

# Language, Stigma, and Identity Transformation in *Joker* (2019): A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis

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**Abstract**—This study examines how cinematic dialogue discursively constructs social alienation and identity transformation in *Joker* (2019). While previous analyses have emphasized the film’s psychological or cinematic dimensions, this paper foregrounds the linguistic mechanisms through which Arthur Fleck’s marginalization is enacted. Adopting a qualitative discourse-stylistic design, five high-stakes authority encounters between Arthur and institutional figures (his therapist, manager, Thomas Wayne, and Murray Franklin) were transcribed and analyzed through speech act theory, politeness/impoliteness frameworks, and stylistic markers such as rhetorical questioning and evaluative lexis. The findings reveal that Arthur is consistently subjected to delegitimizing speech acts, face-threatening evaluations, and ridicule, which reproduce stigma and institutional power asymmetries. Over time, his discourse shifts from tentative self-reflective questioning to accusatory rhetorical reframing and confrontational assertions, dramatizing his discursive reconstitution as the *Joker*. These results extend impoliteness theory by showing how hostile humor in mediated interactions operates as discursive violence, while contributing to film stylistics by demonstrating the central role of dialogue in representing mental health stigma and social exclusion.

**Index Terms**—discourse stylistics, pragmatics, impoliteness, *Joker* (2019), cinematic dialogue

## I. INTRODUCTION

Film dialogue provides a powerful site for examining how language constructs identity, power, and psychological states. Within stylistics and discourse studies, research has demonstrated that speech acts, pragmatic strategies, and rhetorical forms shape not only character development but also audience perceptions of ideology and social relations (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004; Bednarek, 2010). The cinematic exchange cannot ever be a mere transparent reflection of “real talk.” It is a discourse purposely constructed to encode cultural attitudes toward authority, inclusion, and mental health. Psychological thrillers prove themselves to be a very useful domain for conducting a discourse-stylistic study, considering that these genres give prominence to linguistic signs of alienation, instability, and conflict that dramatize both individual identity and social anxieties.

Todd Phillips's 2019 *Joker* presents a very apt example. This is a film about Arthur Fleck, a socially rejected man with mental illness who becomes the *Joker*. The portrayal of Arthur Fleck by this film has instigated a broad debate in fields of psychology, film, and media studies. Empirical literature shows that merely viewing the *Joker* film can induce prejudice in the audience toward people with mental illness (Scarf et al., 2020), with even follow-up studies showing how difficult it is to curtail such stigma effects (Poulgrain et al., 2022). Others propose that the *Joker* figure now stands as a discursive stereotype of madness in international media and popular culture alike (Preston, 2023; Grapă, 2022). At the same time, critics highlight cinema’s potential role in moderating stigma, though many portrayals continue to reinforce exclusionary stereotypes (Harper, 2005; El Halabi, et al., 2024). Despite these debates, little attention has been paid to the *linguistic mechanisms* through which Arthur’s alienation and transformation are enacted.

This study addresses that gap by investigating how dialogue in *Joker* constructs social exclusion and identity transformation. It focuses on five high-stakes interactions between Arthur and authority figures, his therapist, his manager, Thomas Wayne, and Murray Franklin, and analyzes how speech acts, politeness and impoliteness strategies, and rhetorical questioning discursively produce stigma and alienation.

The research addresses three questions:

1. How are institutional power asymmetries and social exclusion linguistically constructed in Arthur Fleck’s interactions with authority figures?
2. What pragmatic and stylistic patterns characterize the discursive shift from vulnerability to nihilism?
3. How do rhetorical questions and impoliteness strategies reinforce themes of stigma, alienation, and identity collapse?

By situating *Joker* within the intersection of stylistics, pragmatics, and stigma studies, this paper contributes to discourse-stylistics and film linguistics while also engaging broader cultural debates. It argues that cinematic dialogue should be analyzed as cultural discourse, one that not only narrativizes identity but also shapes societal understandings of mental illness and exclusion.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Film Discourse and Stylistics*

Stylistics investigates how linguistic form encodes meaning, character, and ideology in artistic texts. Classic accounts emphasize how lexis, grammar, transitivity, and point of view jointly construct narrative effects and align viewers with characters (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004). In contemporary work, film dialogue is treated not as transparent “real talk” but as crafted discourse indexing identity, power, and psychology (Bednarek, 2010). Studies in narrative linguistics further demonstrate that address terms, modality, and turn-management shape perceptions of credibility and authority (Toolan, 2001). This scholarship motivates a stylistic reading of *Joker* that foregrounds patterned linguistic choices in dialogue rather than focusing solely on plot or cinematography.

### B. *Pragmatics: Speech Acts, Facework, and Impoliteness*

Pragmatics provides tools for analyzing how characters do things with words. Austin’s and Searle’s models categorize utterances as assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations, often realized indirectly through implicature (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975). Goffman’s (1967) concept of face and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory explain how speakers negotiate approval and autonomy, while impoliteness studies expand this to adversarial contexts (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011). Ridicule, disbelief, and hostile humor have been identified as key strategies for indexing power asymmetry (Locher & Watts, 2005). In *Joker*, therapeutic sessions, workplace talk, and the climactic interview sequence provide fertile sites for tracing such strategies, as they expose how linguistic forms enact exclusion and marginality.

### C. *Conversation, Turn-Taking, and Interactional Inequality*

Conversation analysis shows that turn-taking, interruptions, and repair are never neutral but distribute rights and obligations (Sacks et al., 1974). In gatekept encounters, authority figures control topics, allocate turns, and reframe disclosures as ignorable or pathological, thereby naturalizing asymmetry. Such practices align with research on institutional talk, where authority is reinforced through linguistic control (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Thornborrow, 2002). Applying these insights to *Joker* allows for a fine-grained account of how managers, therapists, and media hosts repeatedly deny Arthur’s claims linguistic legitimacy.

### D. *Rhetorical Questions, Humor, and Stance*

Rhetorical questions function as indirect speech acts that assert propositions, challenge interlocutors, or dramatize stance while restricting addressee options (Searle, 1975; Ilie, 1994). In adversarial contexts, they often serve as aggression masked as inquiry. Similarly, humor studies show that ridicule, sarcasm, and hostile joking can perform exclusion, licensing face-attacks while preserving deniability (Attardo, 1994; Culpeper, 2011). Media pragmatics research highlights how ridicule and public mockery in televised discourse operate as impoliteness strategies (Dyrel, 2015). In *Joker*, Murray Franklin’s mocking clip exemplifies this pattern, framing Arthur as laughable while discursively reinforcing stigma.

### E. *Language, Stigma, and the Discourse of Alienation*

Stigma is not only a psychological condition but a discursive process enacted through categorization, derogatory descriptors, and institutional talk (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001). In film discourse, these practices often position characters labeled as “crazy” or “unstable” as “other,” constraining audience empathy (Harper, 2005). Recent large-scale evidence confirms this trend: the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2022) found that across 200 popular films, portrayals of mental health conditions overwhelmingly relied on stereotypes of danger, instability, or incompetence, reinforcing exclusionary narratives.

These patterns are amplified in *Joker* (2019). Empirical studies show that viewing the film correlates with heightened prejudice toward people with mental illness (Scarf et al., 2020), while efforts to mitigate such effects through framing interventions remain limited (Poulgrain et al., 2022). Preston (2023) argues that the *Joker* has become a transmedia stereotype of madness, while Grapă (2022) documents its mobilization as a discursive stereotype in global media reporting. El Halabi et al. (2024) underscores that cinema has the potential to moderate stigma but cautions that many portrayals, including *Joker*, risk perpetuating exclusion. Together, this research highlights the need to examine not only cinematic narratives but also the linguistic mechanisms by which stigma and alienation are enacted in dialogue.

### F. *Prior Work on Cinematic Dialogue*

While film studies often emphasize visual style and performance, a growing body of stylistics demonstrates that patterned linguistic choices, address terms, speech acts, turn-taking, and rhetorical questions, drive conflict, characterization, and ideology (Simpson, 2004; Bednarek, 2010; Burke, 2023). Yet despite mounting evidence that cinematic portrayals of mental illness carry measurable cultural consequences (Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 2022; Scarf et al., 2020), scholarship directly linking speech act patterns, (im)politeness strategies, and interactional asymmetry to stigma construction in *Joker* remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study applies a discourse-

stylistic approach to Arthur Fleck's authority-figure encounters, showing how delegitimizing speech acts, face threats, and ridicule linguistically structure his trajectory from vulnerability to nihilism.

### *G. Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Identity and Discourse*

Psychoanalytic theory offers an additional lens for understanding how cinematic dialogue encodes alienation and identity transformation. Freud's (1957, 1961) models of the unconscious and the ego–id–superego dynamic underscore how repression, trauma, and social invalidation can destabilize identity. In the context of *Joker*, Arthur's oscillation between hesitant self-reflection and violent assertion can be interpreted as the surfacing of repressed aggression once ego defenses are eroded by repeated discursive delegitimization. Mitchell and Black (2016) highlight how stigma and exclusion can destabilize psychic structures, leading to reconstitution of selfhood through oppositional roles. Incorporating psychoanalytic insights therefore complements discourse-stylistic and pragmatic analyses by linking linguistic enactments of alienation to deeper psychological processes of disintegration and reconstitution.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Research Design*

This study adopts a qualitative discourse-stylistic design to examine how cinematic dialogue constructs alienation and psychological transformation in *Joker* (2019). Discourse stylistics is particularly suitable for film texts because it foregrounds how linguistic form, pragmatic strategies, and rhetorical choices encode meaning and identity in fictional interaction. The analysis is interpretivist in orientation, treating dialogue not merely as narrative progression but as discourse that indexes authority, exclusion, and stigma.

### *B. Data Selection*

Five high-stakes encounters between Arthur Fleck and authority figures were purposively sampled: two therapy sessions, the firing scene with his manager, the confrontation with Thomas Wayne, and two mediated interactions with Murray Franklin (the recycled clip and the live interview). These scenes were selected because they foreground institutional asymmetry and discursive delegitimization, providing fertile ground for analyzing how stigma and exclusion are linguistically enacted.

### *C. Transcription and Data Preparation*

Dialogues were transcribed verbatim from the official screenplay and repeated viewings, with attention to rhetorical form, lexical repetition, and interactional cues. Minimal transcription conventions adapted from Sacks et al. (1974) were employed to capture pauses, overlaps, and emphases while ensuring readability. Time stamps (e.g., [00:12:15–00:12:47]) were included for transparency. Transcripts were cross-checked against both script and audio to ensure accuracy.

### *D. Analytical Framework*

The analysis combined pragmatic and stylistic approaches. Utterances were coded for speech act type following Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1975). Politeness and impoliteness strategies were identified drawing on Brown and Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (2011). Stylistic features such as rhetorical questioning, evaluative lexis, and pronoun shifts were examined with reference to Simpson (2004) and Leech and Short (2007).

### *E. Procedure and Validation*

The analysis followed three stages: (1) extraction and transcription of the five target dialogues; (2) coding of utterances for pragmatic and stylistic features; and (3) interpretation of recurring patterns in relation to stigma and exclusion. A coding table was developed to ensure consistency. Coding decisions were reviewed by a second researcher to enhance intersubjective validity, and reflexive memoing was used to track analytic choices.

To ensure trustworthiness, credibility was supported through triangulation across frameworks; dependability by maintaining an audit trail of coding notes; confirmability by peer review of coding; and transferability through detailed contextual description of each scene.

### *F. Ethical Considerations*

As the data consisted of a commercially available film, no human participants were involved and formal ethical approval was not required. Ethical conventions were nevertheless observed by representing dialogue faithfully and avoiding distortion of meaning.

### *G. Limitations*

The study focuses on five purposively selected scenes, which may limit generalizability but allows for in-depth, theory-driven analysis of high-stakes interactions. Multimodal features such as gesture, intonation, and visual framing were not systematically analyzed, leaving scope for future research using multimodal or corpus-assisted approaches.

## IV. RESULTS

*A. Therapeutic Dismissal and Bureaucratic Talk*

Arthur's encounters with his state-appointed therapist exemplify how institutional discourse can delegitimize patient voices.

Extract 1 [00:06:41–00:06:57]

Arthur: "Is it just me, or is it getting crazier out there?"

Therapist: "Same questions every week, Arthur. Do you have negative thoughts?"

The first words uttered by Arthur serve pragmatically as a passive assertion of social decline; however, the therapist reframes it as a bureaucratic checkbox. The repetition of "same questions every week" illustrates routinization instead of caring and constitutes an act of non-acknowledgment.

Extract 2 [00:45:30–00:45:42]

Therapist: "They don't give a shit about people like you, Arthur. They don't give a shit about people like me either."

An unmitigated declaration such as this will obliterate any therapeutic alliance and foreground systemic abandonment in a manner that affords attention to the latter. Without support, Arthur has been given that much in return—the confirmation of institutional neglect. Such talk amounts to alienation discourse, whereby bureaucratic language renders individual distress into administrative irrelevance.

*B. Managerial Discourse and Employment Exclusion*

Hoyt, Arthur's manager, embodies institutional indifference through disbelief and economic threat.

Extract 3 [00:25:14–00:25:29]

Arthur: "A bunch of kids stole my sign. They beat me up."

Hoyt: "Why would anyone do that? You better bring the sign back, or it comes out of your paycheck."

A rhetorical question posed by Hoyt erodes Arthur's credibility and situates him as an unreliable source. What follows is the injunction that frames Arthur's victimhood in a different light; that is, as a financial liability. This exemplifies how workplace discourse imbues exclusion, as employee suffering becomes secondary to the money-making concerns of the institution.

*C. Identity Disconfirmation in Confrontation With Thomas Wayne*

Arthur's attempt to establish paternal recognition is denied and stigmatized.

Extract 4 [01:20:11–01:20:33]

Arthur: "My mother always told me... Thomas Wayne is my father."

Thomas Wayne: "You're adopted. Your mother is delusional. Stay away from my family."

Wayne's response mixes denial of kinship with stigmatizing language. The label "delusional" associates Arthur with madness; the command "stay away" enforces exclusion. This interplay exemplifies identity disconfirmation; wherein socially disallowed discursive positioning takes place.

*D. Mockery, Ridicule, and Public Humiliation (Murray Franklin Clip)*

Before Arthur's live interview, Murray Franklin ridicules him on-air.

Extract 5 [00:53:10–00:53:25]

Murray: "Check out this joker! You see this guy? Hilarious, right?"

The vocative "joker" is used in an insulting manner to turn Arthur into a spectacle. Represented as entertainment, such ridicule owes its existence to discursive violence masquerading as humor; it stigmatizes the victim and urges the audience to participate.

*E. Face Attacks and Rhetorical Reframing (Murray Franklin Interview)*

The climactic interview sequence represents the culmination of Arthur's alienation and discursive transformation.

Extract 6 [01:44:02–01:44:24]

Murray: "Arthur, you've got to admit, you need some help. You've got a lot of problems."

Arthur: "You invited me on your show just to make fun of me. You don't care what I feel."

Murray's utterance pathologizes Arthur, reducing him to "problems." Arthur's counter-assertion spells out the framing of Murray's behavior as mockery, thus underlining a more explicit shift from internalized self-doubt into discursive resistance.

Extract 7 [01:47:11–01:47:21]

Arthur: "What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash?"

Grammatically a question, yet it fulfills the function of an accusation. Once Arthur's alienation is set as systemic betrayal, a rhetorical question becomes an indictment before the public.

Extract 8 [01:47:22–01:47:28]

Arthur: "You get what you f\*\*\*ing deserve."

Here, language collapses into action. The repeated usage of “you” foregrounds adversarial identity construction, castigation being thrown squarely upon an authoritative figure.

Across all five encounters, Arthur is the subject of a recurring process of delegitimization through bureaucratic dismissal, managerial disbelief, paternal denial, and public ridicule. Such events expose pragmatic-systematic patterns that consist of:

- speech acts denying Arthur's credibility,
- politeness infraction against face needs of Arthur, and
- impoliteness acts to ridicule and exclude.

Arthur's responses evolve over time from tentative self-reflection to accusatory rhetorical reframing and confrontational assertions, charting his discursive transformation into the *Joker* persona and demonstrating the linguistic enactment and resistance of stigma and exclusion.

Synthesis of these findings is given in Table 1, which categorizes the various authority-figure encounters by dominant speech act patterns, impoliteness strategies, stigma functions, and identity outcomes. In tandem, Figure 1 illustrates the discursive trajectory of Arthur, wherein Arthur is linguistically constructed through a continuum-from tentative self-reflection to in-your-face antagonistic declarations. Together, these demonstrate the *Joker's* persona being constructed Arthur again and again through acts of delegitimization.

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF KEY DIALOGUES, PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES, AND STIGMA OUTCOMES IN *JOKER* (2019)

| Scene / Extract                          | Speech Act(s) (Austin/Searle)  | Politeness / Impoliteness Strategy   | Stigma Function   | Identity Outcome   |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Therapist (Extracts 1–2)                 | Indirect assertion (Arthur); checklist directive (Therapist); bald-on-record attack                    | Failure of positive politeness; routinization; blunt declarative                                     | Institutional neglect; denial of lived experience         | Arthur positioned as voiceless patient, abandoned by system                          |
| Manager Hoyt (Extract 3)                 | Complaint (Arthur); rhetorical question + directive (Hoyt)   | Skepticism; dismissal; economic threat   | Workplace exclusion; credibility undermined               | Arthur framed as untrustworthy employee  |
| Thomas Wayne (Extract 4)                 | Declarative claim (Arthur); denial + exclusion directive (Wayne)                                       | Unmitigated imposition; stigmatizing label (“delusional”)  | Identity disconfirmation; pathologization                 | Arthur denied paternal legitimacy; aligned with “madness”                            |
| Murray Franklin clip (Extract 5)         | Mock directive (“Check out this joker”)  | Ridicule framed as humor; scorn  | Public shaming; spectacle of madness                      | Arthur labeled “ <i>Joker</i> ”; identity redefined by ridicule                      |
| Murray Franklin interview (Extracts 6–8) | Evaluative assertion (Murray); counter-assertive (Arthur); accusatory rhetorical question; declaration | Face-threatening evaluation; metacommentary on mockery; accusatory stance; threat merged with action | Pathologization; systemic indictment; adversarial framing | Arthur's discursive shift from vulnerable loner confrontational <i>Joker</i> persona |

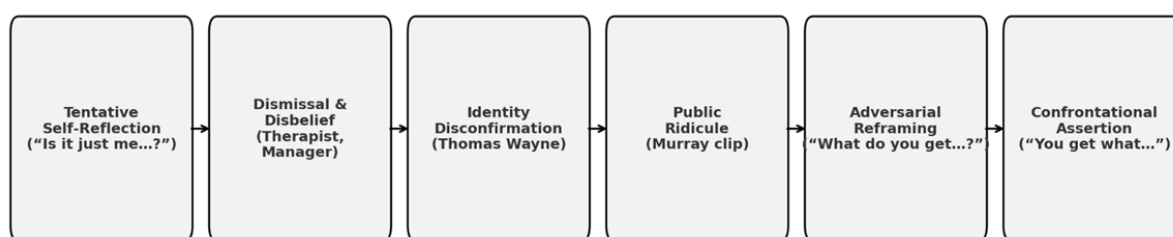


Figure 1. Arthur Fleck's Discursive Trajectory in *Joker* (2019)

## V. DISCUSSION

According to the results obtained, Arthur Fleck's metamorphosis into the *Joker* is realized through repeated patterns of discursive exclusion, disdain, and denial in interaction with authority figures. These results extend research within the pragmatics, stylistics, and stigma studies by indicating alignments of cinematic dialogue as being located in discursive violence.

### A. Authority and Institutional Discourse

The analysis of Arthur's therapy sessions and workplace encounter illustrates how institutional discourse enacts exclusion. Previous studies on bureaucratic talk emphasize that routinization and formulaic questioning undermine participants' lived experiences (Drew & Heritage, 1992). In line with this, Arthur's therapist relies on repetitive, checklist-style questioning that fails to acknowledge his disclosures, enacting what Brown and Levinson (1987) would term a failure of positive politeness. Similarly, Hoyt's managerial discourse reframes Arthur's suffering as financial liability, echoing Thornborrow's (2002) insights on how institutional talk foregrounds efficiency over empathy. These findings suggest that *Joker* linguistically dramatizes how institutions naturalize exclusion, reflecting broader societal discourses of neglect.

### B. *Impoliteness, Ridicule, and Hostile Humor*

Arthur's mockery at the hands of Murray Franklin exemplifies impoliteness in mediated contexts. Culpeper (2011) and Bousfield (2008) identify ridicule as a core impoliteness strategy, while Attardo (1994) highlights how hostile humor legitimizes aggression by masking it as play. The label "joker" functions as a vocative insult, transforming Arthur into an object of public derision. By appropriating this insult as his chosen identity, Arthur performs what Goffman (1963) describes as stigma inversion. Beyond the fictional world, these patterns resonate with broader analyses of ridicule and shaming in televised discourse (Dynel, 2015), underscoring how humor normalizes exclusion in media ecologies.

### C. *Rhetorical Questions and Identity Reconstruction*

Arthur's shift from tentative self-reflective questions to accusatory rhetorical reframing marks a significant stylistic transformation. Early in the film, his utterance "Is it just me, or is it getting crazier out there?" illustrates Ilie's (1994) notion of rhetorical questions as stance-laden self-reflection. By the climactic talk-show scene, however, his utterance "What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him?" operates as a public indictment, aligning with Searle's (1975) account of indirect speech acts as accusatory tools. This discursive trajectory supports Simpson's (2004) claim that stylistic foregrounding of pronouns and question forms dramatizes identity transformation. In *Joker*, rhetorical questions serve as linguistic markers of Arthur's reconstitution from marginalized patient to confrontational antihero.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Arthur's rhetorical trajectory can also be read like the language manifestation of an unconscious conflict and a breakdown in ego control. Freud's (1961) notion of ego defenses shows how the sustained social devaluation eventually places the ego in a weakened position, one in which it cannot impose its regulatory control, and where previously repressed hostility thus comes to be articulated in language. Therefore, the final on-the-spot accusatory question could be interpreted as a pragmatic shift, one that symbolizes the final collapse of internal restraints and thus a last resort of violent assertion. As stated by Mitchell and Black (2016), the destabilizing circumstance of stigma, whether social or psychological, frequently leads to the formation of identities that fulfill oppositional or destructive roles. Viewed from this perspective, the character transformation of Arthur into an altered *Joker* persona is one of discourse and an act of psychoanalytic transformation whereby alienation is translated into aggressive empowerment.

### D. *Language and the Discourse of Stigma*

The results also connect directly to broader sociolinguistic research on stigma. Link and Phelan (2001) describe stigma as a process of labeling, stereotyping, and exclusion, all of which are evident in Arthur's encounters. His therapist categorizes him as hopeless, Hoyt undermines his credibility, Wayne labels his mother "delusional," and Murray pathologizes him on-air. These discursive practices exemplify what Scarf et al. (2020) empirically confirm: *Joker's* portrayal of mental illness intensifies audience prejudice. Poulgrain et al. (2022) further shows that attempts to mitigate such effects are only partially effective, suggesting the enduring cultural weight of these portrayals. Preston (2023) argues that the *Joker* has become a transmedia stereotype of madness, while Grapã (2022) demonstrates its mobilization as a discursive stereotype in international media. At a broader scale, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2022) reports that across 200 popular films, depictions of mental illness overwhelmingly rely on tropes of violence and instability, situating *Joker* within a wider cinematic trend. Conversely, El Halabi et al. (2024) highlights the potential of the arts to moderate stigma, underscoring the importance of rethinking how dialogue constructs mental illness in popular culture.

### E. *Contribution to Discourse-Stylistics and Film Linguistics*

This study makes three key contributions. First, it demonstrates that cinematic dialogue can be rigorously analyzed through pragmatic frameworks, showing how speech acts, politeness, and impoliteness strategies encode alienation and stigma. Second, it extends stigma research into film linguistics by illustrating how linguistic features, ridicule, rhetorical questioning, evaluative labeling, reproduce exclusionary discourses that resonate beyond the fictional world. Third, by connecting micro-level dialogue analysis with macro-level findings from media studies (Scarf et al., 2020; Annenberg, 2022), the paper bridges stylistics with cultural critique, revealing cinematic dialogue as a site where societal prejudices are both represented and reproduced.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that *Joker* (2019) constructs social alienation and identity transformation not only through narrative and cinematography but crucially through dialogue as discursive practice. By analyzing five high-stakes interactions with authority figures, the findings reveal how Arthur Fleck is consistently delegitimized through dismissals, disbelief, denial, and ridicule. These encounters are linguistically structured by face-threatening acts, impoliteness strategies, and rhetorical reframing, which progressively erode his credibility and agency.

The study set out to address three research questions, all of which have been fully answered by the analysis. First, those results show that power does go asymmetrical with the arguing of therapeutic invalidation; denial of a managerial

point of view; paternal or parental denial; and public ridicule. Then enactments of social exclusion are cast by therapeutic dismissal, managerial disbelief, paternal denial, and public ridicule. Secondly, we see a clear stylistic evolution in Arthur's speech. It shifts from tentative self-reflections to accusatory rhetorical reframing and confrontational assertion. Third, the dialogues of rhetorical questions and face-threatening acts in the film work to accentuate alienation and psychological breakdown, culminating in discursive violence precipitated along with Arthur's degeneration into the *Joker*.

From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to discourse-stylistics and pragmatics on three levels. First, it extends impoliteness research demonstrating that hostile humor and ridicule operating under mediated conditions constitute discursive violence. The second bridges film stylistics and sociolinguistic disgrace studies, revealing the manner in which cinematic dialogue endorses broader societal prejudices toward mental illness. Finally, by cross-linking micro-level linguistic and macro-level evidences arising from media studies (e.g., Scarf et al., 2020; Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 2022), it lays out film dialogue as narrative mechanism and a cultural discourse that carries measurable social effects.

Methodologically speaking, this study shows the importance of implementing scene-based pragmatic analyses in the understanding of how authority and marginality lay down their enactments by way of dialogue. This approach therefore, offers rather fine-grained insight into exclusionary practices being encoded in speech, in an attempt to complement large-scale content analyses of manifestations of stigma in film.

Thus, further research could expand this plan in at least three directions: (1) corpus-assisted studies of film dialogue across genres in order to discover what stigma patterns are recurrent at a larger scale; (2) multimodal studies that integrate gesture, intonation, and cinematographic cues to accomplish the full semiotic construction of exclusion; and (3) comparative studies of the representation of mental illness across cultural contexts to examine how local discourses of stigma intersect with global stereotypes.

In sum, this study argues that Arthur's descent into the *Joker* is not only a psychological or cinematic transformation but a linguistic one, enacted through discursive delegitimization and adversarial reframing. By shedding light on how language constructs stigma and alienation, the analysis points to the broader argument that cinematic dialogue is a cultural instrument of social identity legitimation, denial, or reconfiguration.

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