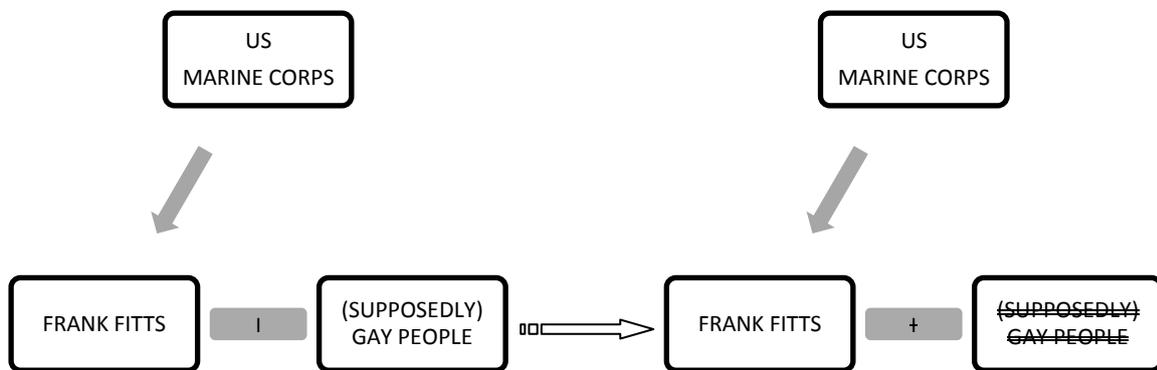


**SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM – TYPE 3 (SMT3): RESENTMENT**

**AN EXAMPLE**

**THE CHARACTER OF COLONEL FRANK FITTS  
IN THE MOVIE  
*AMERICAN BEAUTY*  
(DIRECTOR: SAM MENDES)**



Throughout the film it becomes clear that Frank Fitts is secretly gay and that he is jealous of gay people who "came out of the closet." He dares not reveal himself as a homosexual, though, for fear of being cast out by the social environment whose recognition he has mimetically learned to desire. Frank Fitts always presents himself as "Colonel Frank Fitts, US Marine Corps" and apparently this self-concept considers homosexuality as "something to be ashamed of." He can't stand being around openly gay people, like his two neighbors Jim and Jim, because they awaken his hidden homosexual desires. Frank Fitts resents and hates what he actually desires. When he thinks that his son Ricky is in a gay relationship with his neighbor Lester Burnham, he threatens to throw him out of the house and to banish him forever.

Frank Fitts is willing to do anything to protect his socially mediated (self-)image. His scapegoating of openly gay people helps him to be somewhat *at peace* with his own life, although he is a bitter man. Finally, he reveals himself as a homosexual to his neighbor Lester Burnham, whom he wrongfully considers gay. Frank tries to kiss Lester, but Lester turns him down. Afraid of what might happen, Frank ends up murdering Lester in order to prevent the loss of his so-called acceptable (self-)image. In other words, the *sacrifice* of Lester – in no ways responsible for what happened to Frank, hence a *scapegoat* – seems necessary for Frank to fulfill his desire for recognition. In still other words, *eros* – a mimetically ignited love for some image or social status – leads to *thanatos* (death) to put an end to some identity *crisis*.