. This analysis will show how Chan navigates the space between hegemonic notions of masculinity and the common feminization of Asian males in the media (Chen 1996; Pang & Wong 2005; OkCupid 2014). My thesis shows how Chan creates a masculine identifications by incorporating and subverting hegemonic notions of masculinity through his movies. I assert that Chan's lack of subscription to hegemonic ideals and his rejection of certain aspects of the traditional sense of Western Hollywood masculinity and embracing the trope of the "... asexual Asian characters, ranging from Charlie Chan to the more recent nerdy Asian engineers" (Pang & Wong 2005:209), he establishes a new concept of masculinity in his movies.

The movies I have selected in this analysis hold symbolic importance to Jackie Chan. *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) is what launched his career as an action

film star and *Who Am I?* (1998) is how he obtained the 1999 Hong Kong Film Award for best actor and action choreography. Although he was not as well known as other Chinese actors, *Rush Hour* (1998) and *The Karate Kid* (2010) could be considered what solidified his acting career in America.

I watched several Jackie Chan films and analyzed how the characters he portrays are utilized to create a certain masculine identity. I am interested in the way his characters have created a unique sense of masculinity by both subscribing to and subverting certain hegemonic ideals in Hollywood. I will start by giving a brief overview of Chan's life as well as review some of the literature that is pertinent to defining masculinity and its representations in the media. I will then provide a summary of the movies that will be discussed in this thesis. Next, my analysis will demonstrate how Chan constitutes his own brand of masculinity through the use of violence and subversion of hegemonic masculinity ideals, which aim to regulate emotion and how they are displayed to the public eye.

## Chapter 1: Defining/Constructing Masculinity

R. W. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (1993:77). This notion became influential and has been used by many scholars to analyze masculinity in different parts of the world. It allowed scholars to account for the socio-economic and political forces that shape masculinity and how it practiced in different social contexts. At the same time, this notion has been critiqued by different scholars. Demetriou, for example, attacks Connell’s idea of binarism and argues that, “It is its constant hybridization, its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures” (2001: 348). He continues by stating that it is the incorporation rather than the repudiation of non-hegemonic masculinities that maintains the system of patriarchy (2001: 348). Rather than being chained down by Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity, Demetriou’s take allows for a more dynamic approach to the idea.

I draw from the concept that masculinity is a social construct that cannot be reduced to biology, thus allowing it to be achieved/obtained by individual men (Schwalbe 2005). Also, as discussed in Martin(1998), it is difficult to pinpoint the exact performances that construct masculinity. To add on, this masculinie identification must be repeated in order to be maintained after being achieved (Bosson and Vandello 2011;

Vandello et al. 2008; Kimmel 2008). Males can construct and present their masculinities in various ways such as medical procedures or performative acts, as shown by research in female-to-male transexuals (Dozier 2005), or through the utilization of symbolic/material resources (Hochschild 1989, Pyke 1996), or even the use of violence among poor and working-class men (Strauss et al. 1980, Pyke 1996). Another way it is achieved is through the display of heterosexuality, distance from homosexuality, and evasion of traits and behaviors labeled as feminine (Giaccardi et al. 2017:584; Brandes 1980; Guttman 2006). In addition, Levant et al. (2013) and Parent and Moradi (2009) found that the idea of masculinity is often shown through emotional restrictiveness, self-reliance, aggression, and risk-taking (Giaccardi et al. 2017: 584).

It is also possible to define an act as masculine by placing previously established standards to the performance. Cooper (2000) showed that self-sacrifice can be a medium through which manhood is obtained. Her interviews with 20 computer scientists revealed that they share with the athletes the need to endure pain, a practice that is linked to hegemonic masculinity (Curry 1993). Masculine identification is earned by the programmers through long hours and creating a reputation through their knowledge. But they still have to display other performances such as enduring pain and reputation build in order to boost their standing as men. Even though heterosexuality is closely linked with masculinity ideology, those who hold preferences that are intrinsically opposite of it such as homosexual men are still able to portray themselves as masculine by subscribing to other performances. For instance, homosexual men still achieve manhood through the creation of gay male subcultures that idealize large

bodies/muscularity (Hennen 2005), insatiable and risky sexual behaviors, (Green & Halkitis 2006), and macho fashion (Mosher et al. 2006).

Mosher et al. (2006: 93) found that leathermen (a subculture of gay male that eroticizes leather garments and other symbols) “develop a unique sense of masculinity through integrating care and vulnerability with an aesthetic of heightened masculine appearance.” One participant stated, “in a sense, I have the control. I have the power to be = or not. . . . You generally don’t think about vulnerability being right there with masculinity but it is” (2006:113). In a sense, being a part of this culture allowed its members to attain status and perform acts of masculinity without negating their homosexuality. A common theme that Mosher discovered from the interviews is that the acceptance of one’s own sexuality, gender, and social identities acted as a catalyst in the formation of their masculinity (2006:114). The data suggests that it is possible for individuals to establish a sense of masculinity by gaining control through vulnerability and acceptance of one’s own identity.

### **Masculinity & Violence**

It is difficult to distance masculinity from violence since a 1992 survey found that those who participate in the direct construction of masculinity commit almost 9 times as many violent acts as their counterparts (FBI 1993). We can see that acts of violence begin early. Based on weekly observations of male kindergarteners, Jordan & Cowan (1995) found that violence, in terms of the warrior narrative, is “legitimate and justified when it occurs within a struggle between good and evil” (728). This phenomenon can be

exemplified through stories such as “Batman vs. the Joker” or “Superman vs. Lex Luthor.” Thus it can be assumed that violence is deemed acceptable as long as it is utilized under the correct circumstances.

Violence is also extremely pervasive in movies; Worth KA, et al. (2008) discovered that 91% of movies on television contain violence. One theory for the ubiquitousness of violence in movies is to give an explanation for the gaze at the masculine bodies on the screen. MacKinnon states, “To ward off the threat of homoeroticism from such bodies, which are sometimes stripped fully naked in the course of their narratives, movies have to find an alibi for their concentrated attention to spectacular star bodies” (2003:12). As aforementioned, the hegemonic ideal of masculinity currently is to define itself in opposition to homosexuality. Thus, the pervasiveness of violence in movies allows the male audience to distance themselves from homosexuality and help them reassert their masculine standing.

In her book *Live and Die Like a Man Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*, Ghannam discusses the idea of controlled violence. She shows how the use of force is expected and sanctioned in some cases (such as when defining oneself or one's female relatives) while discouraged and stigmatized in most other cases. She brings in the idea that as a man progresses in age, he is not only expected to decrease his own use of violence but also must participate in ending the physical disputes between younger men (2013:120). In the neighborhood of al-Zawiya al-Hamra, a low-income neighborhood in Cairo, Egypt, the concept of *gada'* is categorized as someone “who excels in materializing social norms ... including intelligence, valor, toughness, reliability, and

decency” (2013:122). This could also be thought of as a character who utilizes violence in a composed manner and in a proper setting (Ghannam 2013:121). To add on, Sawsan El-Messiri describes a *gada'* as an individual who, “does not accept injustice or tyranny and usually stands for the weak against the strong” (1978:82). In contrast, the figure of the *baltagi* or thug represents the stigmatized use of violence, which might be excessive and geared towards achieving personal goals or to unjust ends. Similarly, in many societies, violence is a tool through which masculinity constructs and exhibits itself in society.

### **Men & Media**

In his book *Representing Men: Maleness and Masculinity in the Media*, Mark Mackinnon discusses the idea of being a man in the media. Mackinnon cites Murry Healy’s analysis of the American actor Mark Wahlberg’s representation of the concept of hypermasculinity (2003:5-6). Healy writes that hypermasculinity exposes the flaw of hegemonic masculinity because it shows that becoming a man is an achievement rather than an innate concept. Healy continues, by Wahlberg’s constant use of his body as a piece of evidence for his masculinity, he unintentionally “takes the traditional position of the female stars” (2003: 88). Such as admitting the only asset he possesses is his body thus providing himself as just another subject to be objectified similar to how the female roles are portrayed in classic movies such as *What Women Want* (2000), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *She’s All That* (1999), and many more. The more Wahlberg utilizes his body as a way to achieve his masculinity, he signals that he is and should be looked at for pleasure. Mackinnon also argues that in order for hegemonic masculinity to be

reproduced/created, it needs “fantasy figures to embody its particular variety of masculinity” (2003:9). This can be interpreted as visualizing the male figures on the television screen such as Sylvester Stallone, James Bond, or the aforementioned Mark Wahlberg. He asserts that “Masculine hegemony is formed from the people’s common sense by, perhaps above all, television, film, advertising, and sport as related to and received by huge audiences” (2013: 9-10). Male characters on television has also shown to follow a heteronormative sexual script (Kim et al. 2007: 146). The heteronormative script describes the difference in standards with regards to romance and sexual behaviors between men and women that are set for them in television (Seabrook 2016: 338). Seabrook (2016) describes the standards “as the sexual double standard (men want sex and women set sexual limits), courtship strategies (men attract women with power and women attract men through beauty and sexiness), and commitment strategies (men avoid commitment and women prioritize relationships)” (338).

Media is a medium that allows various groups of people to showcase their identity and be able to enter a system of normalization through that process. According to Michael Kimmel, media representation, “Tell us who we are, who we should be, and who we should avoid” (Michael Kimmel in Craig (ed.), 1992: xii). Mulvey points out that Hollywood goes through great lengths to ensure that the audience associates themselves with the male protagonist in order to justify the objectification of the female subject (Mackinnon 1989: 27). On the other hand, the male spectator is able to explain and justify his homoeotic gaze towards another male individual on the screen by

reassuring himself that he is merely adopting the female perspective on the screen or others in the audience (Mackinnon 1989: 29).

Male characters in movies might support the current hegemonic ideals of masculinities at that time but it might also undermine it. Referring back to Kimmel, the figures that represented what masculinity meant on the big screen might be central to other narratives and identifications. For example, *Rambo*, played by Sylvester Stallone created the narrative that communism was defeated which allowed the public to come to terms with the defeat in Vietnam (Mackinnon 2003:39-40). To add, Mackinnon uses *Rambo* as another piece of evidence of which violence is served with the exposed muscular body of the male lead (2003: 41). In slasher movies, the killer's masculinity is significantly compromised by their own actions (Mackinnon 2003: 44) as observed in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge* film series where the killer's sexuality went against the norm. For instance, the antagonists took over the body of a "closeted" teenage boy to commit his atrocities. In comedic films, however, male characters are usually vulnerable and are used to "satirize the traditional notion of masculinity" (Mackinnon 2003:47). Media, as argued by several authors, is key to how masculinity is defined and communicated to boys, men, and women.

### **Asian Male Representation in Hollywood**

2018 was a monumental year for Asian male representation in Hollywood, not only did it feature a majority Asian cast since/in? *The Joy Luck Club*, but also included a male lead played by Henry Gouling who is of Malaysian descent. This was a huge

accomplishment because it is not uncommon for Asian males to act as the backdrop in movies. For instance, Korean American actor, Edward Hong, has played multiple supporting roles in TV shows and movies over his career such as, “Math Olympian Dude,” “Chinese Man #2” and, in a top-rated network sitcom, “Male Night Nurse” (Ng and James, 2017). Even when roles are supposed to be played by Asian males such as The Mandarin in *Iron Man 3*, what we received was a white-washed character. The 21st century was an improvement from the early 20th-century portrayals such as Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan.

In the media, for most part, the roles for Asian men “at their best, are effeminate closet queens like Charlie Chan and, at their worst, are homosexual menaces like Fu Manchu” (Chan, et al. 1991:xiii). Charlie Chan is a fictional Honolulu detective created by Earl Derr Biggers for his novel series. Chan is portrayed as an asexual and comically mysterious being with his inability to speak grammatically correct English and random instances of “Chinese wisdom.” Ironically, Chan was created with the idea of opposing the yellow peril stereotypes (*The Chinese Mirror: A Journal of Chinese Film History*). To add, Chan was also played on the screen by caucasian actors rather than by actors of the ethnicity of the character. Sax Rohmer created Fu Manchu after an incident with his ouija where it spelled out “Chinaman.” The character was created during the widespread idea of Yellow Peril. He is seen as a Chinese villain who uses his medical expertise and technological knowledge to wreak havoc in society. Chan (1991) would also characterize Fu Manchu as having homosexual qualities due to his long dress and

caressing white men with his long fingernails. Similar to Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu was also played by caucasian actors.

As expressed by Laikwan Pang and Day Wong in, *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*,

Asian men present a threat to white women, and these men's sexual desires must be reined in. This anxiety over Asian men's sexual aggression is reflected in the portrayal of Fu Manchu who has the ability to hypnotize hapless victims, white women. In particular — while the need to discipline or simply to castrate and emasculate Asian men is exemplified in the creation of numerous passive and asexual Asian characters, ranging from Charlie Chan to the more recent nerdy Asian engineers (2005:209).

This can be seen through the character, Mr. Chow, from *The Hangover* series where he is characterized as a short and skinny deranged lunatic with a questionable sense of fashion. Again, the same could be said about the portrayal of Long Duck Dong, Chinese foreign exchange student, in *16 Candles*. As entertainment journalist Susannah Gora writes in her book,

The role of 'The Donger' is pure comedy; a gong sounds every time Dong enters a scene. With his thick accent and bumbled attempts at American catchphrases ('Whass happenin', haaht stuff?, everything Long Duk Dong says and does is understandably offensive—but is also, admittedly, hilarious (2011:30-31).

The archetype of the unattractive, asexual, homosexual, emasculated Asian man is pervasive in media. Current literature shows that the roles that are typically played by Asian males are not considered masculine. At first glance, it may appear that Jackie Chan adopts the same role of an asexual Asian male in his films. However, after closer inspection, it is certain that he is reinventing the definition of masculinity in his films by adopting his own unique style in portraying the characters.

## Chapter 2: Jackie Chan In Focus

Jackie Chan is a common household name in both the Chinese film industry as well as Hollywood. He is known for participating in his own stunts which allows certain angles to be captured on camera. Due to his tenacity, he has broken his ankle, nose, cheekbones, fingers, knee, shoulder, chin, dislocating his pelvis, and cracking his skull during the entirety of his film career filming. This goes to show the amount of love and effort Chan has put into his craft.

Jackie Chan was born Chan Kong-Sang on April 7th, 1954 in Hong Kong to Charles and Lily (Lee-Lee) Chan. Charles worked as a cook and Lily as a housekeeper in the French Embassy. Chan's parents had an exciting past; Charles worked as a spy for China's pre-World War II Nationalist government. Then he became a member of Shanghai's organized crime underworld and was forced to flee to Hong Kong after the Communist takeover of mainland China in 1949. On the other hand, his mother was a stage performer and dealt opium on the side. Charles and Lily met when he arrested her during his time as a spy.

Chan has always struggled in school due to his dyslexia. When Chan was 7, his parents enrolled him in the Chinese Drama Academy (a.k.a. Peking Opera School) and worked at the American Embassy in Australia to pay for the tuition. When Chan first arrived at the academy, he thought it was the best place on Earth but he did not realize the training that awaited him. Chan trained around 18-19 hours a day and was also constantly bullied by the other members at the academy. Over the next 10 years, Chan

trained from “dawn to midnight and anyone caught taking it easy would be whipped and starved” (Medeiros 2018).

After graduating from the Academy, he found work and appeared as an uncredited extra in Bruce Lee’s film *Enter the Dragon* (1973). After his first appearance, Chan was forced to move to Australia and took up a job at a construction site where he obtained the name “Jackie” because his Chinese name was too difficult to pronounce. In 1976, he was invited back to Hong Kong by Director Lo Wei’s attempt to replace Bruce Lee who had died in 1973 (Jonghyun Jeon 2019: 94).

Chan’s luck began to change when he experimented with adding comedic twists to his characterizations. This had allowed Chan to utilize his acting training and brought a new perspective to the action film genre. His breakthrough came in 1978 with *Drunken Master*, a story about a young kung fu pupil who learns a style in which the fighter’s true skills rise to the occasion when and only when he is drunk. *Drunken Master* became a hit in Asia and a success in the United States. So popular that a sequel came out, as Chan's popularity came to America. Chan's performance was a perfect blend of action and perfectly controlled (and often highly comical) false-drunken choreography.

Chan attempted to break into the U.S. market in the 1980s. His U.S. entrance failed initially because the directors of movies such as *The Protector* (1985) and *The Big Brawl* (1985), did not understand the unique aspect he brought to the film industry. Although his films were not a success, they allowed Chan to make an appearance to the American audience. In 1982, when he went back to Hong Kong, Chan took

advantage of the niche he occupied in such films as the slapstick action-comedy, *Project A* (1983), where he infamously took a headfirst plunge off a giant clock face. He continued this newfound niche and pursued it to the fullest as observed in the rest of his career.

In Hong Kong, every time he released a new movie, people would pack the theaters to see what new amazing feats Chan has achieved with his body. *Police Story* (1985) featured him slide down a pole that nearly left him paralyzed after he broke two of his vertebrae. In *Operation Condor* (1990) he jumped off a motorcycle to catch a net attached to a nearby crane. He is always shown utilizing a variety of weapons to complement his martial art skills such as hat racks, tables, and even various kinds of fans. It was the combination of comedy and the application of his body that made crowds flocked to the cinemas.

Determined in his dream to become an international star, he returned to the big screen in Hollywood more than 10 years later. In 1995, *Rumble in the Bronx* became his way to the hearts of the American audience. As stated by Keith Simanton, a film critic from Film.com, “Chan, doing everything at once including all his own stunts, has an infectious energy that will help to remind you why you love movies” (2000).

Since then, Jackie Chan has starred in a series of blockbusters that have put him on the Hollywood A-list. From *Rush Hour* to *Kung Fu Panda*, his roles have continued to entertain audiences worldwide. He has played a disgruntled police officer, private investigator, treasure hunter, an archaeologist, and countless more in the Chinese cinematic world. While shocking and bringing laughter to American audiences through

in his portrayals of a spy, monk, special agent just to name a few. All in all, he has participated in over 135 films and counting. Some of his most well known work in Chan had a dazzling career and it would be impossible to engage all of his work. My analysis would focus on four of his films that represent different stages in his long career. My goal is to explore how he was presented as a man and this presentation shifted over his career.

In Jackie Chan's autobiography, he speaks about how when he first entered Hollywood in the 1980s they (production company) attempted to adhere to the market demands and mold him into another Clint Eastwood, to be a 硬汉 (manly man) (2015: 33). This created a sense of discomfort for him, he did not think he was suitable to portray the cold-hearted killer archetype nor did he like that type of character (Chan 2015: 33). He continues that he did not mind being a “硬汉” in movies, but it has to be under certain circumstances such as self-defense or protecting others (Chan 2015: 33). He adds *The Protector* (1985) contained a variety of Hollywood action films' stereotypes such as foul language, nudity, and overtly violent movements; he did not agree with the director's methods nor the movie's style (Chan 2015: 33). The market did not react well to the film which was reflected in the box office. In addition, when inquired about his approach to movies, he states “I want action, but not to the point of being cruel, it should have a comedic aspect but not lewd,” he does not want to be associated with anything that is distasteful (Chan 2015: 167). Chan adds that Bruce Lee is a superhero for others, but he wants to be a normal person, they have a lot of flaws and struggles and they are not invincible nor are they heroes (2015: 172).

The concept of the snake is closely connected to Jackie Chan. In 3 of the 4 Jackie Chan's films I have selected for analysis, the snake appears in one way or another; this is interesting because his own zodiac is the horse. In *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) he learns the snake-style kung fu. To add, he learns from a cat's action of swiping and killing a snake which ultimately led him to gain the upper hand in the final battle. In *Who Am I?* (1998) The sole reason why "Who Am I?" was able to start on his journey to find out his identity is because a rally car driver was bitten by a snake which led them to be stopped in the middle of the desert in Namibia. In *The Karate Kid* (2010), the temple scene shows an interaction between a kung fu master and a snake; it seems almost as if the two are imitating each other. Also, in *The Medallion* (2003), the antagonist of the film is named "Snake head." A theory behind the common occurrence of the snake is because the film, *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978), was filmed in 1977 and it was also the year of the snake. This movie was transformative in that it rid him of the nickname, "box office poison" (Chan 2015: 173). Although the horse is Chan's birth zodiac, the snake was represented when Chan Kong-Sang became Jackie Chan.

### ***Snake in the Eagles Shadow (1978)***

This was the film that Jackie Chan thought made people forget about his nickname "box office poison" in China (Chan 2015: 173). Before this movie, the directors and producers wanted Chan to follow Bruce Lee's archetype. Chan was never comfortable with being groomed to be the next Bruce Lee, which also explains why

most of his previous movies did not do well compared to *Snake in the Eagle Shadow*, which earned over \$3 million USD in 1978 equating to over \$11.8 million in 2020. Due to the popularity of the movie, English subtitles were later added to the film. This was the initial movie where Chan had portrayed himself to his standards such as using humor that is not lewd and the ability to demonstrate his physical abilities without involving gore.

*Snake in the Eagles' Shadow* is an action comedy film directed by Woo-Ping Yuen and produced by Ng See-yuen that revolves around Chien Fu (played by Jackie Chan), an orphan at a Kung Fu school and his involvement in a rivalry between two clans. The start of the film depicts a fighting scene between Shang Kuan, a master from the Eagle Claw Clan and one of the last remaining elders of the Snake-style clan. At the end of the battle, Shang kills his opponent and finds out that, in order to wipe out the Snake-style kung fu, he must kill Pai Chang Tien, the only surviving member of the clan. The setting then changes to how poorly Chien Fu is treated at his school as he is constantly being manipulated as the ragdoll and is used by his superiors to increase their clout with their students. One day, Chien, being the kind-hearted person he is, saw a beggar, and invited him into his home for a warm meal and a place to stay. Little did he know though that the beggar was Pai Chan Tien. After being ambushed by Shang, Pai Chan decided to teach Chien snake-style under two conditions: he must not call him sifu (master) and must keep his whereabouts a secret. The climax occurs when Chien sees Pai Chan defeated by Shang and decides to avenge his master. At first, Chien

was clearly disadvantaged but was able to overthrow his adversary by incorporating some of the movements from seeing his pet cat killing a cobra.

The film depicts Chien as someone who was a spineless individual in the beginning and as the film progressed, but is cultivated as a man by the training he received from the older master. This training is materialized in his bodily abilities, which were shown through his martial arts skills and learning how to control his emotions. For example, as Chien wipes the floor of the gym with a wet towel, his master is deliberately making it harder for him by stepping in chalk and attempting to invalidate Chien's hard work. Chien does nothing to retaliate and follows his master around while wiping the chalky footsteps away. Adding on to his spinelessness, during kung fu demonstrations, his masters would tell him to stand around as if he were punching bag and display their techniques on him as he sustains heavy blows to his body. It is obvious to the audience that he feels the pain and embarrassment from the attacks, yet he chooses to do nothing about them. As discussed previously, enduring pain is often linked to hegemonic masculinity and men are often expected to hide any reaction to bodily sensations like pain. As the film develops, Chien learned some techniques from Pai Chang and became a little more comfortable with expressing himself. When he was prompted to be used as a human punching again, he fought back and was met with harsh criticisms from his master because he disobeyed his orders. Afterward, he saw how his cat was able to kill a snake with ease and decided to create his own style from it. The audience saw the transformation of someone who did not speak to defend himself when he was being utilized as nothing more than a piece of training equipment

to him become a fierce fighter, who was capable of defeating a formidable enemy in the end.

Chien is seen as a kind-hearted character in the movie. When he saw Pai Chang being attacked by six members from a rivaling school, he jumped in even though he had zero kung fu skills and said “How could six of you beat up one of him?! Do you not know shame?!” Similar to the discussion of the *gada’* (Ghannam 2013), who does not hesitate to support the vulnerable and weak, Chien knew he would physically suffer from this encounter and still put his own life at risk for a complete stranger. After the encounter, Chien invites Pai Chang back for a cup of tea and offers him a place to stay for the night. True to Chinese hospitality norms, Chien even offers him his bed and blanket while he is shivering on the cold hard ground at night. Furthermore, when he saw Pai Chang suffering from a horrible injury, he went and gathered medicine to treat him and nursed him back to health by feeding him medicine even though he was incredibly exhausted.

This first film showed that relinquishing control, displaying vulnerability as well as utilizing violence in a controlled manner assisted in creating Chan’s own definition of being a man in the media. When Chan was only 24, he established his reputation as an actor that could be loved by movie goers in Hong Kong.

### ***Rush Hour* (1998)**

Ten years after *Snake in the Eagles’ Shadow*, *Rush Hour* is the second film that I analyze. *Rush Hour* is an American martial art and buddy cop film directed by Brett

Ratner, produced by Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker. The film follows the adventure of Detective Inspector Lee from Hong Kong (played by Chan) and Detective James Carter from the Los Angeles Police Department (portrayed by Tucker) as they unravel the mysteries behind the kidnapping of Soo Yung, the daughter of a Chinese diplomat. Their unlikely pair up is due to the fact that Carter was tricked into acting as a “babysitter” for Lee because of Carter’s recent mishap with the operation and the FBI’s refusal of letting a foreigner assist in the investigation. Once Carter found out that he was duped, he decided to solve the case himself while attempting to keep Lee entertained. Lee became frustrated with Carter and decided to go find the consulate himself. Once Lee discovered that his help was unwanted by the FBI, he and Carter collaborated together to attempt to find Soo Yung themselves. Their journey led them to discover that the one who orchestrated the scheme was a close friend of the diplomat’s, who wrapped a bomb around Soo Young. During the final scene, Carter assists in defusing the bomb while Lee embarks on a chase and catches the one responsible.

As the film progressed, we see Lee evolving from an uptight and rigid character into a more approachable and friendly individual. For instance, when he got off the plane in Los Angeles, he greeted Carter with a stern demeanor and did not answer any of the questions he asked, which made Carter assume that Lee did not speak English. Then when Carter heard Lee talk for the first time and inquired why he did not answer him at first, Lee responded with “you didn’t ask.” To add on, Lee was portrayed as “a lone wolf” because he did not want to work with Carter to find Soo Yung. For example, Lee ran away from Carter when they took a break at a convenience store. The scene

showed Lee's ingenuity. He was handcuffed by Carter to the steering wheel. He escaped by taking off the whole wheel. Later on, we see him dancing with Carter to Edwin Starr's "War" in a comedic way by mimicking Carter's movements. Furthermore, Lee even becomes a mentor to Carter in a way by teaching him how to disarm a pistol, proper kung fu techniques, and showing him Chinese cuisine by taking him to a Chinese take out restaurant and ordering for him.

Throughout the film, Lee is seen as someone who is tough, but only when he needs to be. He also keeps his rationality during adrenaline rushing situations. During a bar fight scene, he used as much violence as warranted to incapacitate his attackers, never more. When he saw that they were unable to cause harm to him, he backed away while stating "I don't want trouble." Furthermore, the final scene occurs in a museum containing priceless Chinese artifacts and he would prevent damages to the antiques whenever he could. His encounter with a henchman caused a vase to be knocked down from its display and he ran as fast as he could to carry it and gently place it on the ground. Then, when he saw a giant porcelain vase being pushed over, he held it in place with all of his might while enduring punches and kicks from his opponents. He is seen as a more complex character that is not just based on violence.

There are surprisingly a lot of similarities between the plot of the movie and the Handover of Hong Kong. For instance, the time of the filming occurred in the same time frame as the Handover of Hong Kong in 1997. To add, the antagonist in the film is a British Commander, who has kidnapped the daughter of a Chinese consulate. In this case, Chan is representative of China in taking back the "daughter" (Hong Kong) or

what the Chinese consider is rightfully theirs from Britain. This theory is plausible because Chan has been demonstrating support for the Communist Party of China in the past ranging from disavowing the anti-piracy support in Hong Kong in 1999 and publicly stating that “We Chinese people need to be controlled” (Tang 2013). In this way, Chan is not only saving the young girl but is also asserting Chinese national identity and protecting its standing on the global scene.

In this film, we see a clear definition of hegemonic masculinity that emphasizes rationality, controlling emotions, and using violence when appropriate to protect the vulnerable and defend one’s nation and its heritage.

### ***Who Am I (1988)***

*Who am I?* is an action comedy film directed by Benny Chan and Jackie Chan who is also the lead role. The film was released in Hong Kong and was shot in South Africa and the Netherlands. The movie follows a Chinese special operatives agent suffering from amnesia (Jackie Chan) attempting to find his identity after being betrayed by his superior, Morgan, a White American male, during a mission in South Africa. Chan portrays an agent as a part of a multinational military unit representing Hong Kong. Throughout the film, he is called regarded as “Who am I?” because when asked who he was by the villagers who rescued him, he responds with “Who Am I?”

One day, he sees a rally car on the side of the road, and by rescuing the driver from a snake bite and finishing the race for him, he became famous in Johannesburg. After arriving in the city, “Who Am I?” meets Christine Park, a journalist working in South

Africa sent to interview him. However, Morgan also saw the news and sent a team of hitmen after “Who Am I?” After their narrow escape, Christine deciphered a piece of evidence that led them to Rotterdam, Netherlands. Upon discovering that Christine was an undercover CIA agent, “Who Am I?” did not know who to trust and wandered into Willemswerf alone. There, he discovers that Morgan was actually behind the whole scheme. “Who Am I?” began to fight his way out of the building after securing the disc that contained the formula for a very powerful bomb. In the end, Christine assists him and arrests Morgan.

Similar to *Snake in the Eagles’ Shadow*, as the movie progresses Chan’s character develops a sense of confidence in himself. For instance, when he is first awakened and finds himself in a hut, he scrambles around in fear and when inquired about who he is by the villagers, that is when he is given the title “Who Am I?” To add on, after he is brought to a hospital in Johannesburg, he encounters Morgan. Oblivious of what he has done, “Who Am I?” reveals all that has happened to him and everything that he knows to Morgan. The audience can see that “Who Am I?” is full of doubt and helplessness as the conversation ensues. Furthermore, those watching it on the big screen cannot help but feel sorry for “Who Am I?” as he asks the man that has put him in this situation for assistance out of desperation. Adding on to his confusion, a team of officers from the Johannesburg police department arrested him and started to interrogate him as if he were a terrorist. All he could respond with was “I don’t know” and “I have lost all my memories” and was thus beaten by those in uniform.

Chan's character also takes a passive/reactive role during the beginning of the movie and it was not until the end where he gained the courage to take charge. To illustrate, after he was about to be arrested, he responds by outmaneuvering the officers and frantically escapes their pursuit. To add, as he is being chased by Morgan's hitmen, he takes a reactive role by taking part in a car chase and running away from them. It was not until the middle of the film when he had a breakthrough after realizing that he was exhausted from being confused and hunted down by others that he decided to take a more active role in the movie. When "Who am I?" and Christine arrived in Rotterdam, "Who am I?" took matters into his own hands when he rushed into the Willemswerf, climbed into the air ducts, and found those responsible for causing his current situation. He further solidifies his active portrayal by confronting Mr. Morgan and forces him to admit to what he has done.

Throughout the scene in the Willemswerf, the audience can see how much the character, "Who am I," has changed by simply looking at his eyes. Compared to the moments in South Africa where his eyes were full of hesitation and fearfulness, in the final fight scene on the rooftop, against Morgan's bodyguards, the uncertainty in his eyes was replaced by an intense and driven gaze. The movie ends with Morgan being trapped by the Royal Netherland Marine Corps on the Erasmus Bridge.

This film, which was produced the same year as *Rush Hour*, also takes place outside of China and Hong Kong and emphasizes the role of the man in the protection of the nation and its citizens. Chan's travels are motivated by the need to serve his country and its citizens.

***The Karate Kid (2010)***

*The Karate Kid* is a martial arts drama film directed by Harald Zwart and stars Jaden Smith and Jackie Chan. The film's budget was \$40 million but made over \$359 million in the box office. This film is a very similar story to *Snake in the Eagles' Shadow* but Chan, who is now 56, plays almost the opposite role. Instead of being the apprentice, he is here the master. The plot of the film focuses on Dre Parker (Jaden Smith), a 12-year-old African-American boy, who has just moved from Detroit to Beijing because of his mom's job. As he is attempting to settle in a new environment, Dre faces bullying from Cheng, a kung fu prodigy. Dre retaliates by dumping a bucket of water on Cheng and his friends during a school field trip. As Dre is chased down by the gang of bullies, the maintenance man, Mr. Han (Jackie Chan) steps in and reveals his kung fu skills. Dre then began to ask Han to teach him Kung fu. At first, Han refuses, but after attempting to make peace with Dre's bullies, he decided that the only way to stop the attacks was to make Dre compete with his bullies during a tournament.

Han began to train Dre by having him take his jacket off, hang it on a wooden dummy, take it down, put it on the ground, pick it up, put on his jacket and repeat this process innumerable. After several days, Dre was fed up with his "training," but as Han demonstrates how the jacket technique has taught him muscle memory, Dre gladly went back to the wooden dummy.

During the tournament, one of the former bullies was told by his master to impair Dre so that he could not advance to the final round to face Cheng. Doing so resulted in an immediate disqualification for him, but Dre was unable to compete due to the injury.

In the end, and in parallel to studies that show how men should endure suffering, he overcame the pain and ended up beating Cheng on the main stage.

Throughout the movie, Chan's character acts as a supporting role for the lead but still exhibits development nonetheless. To illustrate, Han shows little to no affection to Dre when they first started the training. He would bark out instructions to Dre and expect him to follow as if he were a soldier being prepared for war with no explanations behind his directions. Even when Dre became irked by the relentless jacket procedure, Han revealed his intentions through his actions by having Dre defend his attacks using what he had learned rather than basic communication. Eventually, Han shows the audience a peek of his emotions towards Dre when he brings him to a Taoist Temple on top of the Wudang Mountains and reveals that his father took him there when he was a child. To add on, on their way back to Beijing on the train ride, Dre falls asleep on Mr. Han's lap and he displays his care towards his student by gently patting him to sleep as if he were his son. However, as they were climbing up the 1600 meters (5300 feet) mountain, Dre expressed his discomfort by stating that he needed water, and Han coldly replied, "Water on top of the mountain." We see here how Chan is playing the role of the father, who is supportive but firm, who is kind but disciplinarian, and who is deeply invested in cultivating his son/apprentice into a strong and proper man.

Chan's character further puts his humanity on display when he recounts his past with Dre in a Volkswagen Scirocco. The day before, Dre asks what time the practice will be tomorrow and Han simply replies, "物极必反 (too much of a good thing can be bad), you train a lot, you need rest." Then, as Dre walks into Han's home again, he sees Mr.

Han destroying his Scirocco with pure, unadulterated rage in a drunken state. As Dre yells “Mr. Han!” He finally comes to his senses, drops his sledgehammer and slumps down the driver’s seat of his car. Then, a newspaper clipping covered with the broken car window pieces sits on the hood of the car with the headline that reads “Beijing district car accident, the driver lost both his wife and son.” Mr. Han then describes how it was a rainy night and he lost control of the car as they crashed. Then, he describes how his wife, Zhang, used to sing only for him and started to serenade a Mandarin song as he attempts to hold back his tears. The scene ends with Mr. Han sobbing uncontrollably while laying his head on the center of his steering wheel and holding on to the sides of the wheel. Dre responds by holding Han’s hands and brings him to the backyard where he signals to Mr. Han that he wants to keep training, making it a landmark bonding moment.

The film moves the notion of masculinity from the focus on the physical strength and training, to a discussion of fatherhood and heterosexuality, to the vulnerability that connects the young and the old, the son and the father, and the apprentice and the master.

These movies provide many interesting aspects to discuss when it comes to masculinity. Be it the role of the strong protector and the savvy wanderer, or the gentle teacher and caring master, there is much that can be said about how Chan’s career has shifted and how his depiction as a man changed over time. For the rest of the thesis, however, I am going to limit my discussion to two major themes: The use of violence and the idea of vulnerability

### Chapter 3: Masculinity, Age, and Violence

As stated above, the use of violence is strongly linked to masculinity in many societies. In Ghannam's book *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*, she describes the phenomenon that as a man in Egypt gets older, he is expected to minimize his use of violence and to end physical disputes (2013:120). This pattern can also be seen in Chan's characters as they age. In my argument, I am utilizing the definition of violence as the use of force to improve one's physical capabilities, as well as engaging in a physical altercation with an opponent(s) for self-defense or the safety of others. With that definition in mind, I will discuss how the character Jackie Chan portrays utilizes violence less as he ages. I will first describe the types and amount of violence shown in each film then connect it to the idea of a negative correlation between age and violence.

*Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* was Chan's first movie that put his name in the limelight and it was also the film where his character displayed the most physical prowess. In this film, where he played the role of a young man, there was a total of over 31 minutes of violence that included his character. Within a 90 minute film, over  $\frac{1}{3}$  of it made use of Jackie Chan's younger self to depict violence. His usage of violence included helping out an older man in an outnumbered fight who later turns out to be his teacher. Also, he has participated in several fights, all in the name of protecting the weak from the oppressor.

The movie, *Who Am I?*, was the last film he created with the Golden Harvest production studio. This film contained over 25 minutes of demonstration of violence in an hour and 47 minutes of cinematography. The amount of exhibition of force pales in comparison when put next to the previous film. Violence used in this context is different compared to the previous example in that he applied it only in self defense such as escaping the South African Police Department when they wrongly accused him of crimes. Another instance would be in the final fight scene where he had to escape two of the antagonist's henchmen.

*Rush Hour* was Chan's first blockbuster success in Hollywood which grossed over \$130 million dollars. Chan's character, Lee, was only involved in 9 minutes of violence in a movie that was nearly 2 hours long. Reiterating the previous point of violence being utilized as a tool to help others, he employed violence in order to help the Chinese diplomat to find his daughter and punish those responsible. Some instance is when he fought off the enemy in the final scene of the museum in an attempt to apprehend the antagonist.

*The Karate Kid* was Chan's first dramatic American film that helped him win one of the Nickelodeon Kids Choice awards. This movie contained Chan's character participating in 2 minutes of direct violence in a movie that was almost 2 and a half hours long. However, this does not include the time that he has dedicated to helping Dre train. Mr. Han will have participated in violence for a longer duration if the guidance were to be included. At first, this might contradict the theory of negative correlation

between age and violence, but the training was done to permanently halt the physical dispute between Dre and Cheng thus it still aligns well with the idea.

Looking temporally at the 4 selected movies, we see how his use of violence shifted over his career, which extended from 1978 to 2010. Jackie Chan was 24 (born 1954) during the filming of *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (released in 1978). As a young man, he deploys violence to protect others, and as he becomes older, he takes on the role of a mentor to train them to defend themselves. To add on, we can see a clear correlation of the decreased use of violence by Chan's character's throughout the years. Starting from 30% of the total run time of the film when he was 24 to 24% at 44 to 7.5% at 45 to 1.3% at 56. There is a clear correlation that as Chan ages, the characters he depicts also tend to resort less towards violence similar to the social norms placed upon older men discussed in Ghannam's book.

### **Masculine Violence**

Although Chan is known for his physical prowess in his films, he incorporates a certain level of finesse that is similar to the figure of the *gada`* as described in Ghannam's book. In her book, she describes an individual named Kirsha receiving praise for his violence because he was able to engage in fights without fatally harming anyone (2013:122). In this case, Kirsha would be considered a *gada`*. The figure of the *gada`* refers to a man who exhibits "intelligence, valor, toughness, reliability, and decency" (2013:122). It also describes a man who selectively uses measured violence

for proper social ends such as protecting the weak or defending one's family. I find these ideas useful when I analyze the characters played by Chan in the movies.

Chan's characters exhibit intelligence by being resourceful and aware of what is around him at all times. In all of his movies, Chan's characters always show a certain level of familiarity with his surroundings as well as an ability to utilize this knowledge to his advantage and not rely on brute strength to get himself out of trouble.

In *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*, when Chien Fu saw that Pai Cheng Tien was being beaten by thugs, he knew that he would not be able to take on the group without help so he used the bamboo stick he was using for his errands as a weapon. This split-second decision allowed him to fend off the group of enemies and to save Pai Cheng Tien. Later on, after he was beaten in a fight, he saw that his house cat had killed a snake. As he was congratulating the cat for its achievement, he noticed that the cat's claws were quite deadly. This gave him the inspiration of incorporating a cat-like fighting stance into his snake-style kung fu. It was also this novel technique that gave him the upper hand and advantage in the final fight. This shows how Chien Fu is a dynamic character in that he does not only take his failure but also uses it as an opportunity to grow.

Chan's character, Lee, shows off his ingenuity the most in *Rush Hour*. For example, in the pool room scene, as Lee is being put in a chokehold by the bartender on the bar, he maintains a degree of calmness by grabbing the stool and hitting the bartender with it. In the same setting, as Lee is waving his hands saying he does not want trouble, his large opponent grabs his right hand and forces it back. As Lee realizes

that he is about to lose in this battle of brute strength, he looks around, sees the cue ball, grabs it, and smashes his opponent's hand with it. Then, as he is pushed by another attacker, he makes a split-second decision and utilizes the momentum to slide under the table rather than being thrown on top of it. He then sees the light fixture above the pool table and instinctually pushes it towards his attacker to incapacitate him after sliding to the other side of the table. The pool room fight scene displays Lee's alertness to his surroundings and his ability to use his wits to outmaneuver his foes. In another scene, as he is about to drink the tea at a Chinese restaurant, he sees the waitress wearing the necklace that belonged to Soo Yung and immediately stopped himself, rightfully so, because the tea was poisoned. The billiard room and restaurant scene demonstrate Lee's ability to make use of his environment during a fight to improve his odds.

In *Who Am I?* "Who Am I?" demonstrates the ability to use his intelligence to get out of precarious situations to another level. To demonstrate, when "Who Am I?" is handcuffed and arrested by five South African police officers and is told that he will be charged with espionage and attempted murder, he realizes the danger he is in and takes charge. First, he headbutts one of the officers and then proceeds to kick a chair to immobilize another. Then, as he sees another officer advancing towards him, he grabs a chair with his feet and rolls backward on a table and in doing so. He knocks the police officer back hindering him from attacking. Next, he jumps with his hands cuffed behind him and brings them under and forward for better mobility. After, "Who Am I?" decides to escape to the roof, and still thinks of deterring his pursuers by throwing paint cans

and plastic pies down the stairs. When he gets to the roof, he sees that there is nothing but a couple of pieces of equipment around and a rope tied to a steel beam. He quickly strategizes and throws the rope a couple of times around the plastic tub, kicks it, and jumps into the circle of rope he just made. After, he ties the rope around himself to make a makeshift belay system and propels down from the roof leaving his enemies in the dust. In another scene, "Who Am I?" uses his wits in a comedic way to defeat his enemies. As he is running shoeless away from his pursuers, he crashes into a Holland clogs display and knocks them all down. As he is on the ground, he notices that the clogs are made from a hardened wood, he wears them to increase the force of his kicks which ends up working out in his favor. No matter where "Who Am I?" is, he is able to manipulate the odds by utilizing his surroundings, exhibiting his intelligence even in a fast-paced setting.

Although Jackie Chan does not participate in the action in *The Karate Kid* as much as he does in other movies, his ability to make use of his surroundings is still visible. In this case, Mr. Han knows that he does not have the required types of equipment to train Dre, so he improvises. He sees Dre's jacket and creates a unique training plan involving the techniques that Dre typically uses for taking off and putting on his outerwear. Later on, it is seen that Mr. Han utilized the jacket to instill upon Dre the fundamentals of kung fu. It is incredible how Chan's character can use a piece of clothing to teach the basics of martial arts to a child. After, Mr. Han takes Dre to the rooftop, hangs a bedsheet between the two of them on a clothesline, and as Dre asks what is going on, Mr. Han uses a boxing glove attached to a wooden stick to punch Dre.

Not surprisingly, Dre is in shock and pain due to the punch and Mr. Han clarifies that you need to anticipate where the punches are coming from with the least amount of information to go on. Mr. Han's teachings may be unorthodox, but as observed later on in the movie, he was able to predict the movements of his opponents a lot quicker compared to other competitors in the final tournament.

In all the roles he plays, Chan consistently exhibits a sense of confidence and calmness even in situations where it seems hopeless. By staying collected during times of crises, Chan's characters all display valor and toughness, traits that are integral to being a *gada'*. More importantly, his use of violence is not premeditated but is rather reactive to imposed danger and is largely geared towards defending himself and vulnerable others. The fact that he does not use weapons but relies on using objects available around him distances him from brutality and oppression and constitutes him as a rational and self-controlling man.

### **Brave Cool Men**

Similar to what is argued in Ghannam's book (2013), bravery, willingness to sacrifice, and dedication to protect are also key to how masculinity is depicted in these films. Chien Fu did not turn into a coward and run away but instead faced his opposition's head-on in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*. To demonstrate, in the scene described above when Chien Fu sees Pai Cheng Tien being outnumbered, not only did he not escape to save himself the trouble, but he also yelled at the big group running

into the fight by himself. Although Chien Fu lacked experience and the necessary manpower, he did not show any signs of weakness and took on the group head-on. To add on, in another scene he challenged the opponent that had just previously beaten his former master without thinking twice. Even though he knew that there was a possibility of him being horribly injured from this encounter, he nonetheless put aside his fear and welcomed the fight. Then, Chien Fu faces the man that has killed off everyone that was part of the Snake Clan. Again, we see that Chien Fu has no sense of concern on his face and jumps into the battle with everything he has.

Lee also exemplifies bravery and toughness in *Rush Hour*. Referring to the pool scene above, when the everyday person sees that they are about to be the target of a brawl, their sympathetic response would kick in and tell them to run away as fast as possible. However, that is exactly what happened, Lee took on all of his enemies with ease while still maintaining a sense of calmness. In another scene, after seeing the top of an abandoned building explode and killing a whole FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team, Lee notices a suspicious figure near an alleyway and proceeds to chase him. The suspect could have had a weapon, or even back up with him, but Lee did not let any of those possible scenarios stop him and embarked on a dangerous mission of pursuing the culprit. During the final scene, after Carter successfully diffuses the bomb and takes it off of Soo Yung, Lee realizes that it can still be remotely detonated. Being the gallant character he is, he grabs it, puts it on himself, and begins to run toward the one with the remote because Lee knows it would not be detonated for fear of hurting himself. It is

amazing how Lee's first course of action in order to protect those he cares about is to strap a bomb to himself and chase toward the person with a remote. Lee's fast-paced reaction to dangerous circumstances and his instinctual decision to leap into action with no regard demonstrates his bravery.

Unlike the bravery that is observed through Chan's portrayal of the other two characters, "Who Am I?" presents his bravery in a more nuanced way. While "Who Am I?" displays the same type of valor that was seen in the other two roles, I will be analyzing his fearlessness when it comes to finding his identity. Towards the beginning of the movie, after being betrayed by Morgan, "Who Am I?" wakes up with a body full of injury while being dazed and confused in a hut in South African Veldt. After spending a couple of weeks recovering and learning about the culture and language of the village, "Who Am I?" was told that there was a rally race nearby, and, if he chooses to, he can leave the village to uncover his identity. Here is the exact moment where he is given an ultimatum. "Who Am I?" could either stay, foster the relationships he has built, and be content with his new life or he could abandon what he has currently and wander into the unknown while being amnesiac. Typically, those suffering from amnesia will experience symptoms of confusion and frustration, which is why it benefits them to live in a static environment. Imagine being in a foreign land with no memories and just barely recovered from unknown injuries; would the first thought that comes to your head be to leave a secure setting for unknown territories? Most would answer no. Yet, "Who Am I?" revealed no hesitation in his facial expressions when he told the chief of the village that he will be leaving soon. In this situation, his opponents were not those that wanted

to harm him physically but the unfamiliar, some might even argue the latter requires more to overcome.

Correspondingly to the valor that “Who Am I” exhibits, Mr. Han possesses the same subtle bravery in *Karate Kid*. When Mr. Han first interacts with Dre as a distant father figure by teaching him the foundation of kung fu through a piece of clothing and telling him why he should respect his mother. However, during these times of teaching, he provides the instructions with no context and expects Dre to follow them making him appear as if he is reluctant to be his instructor. The depiction of Mr. Han evolves after Dre finds him destroying the hood of his car furiously while in an intoxicated state. The audience then learns that Mr. Han was driving when his wife and son were killed in a deadly car accident and he puts the sole blame on himself. This explains why he has been distant towards Dre because he is fearful that once the two of them have formed a long-lasting relationship, Dre will be taken away from him similar to how his loved ones were. Yet, after Mr. Han explains his trauma to Dre, he gathers up the courage and with the help of his disciple, he is able to walk out of his own shadows. After this encounter, Mr. Han’s character evolves into someone who is able to open himself up and exhibit that he cares for others. This is presented when Mr. Han gives Dre praise for his efforts, something that was never done before. To add on, he gifted Dre a silk kung fu gi before the tournament as a token of his respect for the dedication that Dre has put into his training. It takes a great deal of courage to change, and Mr. Han displayed it in this film.

In the context of Ghannam's book, a *gada'* is a man that possesses "decency" which is a quality that is described as utilizing violence in a controlled manner and in an appropriate setting (2013:121). In my argument, I am extending the definition to include the use of violence for the sake of others as additional ways of expressing "decency." This stems from Sawsan El-Messiri's definition of a *gada'*, "does not accept injustice or tyranny and usually stands for the weak against the strong" (1978: 82). The characters played by Chan exhibit this trait by only utilizing the appropriate amount of violence and assist others during times of distress.

We will start with the character, Chien Fu, in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*. As mentioned previously, when Chien Fu saw Pai Cheng Tien, a stranger, being attacked, he yelled out to and jumped in to help with no hesitation. He put his own life on the line for a completely random person on the streets because he saw that, if he were to walk away, he would not be able to live with himself. To add on, during a Kung Fu demonstration, Chien Fu was used as a prop again by his masters, but this time, he has learned proper techniques from Pai Cheng Tien. When he had successfully defended himself, he stopped his advance towards his opponent and said: "Thank you." This once again illustrates the degree of control he has over himself even though he had picked up the skill not long ago, he was able to execute it perfectly. On the other hand, one might argue that Chien Fu exhibited behaviors similar to Atif when Chien Fu killed Sheng Kuan, the leader of the Eagle clan. To refute this argument, Chien Fu's action has to be taken into a larger context of the story. Sheng Kuan's mission revolves around decimating the Snake Clan and would have succeeded in killing the last remaining

member, Pai Cheng Tien if it were not for Chien Fu's interference. To add on, if Chien Fu had merely incapacitated Sheng Kuan, this would have resulted in Chien Fu and Pai Cheng Tien being on the run for the rest of their lives. Thus, Chien Fu's use of violence was justified for the sake of not only his survival but also his mentor's. This aligns well with the definition of gada' as proposed by El-Messiri in that Chien Fu stood up for the weak in a battle against the strong.

Detective Lee also exhibits the same level of command of his force in *Rush Hour*. Referring to the billiard room fight sequence above, once Lee has immobilized his attackers and sees that he was no longer in danger, he slowly backs away while saying, "Please, I do not want trouble." Lee's statement and action support the idea that he does not harm others and had to resort to violence due to the position he was put in. Lee realizes that he has eliminated the threat to his person thus he does not need to utilize any more unnecessary violence. To add, the premise for this film is based on the kidnapping of the Chinese diplomat's daughter, Sue Young. With that in mind, all the fighting that Lee is a part of during the movie is because he wants to rescue Sue Young. This further supports the argument that Chan's character, Lee, will use violence in a situation to get others out of harm's way. In addition, when Sue Young was relieved of the bomb vest, Lee knew that if Juntao were allowed to escape, other individuals would be put in a dangerous position because Juntao could still detonate the bomb with his remote detonator. This is why Lee put on the vest himself and proceeded to apprehend Juntao since he knew Juntao would not press the trigger as long as the bomb was near him. Lee is willing to put himself at risk of violence if it meant saving the people around

him. The character, Detective Lee, represents the trait of “decency” in a *gada`* to the full extent.

For “Who Am I?”, the force was only utilized as a way for him to escape dangerous situations as well as a method through which to save others. Referring back to the action scene with the South African police officers, “Who Am I?” used the perfect amount of force to incapacitate the officers and flee from danger. The audience can deduct that the police officers did not sustain long-lasting damages to their bodies because they saw them get back to their feet and pursue “Who Am I?” to the roof. Then, in a car chase scene, he and his partners were able to evade the hitmen’s attempt to push them off the top of a parking garage. However, this resulted in their attackers’ car crashing into the ledge which caused half of the car to tip over the edge. Once “Who Am I?” saw that their car was about to fall, he went to the car and held down one side so that the passengers could get out right before the vehicle fell down. This goes to show that “Who Am I?” could not cause irreparable harm to others even when they are the ones hired to end his life. We can see the similar use of force to protect others, but to a smaller degree in *Karate Kid*.

Mr. Han only displays obvious use of violence once in *Karate Kid* which was utilized to protect Dre. In the scene where Dre is groaning and holding onto his chest on the ground, as Cheng is about to deliver the final punch, Mr. Han catches his hands right before it makes contact with Dre’s face, bends his wrist and tells Cheng to “go home.” It is clear that Mr. Han did not want to apply more force than needed to resolve the situation, but Cheng did not listen and attempted to kick Mr. Han as he was

evaluating Dre's condition. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Han grabs his left leg, raises it above Cheng's head causing mild discomfort and pushes him back. Once Cheng's compatriots realized that they needed to join the fight, the conflict soon ensued. During this encounter, Mr. Han did not once strike any of his opponents, granted the fact that they were kids, his movements were well calculated to immobilize them. One of Cheng's ally's hands was caught by Mr. Han and, as he was just about to strike, he controlled himself and simply gave him a small shove. During the final sequence of movements, Mr. Han used one of the gang member's jackets as a rope to tie the other participants' limbs together, gave them a push, and told them to go home. This whole ordeal demonstrates that not only Mr. Han can apply the exact volume of force to diffuse the situation while achieving his objective, but also he is more than willing to put himself in harm's way for a stranger similar to the encounter described in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*. Also, after the fight as Mr. Han is applying cupping to help Dre recover from his injuries, he says, "it is best to stay out of their way," which further backs the idea that the only reason he got involved was to assist Dre. In addition, during the training montages, Mr. Han has, on multiple occasions, used force as a method to teach Dre Kung Fu. While some may say that his methods were a bit too aggressive, I assert that his approach is harsh because if not, Dre would not be able to defend himself otherwise. This goes to show that Mr. Han's violence was used appropriately in this context.

This chapter has shown how Chan utilizes violence in a way that is similar to the gada' in his approach to display masculinity in his films. Through protecting those that

cannot defend themselves in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Karate Kid* to applying calculated violence in *Who Am I?* And *Rush Hour* Chan has shown us how he portrays masculinity.

#### Chapter 4: Masculinity, Emotions, and Vulnerability

In the movies discussed above, there is no mention of potential romantic interest to Jackie Chan's characters. This is a novel phenomenon in action films because in most cases, the male lead has a female counterpart accompanying him during his endeavors. For instance, in the famous James Bond franchise, Bond is seen completing the objectives and "goes off into the sunset" with a female companion at the end of every single movie. Compared to Chan, if there is a relationship that develops during the film, it is usually with another male as seen in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*, *Rush Hour*, and *Karate Kid*. Some would argue that these portrayals feed into the archetype of the asexual Asian male in movies. This would be supported by Pang and Wong to describe the character usually played by Chan, which, "... [R]eflects his incorporation into this established system of racial representation that has a long history of deforming the racial and sexual identities of both Asian women and men" (2005: 209). However, I argue that Chan's own interpretation of masculinity is formulated through disregarding the roles of romantic female interest and emphasizing a sense of vulnerability in his films. As Chan performs in the cinema, he stays consistent by not wavering from his ideals in both the Hong Kong movie industry and Hollywood.

Drawing from the information gathered from Mosher et al. (2006) and Giddens (1992), masculine identification can also be achieved by displaying vulnerability, self-confidence, and male-to-male friendship. The concept of vulnerability I will be applying in my analysis ranges from giving up control to the exhibition of emotional vulnerability to even displays of physical weakness. The aspect of giving up control not

only humanizes the characters Chan portrays but also assists him in redefining what it means to be masculine in movies.

A strong instance of this phenomenon can be observed in a chalk incident between Chien Fu (Jackie Chan) and his master. However, this exchange between the two individuals occurred after Chien Fu had received training from Pai Chan, which shifted the power dynamic in an interesting way. Compared to the previous involvement with chalk, Chien Fu could not retaliate against the abusive treatments from his superior even if he had wanted to. On the other hand, the audience members have seen the amount and quality of the rigorous training that Pai Chan had put Chien Fu through, which has instilled confidence from the spectator in his ability. During this scene, his master is seen deliberately taking wide steps in an attempt to blame Chien Fu for not completing his assigned chores. Yet, wherever he stepped, Fu would slide a wet towel under his feet to prevent the chalk from coming in contact with the floor, thus legitimizing him in reprimanding Fu. Surprisingly, no matter where he shifted the placement of his feet, Chien Fu reacted with remarkable reflex and awareness by appearing to be consistently one step ahead of his master. During this whole interaction, he remained cordial with the master, kindly referring to him throughout the process. Although Chien Fu is being humiliated he exhibits discipline by not retaliating even though he has the means to as we see in a later conflict.

Later, a rival Kung Fu temple sent a student to 踢館 (kick the hall). This is the act of asserting dominance in the culture of Kung Fu by challenging the most skilled individual from another faction in their home territory. In this case, Chien Fu's master is

seen easily bested by the newly arrived adversary and resulting in him being left in an unconscious state. Then, in another example, Chien Fu is seen intervening in a conflict that entangled the student mentioned previously and another individual. Chien Fu saw that the student attempted to deliver the finishing blow to his opponent and intervened by throwing one of his shoes at him, thereby disorienting him. This prompted him to engage in a battle with the disciple from another temple and initially, the brawl was evenly matched. However, as it progressed, Chien Fu ended up beating his adversary with ease.

These three separate scenes serve as a single piece of evidence that demonstrates how although Chan's character had the opportunity to not command, he still chose to, but only through his own accord. The second occurrence goes to show how the skill set of Chien Fu's master paled in comparison to the student. The third scene establishes that Chien Fu is able to overpower his rival comfortably. This goes to show that Chan's character was more than capable of not being subjected to humiliation by his master, yet he still does due to his own choosing.

### **Cultivating Vulnerability**

In *Rush Hour* (1998) Chan's character, Lee, shows how vulnerability is cultivated over time and indicates a sense of intimacy that is generated over time. When Lee first arrives in Los Angeles, he is picked up by Carter and driven to a billiard room in order to obtain information about the kidnapped girl from an informant. Before Carter

interrogates the informant, he relays to Lee, "Alright look, Lee, go outside real quick. It's gonna get a little dangerous in here," and "Remember what I told you? Back me up, go outside, I am going to take care of everything." He responds with, "You sure?" Which prompted Carter to respond with "Now go on, now, go on," while gesturing Lee towards the door. This scene speaks volumes in that Lee is a high ranking police official in Hong Kong, yet is willing to give up the reins to a stranger that he had just met on the same day. In order for Carter to remove Lee from the room, it would have had to be up to Lee's own volition since the audience experiences Lee's physical abilities in the upcoming scene. Thus, by allowing himself to be dictated by Carter similar to the leathermen from Mosher et al. (2005), Lee voluntarily gives up control in this situation and proves his masculinity.

To add, in a later scene, Lee sneaks into the Chinese Consulate in order to meet with the diplomat and skillfully takes down two FBI agents all the while with one hand being handcuffed to a steering wheel. Next, he takes and points the agent's gun towards them and commands them to stay still. At this point, Lee is in the position with the most amount of power since he can dictate the life or death of the two individuals. However, after verifying the identity of the Chinese diplomat, he sops in his tracks, apologizes for being late, and returns the pistol back to its owner. The spectator had just witnessed a man taking down two FBI trained personnel being taken down with ease, gain the upper hand in a dangerous situation, and cede his power all within the span of 25 seconds. Unlike the previous scenario, Lee's dominance was not established before relinquishing power. This instance demonstrated how Lee is able to effortlessly

dominate others, yet he allows himself to be under the will of certain individuals. Not only does Lee display physical vulnerability, but also he is seen showing the audience his emotional side.

Similar to how the participants perceived giving up control as a way of achieving masculinity in Mosher et al. (2005), Lee implicitly expressed that emotional vulnerability can also be perceived in the same manner. As shown by Lee's statement as he and Carter are interrogating a bomb maker in jail, "I don't care about him (points at Carter) and I don't care about you, I only care about the little girl." As an inspector detective, Lee has been trained in interrogation techniques and has prior experience in interacting with suspects thus he comprehends the role of calmness in an interrogator. However, he exhibited his emotional vulnerability by essentially begging the individual for information regarding the girl. This brings a novel method of conversing with suspects compared to how the antagonist in *Casino Royale* (2006) utilized extreme force and intimidation in order to elicit information. By him abandoning control during the process of interrogation and exposing himself emotionally, he creates a new way of establishing masculinity in action movies.

An instance of relinquishing control can also be observed in *The Karate Kid* (2010). For example, referring to the car scene where Mr. Han explains to Dre the tradition of him rebuilding the car that his wife and son passed away in and destroying it every year as a way of obtaining closure is a way to convey sensitivity. He says with a certain tone of sadness in his voice, "Every year I fix the car, still fix nothing." The scene both humanizes and transforms how he is perceived by the audience to a certain extent.

Before this interaction between the two characters, Mr. Han was portrayed as a cold individual who trained Dre not because of his own volitions but due to his own obligation of having been involved. When Dre first asked Mr. Han to assist in understanding the art of Kung Fu, Mr. Han vehemently rejected Dre. Even during the process of training, Mr. Han carried himself similar to that of drill sergeant where he gave commands with no explanations and expected Dre to accomplish them. During the exchange, Mr. Han pulls out a picture of his wife and son from the glove compartment to show Dre, it reveals another side of him that the spectator has not seen. Upon seeing the picture, tears started to overflow from his eyes and he began to cry uncontrollably while leaning into and gripping the sides of his steering wheel. This provides an explanation for the way Mr. Han behaved earlier in the film which enables the audience to both sympathize and empathize with him. This may be the most vulnerable scene that Jackie Chan has ever participated in due to the raw emotion and total relaxation of control. By forgoing the teacher-disciple relationship that was previously established during the film and allowing himself to connect with Dre emotionally, Mr. Han exhibits his own definition of what it means to be a man in the film.

Both psychological and anthropological studies argue that male participants associated the concept of masculinity with emotional restrictiveness (Parent and Moradi 2009; Levant et al. 2013; Ghannam 2013). This notion is supported by filmmaker, Jennifer Siebel Newsom, as she states in an interview,

If you are socialized at a very early age to repress emotions and empathy and are told your value lies in making money, in athletic prowess, power, dominance, control, and aggression — regardless of the cost to society — you get a lot of adult men who are repressed, disconnected, and emotionally illiterate.

In her film, *The Mask You Live In* (2015), one of the men expresses the thought, “I was taught that men are tough and strong, but I spent a lot of nights crying.” That type of mentality towards emotional awareness is prevalent. Miles argues men starting from a young age are trained to be emotionally distant by not being allowed to express their inner thoughts or by turning a blind eye to their own feelings. He adds, they are “witness to the stereotypes of masculine heroes, who are self-sufficient, strong, and capable” (2017: 2). This can be seen in movies such as *The Terminator* (1984) and *The Matrix* (1999). In the former, the main character is a cybernetic android that does not display any emotion throughout the film as it attempts to kill its target. As for *The Matrix*, the lack of emotion is a common trait among the individuals in the movie, combined with the frequent adoption of sunglasses as a costume choice added to the perception of emotional restrictiveness. Chan’s portrayal of his characters twists the common narrative of men being suppressive of their emotions thereby substantiating his interpretation of masculinity in cinema.

### **Crying**

Terminator: Why do you cry?

John Connor: You mean people?

Terminator: Yes.

John Connor: I don't know. We just cry. You know. When it hurts.

Terminator: Pain causes it?

John Connor: Uh-uh, no, it's different ... It's when there's nothing wrong with you, but you hurt anyways. You get it?

Terminator: No.

— Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)

Crying helps us to communicate what we're feeling in a way that language cannot (Pierre 2018). In addition, "... boys are socialized against any display of strong emotion considered inappropriate while crying is specifically targeted as being "feminine" behaviour" (Vitelli 2013: 1). This phenomenon is further supported in Hollywood where the top 10 movies that portrayed men crying are in genres that target women (Singer 2015; Statistica 2018). Whereas in action films whose main audience and lead roles consist of men (Statistica 2018; Women and Hollywood 2018), there are little to no signs of tears. However, Chan shows that tears can be a way to demonstrate masculinity rather than distance one from this movie. However, age here is an important element. As a young man, we do not see him cry while things change over time and we start seeing him become more vulnerable and open to expressing his emotions in visible ways.

Referring to the aforementioned car scene in *Karate Kid*, the shed tears symbolized a pivotal point in transition and growth for Mr. Han. Before the scene, Mr. Han did not converse in depth with Dre, yet in the car, he bared his soul out by describing his past which indirectly spoke to the explanations behind his actions and his personality. This act allowed Dre as well as the audience to gain a deeper understanding of who this character is as well as his origins. In addition, by initiating the process of crying first, Chan's character set a precedent for the accepted behavior in that setting, which is shortly followed by Dre. While at first modeling emotional control and distance and then showing Dre and the audience that the act of crying is a normalized act, Mr. Han presented his own version of being a man on the big screen.

This can also be seen in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*. As Chien Fu was protecting himself in an act of self defense, he had accidentally injured the son of a prominent sponsor of the school. This resulted in his masters beating him in a fit of anger. Their actions led Chien Fu to feeling both misunderstood and betrayed by his teachers, feelings that he expressed by crying and fleeing away from the setting. This scene uncovered a new method of reacting to defeat in action films rather than continue to “fight through pain,” a concept that can be observed in *Never Back Down* (2008). During the final fight scene, Jake, protagonist, continues to engage in combat with Ryan even after suffering from several broken ribs. Engagements similar to the one described perpetuates the idea that one has to “man up” when they are being put in a difficult position and creates a space where that is the only viable option. Contrarily, Chien Fu is noticeably upset by the misunderstanding and instead of retaliating physically, he chose to express himself emotionally through crying and chose to detach himself from the situation. His actions conveyed to the audience that, as a man, there are more than one way to react when coming across defeat.

In *Who Am I*, the protagonist had no difficulties conveying his emotions and feelings at all times. As previously stated, the movie revolves around a special operations agent suffering from amnesia. However, when compared to Ray Garrison, a soldier who has also lost his memories and proceeds on a journey to kill those who have wronged him in an emotionless manner, “Who Am I?” expresses a sense of confusion (understandably so) by constantly “wearing his heart on his sleeves.” The spectator knew the inner thoughts of “Who Am I?” at all times because Chan did not

want to portray a cold individual. This decision refers back to the fact that Chan did not want to be a part of the traditional “manly man” club in films such as roles played by Clint Eastwood. This is supported by Zaller when describing Eastwood’s performance in *For a Fistful of Dollars* or *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, “... as if all emotion— even greed— is only wasted motion” (2009: 2). On the other hand, when “Who Am I?” was arrested by the South African Police, he did not hesitate in conveying his inner thoughts by stating that he has no recollection of who he is, which is the truth. Midway through the conversation, the interrogator is seemingly irritated and begins to resort to more physical methods. After assaulting “Who Am I?,” he says to him, “What a tough guy huh ... We got special ways to make tough guys like you crack.” This quote indirectly implies that the established norm of interrogation is for the suspect to lie thus “Who Am I?”’s openness is unprecedented. In another scene, “Who Am I?” discovers the ulterior motives of his partner, and can be seen visibly hurt by her betrayal, “Who are you? What do you want?!” On the other hand, Ocean Master responds to Nudis’ in an unfazed manner in *Aquaman* (2018) when he discovers his deception, “You think I do not know of your treachery that you have made loyal to my mother’s bastard son.” These two scenes when juxtaposed show how “Who Am I?” is not an individual who is afraid of displaying emotions when confronted with betrayal. The protagonist in *Who Am I?* is not an individual who shows emotional restrictiveness thus changing the common interpretations of masculinity in film. The different films analyzed here show the multifaceted aspects of masculinity. My discussion shows how a man is expected to control his emotions and regulate their display in public life. however, knowing when

and under which conditions to share one's vulnerabilities could boost a man's standing and strengthen his masculine identification.

## Conclusion

I can still recall the times at which I watched Jackie Chan on the small television screen in my home in China and then proceed to imitate him and fail horribly. He was probably one of the actors that I watched the most growing up and the only one that had what it means to be a man. Chan showed me that you do not require strength to overpower your opponents, it just requires a bit of brain power. Also, to be a man does not mean to hide your emotion; he had a comedic way of conveying to the audience that he was in pain such as shaking his hands vigorously after punching a wall. He showed me that masculinity is not something that only “manly men” possess.

Through deep self contemplation My idea of being a man has definitely been altered through this project. It has shown me the difficulties that most men face in attempting to accept their emotional side fearing that they might be judged by others. I was not aware of how much of my own rationale in being a man originated from Chan’s portrayal of his movies. Such as being able to allow others to see the vulnerable side of you as well as relinquishing your authority through your own disposition. To me, in order to be a man, he would have to be able to go against the grain to do what he believes in. This is shown through how Chan did not want to entertain nor was he comfortable with the idea of the “manly man” archetype and carved out his own path in Hollywood. I assert that one of the main reasons behind his success is the fact that he accepted his own identity and did not attempt nor did he want to assimilate into the dominant idea of

what a man is. In him doing so, it has brought him great prosperity in terms of the financial aspects as well as fame.

Through my research I have shown how Chan's lack of consne to hegemonic ideas and his dismissal of certain forms of the traditional sense of Western Hollywood masculinity and embracing the trope of the "... asexual Asian characters, ranging from Charlie Chan to the more recent nerdy Asian engineers" (Pang & Wong 2005: 209), he provides a new conception of masculinity through his movies.

To be honest, this was not the direction that I intended to go with my thesis. When I first selected the topic, I wanted to see how differently Chan was portrayed in Hollywood compared to Hong Kong Cinema. However, the more I learned about Chan, the more I realized the amount of agency he controlled in how he wanted to be portrayed. Compared to how some actors have to adhere to the director and production companies' decisions, Chan, on the other hand, is able to govern how he is symbolized in the films. However, it is unfortunate that he is seen as simply assimilating into the paradigm of feminized Asian men in Hollywood (Pang & Wong 2005).

I begin this thesis with a discussion about the literature regarding the meaning and formation of masculinity, Jackie Chan, portrayal of Asian men in media, and masculinity in media. Through my writing, I have explored the intricacies and depth of Chan's characters and what they represent from a sociological as well as anthropological standpoint. I hope my research has shown how by assimilating into the archetype, he has shown the audience a novel manner of being a man.

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