Exploring *Brokeback Mountain*: Aspects of Film Reviews, Queer Identity and Self-Identity

- Bachelor Thesis -

Kirstine Hedegaard Thomassen, 995938
Spansk og Engelsk Virksomhedskommunikation
Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University
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Supervisor: Carmen Maier
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Reading Instructions

This study is a bachelor thesis from a 6th semester student at Aarhus University. It has been written in the spring of 2014 and handed in on May 5, 2014. Brief explanations for the lay-out of the thesis will here be described.

All of the references used throughout the thesis are listed at the end. The Harvard Method is used for references, which means that sources will be written as (Author, Year) in the text. If a reference is placed before the full stop in a sentence, the reference is stated for only this sentence and if the reference is placed after the full stop, the reference is stated for the entire paragraph. The chapters throughout the thesis are numbered in accordance with the List of Content in order to create a cohesive and clear structure of the thesis.

Two kinds of quotation marks have been used. The single quotation mark (‘) is used to emphasize concepts, whereas the double quotation mark (“) is used for quotations. Furthermore, italic font is used for titles (e.g. Brokeback Mountain).
Abstract

*Brokeback Mountain* is a film, which has received several reviews, both academic and non-academic. Many of these discuss whether the film is a story about gays, or if it is actually a love story and this thesis concludes through examinations of four reviews that according to the general opinion the film is in fact a love story. Furthermore, this thesis clarifies that the academic reviews propose their arguments and references more reliably than the non-academic reviews.

Moreover, this thesis analyzes how specific aspects of queer identity and self-identity are reflected in the construction of the two main characters of the film. The theorists who have been proven most apposite for the purpose of the problem statement are Giddens (1991), Hall (1996) and Butler (1990). Together their studies of the concepts of identity have constituted the foundation for the analysis of *Brokeback Mountain*’s main characters. One of the main concepts is that all aspects of ‘identity’ must remain protean and that an ‘identity’ develops throughout the entire life and keeps changing in line with circumstances and time. Internal and external events influence the way an individual perceives him/herself.

Another aspect of identity theory, which has been investigated in this thesis, is Hall’s spectacle of ‘the other’. Hall claims that we can only truly identify ourselves if we compare ourselves and our actions to people who are different than we are. Along with this, the examination of queer identity has revealed that the concepts ‘queer’ and ‘identity’ are indeed related to each other, and that queer identities are those who do not conform with the gendered norms, which we already know.

Even though the film appears mostly to be a love story, it has a queer twist. The two main characters of the film are both heterosexual cowboys, who act queer when they are around each other. They secretly have a passion for one another but cannot reveal their true identity in fear of society’s prejudices. As the two cowboys do not behave as the gendered norms of cowboys as we know them, this thesis concludes that they are, in fact, two queer men.

Number of characters: 1,776
# List of Content

1 INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................................................... 5

1.1 Purpose and Problem Statement .................................................................................................................. 5

1.2 Method .......................................................................................................................................................... 6

1.3 Structure of the Thesis ................................................................................................................................ 7

1.4 Delimitations ................................................................................................................................................ 8

2 THE FILM IN CONTEXT TO AMERICAN SOCIETY ......................................................................................... 9

2.1 Background Information on the Film ........................................................................................................... 9

2.1.1 The Story of the Film ............................................................................................................................... 9

2.2 American Context ....................................................................................................................................... 10

3 THEORY ......................................................................................................................................................... 12

3.1 Identity Theory ............................................................................................................................................ 12

3.1.1 Anthony Giddens .................................................................................................................................... 12

3.1.2 Stuart Hall ............................................................................................................................................... 13

3.2 Queer Theory .............................................................................................................................................. 16

3.2.1 Judith Butler ........................................................................................................................................... 17

3.2.2 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick ....................................................................................................................... 17

4 METHOD ....................................................................................................................................................... 19

5 ANALYSIS .................................................................................................................................................... 21

5.1 Reactions and Reviews of Brokeback Mountain .......................................................................................... 21

5.1.1 Popular Contexts ..................................................................................................................................... 21

5.1.2 Academic Contexts ............................................................................................................................... 23

5.2 Comparison and Discussion of the Reviews ............................................................................................... 25

5.3 Queer Identity and Self-Identity Reflected in the Characters of the Film .................................................. 26

6 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................................... 30

LIST OF REFERENCES ................................................................................................................................... 32

LIST OF APPENDICES .................................................................................................................................. 35
1 Introduction

We live in a society that allows us to be practically who we want to be and for us to do almost what we want to do. It is nearly impossible not to notice distinctions between people’s appearance in the form of clothes, hairstyles, facial expressions and general appearance as well as their personality and identity, and we compare ourselves to these ‘other’ people. ‘Identity’ includes several aspects and is a tricky concept. It has been discussed by many theorists and it helps us identify who we are throughout our entire life.

One of the relevant aspects of identity is the concept of ‘queer identity’, which arose in the 1980s. Since then, the term has developed and disseminated and has thus become more familiar and well-known. Several theorists and sociologists have written books about the concept of ‘queer’, and the term has been examined thoroughly. Furthermore, throughout the history of the movie theater several queer films have been made, and it seems that they are more accepted than earlier. The 2005 American film Brokeback Mountain seems to be one of the most thought-provoking and touching queer films, and it has received reviews in plenty, both from popular and academic contexts. After the publication of the film on-line discussion forums and several communities devoted to the film were formed. Additionally, Brokeback Mountain won a series of prominent film awards. It seems as if a continuous discussion about gender, sexuality and identity is going on in the media, and people start questioning their own sexual identity. Keeping in line with this, even though the concept of ‘queer’ seems more accepted and normative today than earlier, statistics of suicides amongst young queer people are alarming due to governments’ restrictions and prejudices. In addition, when Brokeback Mountain appeared in movie theaters in the US it was in the middle of a political period, where many issues about sexuality were touched upon and discussed. In the years before and after the release of the film, different political acts concerning gay/lesbian rights and homosexuals’ marital rights occurred in the US. Some states excluded homosexuals from marrying while others legalized same-sex marriages.

1.1 Purpose and Problem Statement

Returning to the notion of ‘identity’, Anthony Giddens (1991) is one of the theorists who has discussed and analyzed a great deal in this topic. He claims that identity is not something we have and that it is not the different traits that each person possesses. It is rather what we do, how we act and who we are (Giddens, 1991: cited in Barker, 2012), which in other words means that identity
theory describes people’s regular behavior, in contrast to queer theory, which describes strange and/or different patterns in people’s behavior. However, the notions of queer can also be equivalent to the notions of identity.

On the same note, the two main characters of the 2005 American film *Brokeback Mountain* have problems finding their true identities. They both act heterosexually in their everyday lives, but as soon as they are around each other something queer appears in the way they behave. The two men know that they cannot show their desire towards each other in public, as queer behavior is not accepted nor approved of in the society in which they live. They struggle to keep their passion a secret while also struggling to keep their marriages alive.

It has been discussed whether the theme of *Brokeback Mountain* is really about a gay story or if it actually is a love story, and the film has received quite a lot of reviews on this topic, both within popular and academic contexts. Keeping in line with this, what are the most significant differences between the academic and the non-academic reviews, and how do they state and explain the main theme of the film? Moreover, based on analyzes of identity theories and queer theory, how do the film’s main characters reflect the construction of specific aspects of queer identity and self-identity?

### 1.2 Method

In terms of methodology for answering the above-mentioned problem statement, distinctions and resemblances of identity theories and queer theories will be examined by means of a detailed account of Giddens’ theory on ‘self-identity’ and the project of the self along with an examination of Stuart Hall’s understanding of ‘identity’. Furthermore, various definitions of ‘queer identity’ and discussions of queer theory will be included, amongst others, by Chris Barker (2012), Judith Butler (1990) and Jonathan Alexander and Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio (2012). Afterwards, an attempt to exemplify the construction of self-identity and queer identity in the main characters of *Brokeback Mountain* will be demonstrated. This will be done by means of a qualitative deductive method, a discussion analysis and a conclusion on the perspectives.

Additionally, in terms of *Brokeback Mountain* the thesis will exclusively focus on the main theme of the film and how certain aspects of queer theory and identity theory apply to the main characters of the film.

Finally, social constructivism will be employed in the work of this thesis in order to explain that there is no definite truth, as all individuals create their own truth (Holm, 2013). For that reason, the
results of this thesis may not be true to everybody, but are true to me as a researcher in the light of my specific social background. The reality of the included concepts is created through our interactions and through the way we speak about these concepts and may therefore vary from individual to individual. Moreover, according to Holm, words and sentences derive their meaning from the way we use them, not from their reference to ‘reality’. Depending on the context, the words we use have different meanings, and our lives are formed through the way we use words in different contexts (2013).

Holm’s perception of ‘identity policy’ will be included as to explain why the concept of queer still seems wrong to many people even though it has been disseminated a lot, inter alia through the media. He explains that ‘identity policy’ is an attempt to reform or improve conditions for oppressed social groups by problematizing the way in which the oppression is reproduced in the way we speak of these groups (2013).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis
The thesis is structured chronologically in order to keep a thread throughout the respective chapters and parts. The beginning of the thesis provides general facts and a short resume of Brokeback Mountain followed by an explanation of the American context of the film. This part is included with the intention of giving a general knowledge of the film so as to better understand the subsequent analysis.

Thereupon, the theory chapter provides information and different aspects of both queer theory and identity theory. The two subchapters of the theory part lead with a brief introduction to the subject and a short description of what they contain to capture the attention of the reader. Next, the method chapter helps provide an overview of the most important and relevant parts of the theory chapter and an account for why these are important and relevant with the purpose of analyzing the selected reviews of the film, which are described and analyzed later in the thesis.

After the method chapter, four carefully chosen reviews of Brokeback Mountain – two from popular contexts and two from academic contexts – are analyzed, discussed and compared. Subsequently, the two main characters of the film will be analyzed by means of the parts of queer and identity theory described in the method chapter.

Finally, answers to the two questions of the problem statement will be given in the conclusion, where unanswered questions and issues from the thesis also will be explained in order to give the reader a complete conclusion of the thesis.
1.4 Delimitations
The story of *Brokeback Mountain* invites multiple perspectives for critical analyzes and raises questions and debates about many issues relevant to life itself and identity. A topic, that could have been interesting to include, is the way several of the reviews treat the actors’ performances in the film. Especially the two main characters Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal have been both criticized and commended for their performances. Some applaud their performances as closeted cowboys, while others disapprove of them. An example of a critical and negative reviewer is Marcy Demansky from World Film who criticizes Jake Gyllenhaal for not being convincing as a middle-aged cowboy: “He acts so hard, he practically screams: ‘I am playing a challenging part’.” (Demansky, n.d.). Had these reviews been included in the thesis, the problem statement would have included a question about whether or not Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal managed to play the roles of two heterosexual cowboys with queer tendencies.

*Brokeback Mountain* is a very extensive film, that includes a great many different topics and issues, and a very detailed and thorough analysis could have been made, had the thesis not been delimited. However, the chapters of the thesis are thoroughly prepared and the selection of issues has been handled carefully.
2 The Film in Context to American Society
The thesis has been written within the field of American Culture and Society and therefore this chapter will provide background information on *Brokeback Mountain* in order to account for important details in the film and its themes and issues in accordance to the field. A short summary of the film will be given, and later the political events briefly mentioned in the introduction will be further scrutinized in order to understand the film in an American context.

2.1 Background Information on the Film
The film *Brokeback Mountain* is based on the short story *Brokeback Mountain* by Annie Proulx, which was published in *The New Yorker* in 1997 (Anon., 2014). The screenplay to the film is made by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana, and the film was released on December 9, 2005. In 2006 it won three Academy Awards: One for *Best Original Score*, one for *Best Adapted Screen Play*, and one for *Best Director* (Piontek, 2012). Furthermore, the film has several times been nominated as one of the most romantic films ever made (Koziak, 2009).

Brokeback Mountain is an idyllic place outside of society and sets the frame for the film. The two main characters are the cowboys Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist, who are played by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal respectively. In the area of Brokeback Mountain they can escape and be who they really are, and the mountain are essential both at the beginning and at the end of Ennis’ and Jack’s relationship/affair.

2.1.1 The Story of the Film
Ennis and Jack meet during a shepherding season at Brokeback Mountain in 1963. Ennis’ parents died when he was a child and he was raised by his brother and sister. At the age of nine, when his parents were still alive, his father took him and his brother out to see what might happen to a queer man: “They found Earl dead in a irrigation ditch. They’d took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick till it pulled off…” (McMurtry & Ossana, 2005, p. 53). The sight of the dead cowboy with his pants down scarred Ennis for life and is important to the film in order to truly understand Ennis’ personality. Jack grew up in a rodeo with both his parents but feels alienated by his father. His feelings towards his father are equally important in order to understand Jack’s personality. Jack is, however, clearly more extrovert than Ennis. At least this is the case until they get to know each other and Ennis opens up.
During the shepherding season they only have each other, a lot of sheep and their horses as company, and as the season passes by they develop a close friendship. One of them is supposed to sleep amongst the sheep to keep away coyotes, whilst the other sleeps in the camp down the hill as well as makes breakfast and supper for the other one. One night they get drunk and Ennis, who was supposed to go sleep amongst the sheep, falls asleep in front of the fire. At night he wakes up freezing and Jack calls him from the tent, telling him to come and sleep inside. Ennis obeys, and whilst inside the tent lying close to each other, they make love for the first time, initiated by Jack. During their summer at Brokeback Mountain the act of love between Ennis and Jack is repeated several times.

The season suddenly ends because of the signs of a blizzard, and Jack and Ennis part ways to continue with their lives planned before going to Brokeback Mountain for the summer. Ennis marries his girlfriend Alma and has two daughters, while he works for different farmers. Jack meets the rodeo queen Lureen, whom he marries and has a son with. He works for his father-in-law’s farm-equipment business. Four years after the parted ways, Jack, who lives in Texas, sends Ennis a postcard telling him that he is coming to Wyoming, where Ennis lives. They meet up, and their passion for each other is revived. Unfortunately Alma sees the two men kissing and she knows from that moment on what is actually going on between the two men. However, her knowledge of Jack and Ennis’ passion for each other is not revealed until years later.

During the next 16 years, Ennis and Jack meet up annually to go on so-called ‘fishing-trips’, which is an excuse for the two men to be alone together without other people judging their relationship. Jack proposes that they forsake their former lives and set up a ranch together, but Ennis is too haunted by the aforementioned childhood memory to feel anything but fear and shame of such a proposal. Over time, both men’s marriages slowly dissolve and Ennis ends up divorcing Alma. Jack dies. He is said to have died in an accident, and after a visit to Jack’s parents, the film ends with Ennis living a lonely life in a camper van.

2.2 American Context

This part of the chapter will clarify some of the important political events that happened in the years around the release of Brokeback Mountain. These facts are based on Barbara Koziak’s review of Brokeback Mountain (2009), which later in the thesis will be used for analysis.

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1 Ennis and Jack’s ‘affair’, and thus the film, lasts for 20 years
Koziak states some facts about how politics in the US have changed in different states before, during and after the appearance of the film. She explains that *Brokeback Mountain* and the responses the film got appeared in the middle of a “politically treacherous period for sexuality in public life” (Koziak, 2009, p. 1), where many things happened within American politics. An example of this can be taken from the 2003 US Supreme Court in the years before the appearance of the film, where the Supreme Court ruled that anti-sodomy laws are unconstitutional. Furthermore, civil union or domestic partnership legislation was enacted by five different states and in Massachusetts gay marriage was legalized. If you support civil union and gay rights within marital rights, the above-mentioned political events are positive. However, negative acts happened as well as eleven states passed amendments or laws, which effectively barred same-sex marriage. After the film’s appearance different political events occurred as well, both negative and positive. In 2006 eight states excluded gays and lesbians from marrying, but in 2008 same-sex marriage was legalized in Connecticut and all marriages, which are contracted in other states, are recognized in New York today.

One cannot possibly do anything else but wonder if these above-mentioned political events, which occurred after the appearance of *Brokeback Mountain*, had anything to do with the film and the responses it got. However, they are interesting to bear in mind, when thinking about the film from an American cultural aspect.
3 Theory
Now it is time to examine queer theory and identity theory. Different points of views on the topic will be stated from different theorists and sociologists, and distinctions and resemblances between the theories will be studied and explained. Later, the reason for choosing certain aspects of the theories for the subsequent analysis will be explained.

3.1 Identity Theory
In the Western world, the concept of ‘self-identity’ is culturally conditioned and follow particular times and places. That is, “what it means to be a person is social and cultural ‘all the way down’” (Barker, 2004, p. 181). Furthermore, the concept of ‘identity’ depends on the network of kinship and social obligations, which each individual possesses. Barker claims that self-identity theory deals with the way we think about ourselves and the collection of “narratives of the self with which we emotionally identify” (2004, p. 180). That is, the concept of ‘self-identity’ is based on stories individuals tell about themselves.

Next, the concept of ‘self-identity’ will be described and looked at through the eyes of two well-known theorists, namely Anthony Giddens and Stuart Hall.

3.1.1 Anthony Giddens
Anthony Giddens examines and explains modernity and its relation to the self in a new way and at a new level than earlier. According to him, the concept of ‘identity’ is not something we have or the different features, which each person possesses. However, the concept should rather be perceived as a project. Identity is what we think about ourselves and how we change in character and personality in different circumstances in time and space. According to Giddens, self-identity is “the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography” (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). In addition, Giddens claims that identity is never stagnant, but that it is rather something, which is always in process and some kind of goal, which we will always move towards. “What to do? How to act? Who to be?” (Giddens, 1991: cited in Barker, 2012, p. 221) are the questions, that identity stories attempt to answer in order for the individual to create a coherent identity story by which “the self forms a trajectory of development from the past to an anticipated future” (Giddens, 1991, p. 75). Additionally, “all human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do, and such monitoring always has discursive features” (Giddens, 1991, p. 35).
In order to get an overall picture of the psychological make-up of the individual it is necessary to develop an account for the self-identity and keep in mind that knowing both what one is doing, and why one is doing so, is to be a human being. The settings of our lives are variegated by the things people do and the social conventions, which are produced and reproduced in our daily lives. Furthermore, people are normally able to express and analyze the nature of and the reasons for their behavior because of the earlier mentioned fact that people continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities (1991).

Giddens claims that when investigating the notion of ‘self-identity’, two aspects are important to bear in mind, namely ‘reflexivity’ and ‘biography’. First of all, reflexivity deals with and analyzes the way a person reacts to various situations. It seeks to learn which opportunities a person has and how he/she can improve his/her own situation. In addition to that, reflexivity treats mental activity and the reflection of the self as a detached being in cultural contexts. I.e., people are able to do a ‘lifting out’ of social relations and local contexts. Giddens states that identity is created through this before-mentioned reflexivity. That is, identity is created through the way people reflect upon their own actions and/or achievements. In society today (i.e. the modern society), individuals cannot move from one part of life, for example adolescence, to another part of life, for example adulthood, without exploring and constructing the altered self. This is what Giddens calls a ‘reflexive process’ of the connection between personal and social change (1991).

Secondly, the identity of an individual is created through one’s biography, and individuals need to feel this biographical continuity in order to have a “reasonable stable sense of self-identity” (1991, p. 54). The biography is a composition of an individual’s actions through life and it contains events from the external world, which are continuously weaved “into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self” (1991, p. 54). In order to feel who we really and truly are, we need to understand how we have become what we are and where we are going. Therefore it is important that our biography contains the abovementioned elements.

3.1.2 Stuart Hall
Corresponding to Giddens, Stuart Hall claims that the concept of ‘identity’ today is different than previously. In its traditional meaning, identity is an all-inclusive sameness, which is a concept without internal differentiation. This is so different from the way we understand the concept today
that we, according to Hall, are not able to compare the old and new version of the concept (Hall, 1996).

Identity, as stated by Hall, is a concept that functions in the interval between reversal and emergence. Furthermore, “identities are never unified and, in the late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different […] discourses, practices and positions” (Hall, 1996). Hall too perceives identity as a continuous process, which constantly moves and transforms. Moreover, Hall argues that identity is the process of becoming and how we are represented rather than being and where we came from. Identities are thus constituted by individual’s representations. Moreover, according to both Hall and Giddens, identity is the result of narratives of the self and is partly imaginary. That it, identities are constructed within our actions and the way we behave, and precisely because of this identities should be understood “as produced in specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (1996, p. 4).

Hall’s definition of identity comprises two parts. The first part is that identities are products of how we as individuals are differentiated and excluded. The fact that identity is constructed through difference entails that it exclusively is through others, through relations to what the identity is not and through what the identity lacks that one’s identity is constructed (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993: cited in Hall, 1996). The other part is constructed by individual’s internal psychic processes of subjectivity and “refers to points of temporary emotional attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (Barker, 2004, p. 181). The suturing of these two parts should be thought of as an articulation rather than a one-sided process (Hall, 1996).

To enlarge on his idea of identities as constructions of difference, Hall engages on the notions of ‘difference’ in order to explain the concept of ‘representation’. Within cultural studies, questions of ‘difference’ have become important and elucidated in recent decades, and the notions of this have been addressed in different ways in order to understand why it matters in the analysis and discussion of representation and identities. According to Hall, “representation engages feelings, attitudes and emotions” (Hall, 1997, p. 226). This especially applies to when we deal with ‘difference’.

He claims in his studies of representation and the question of ’difference’ that meaning is ambiguous and that a picture, a text, a film can carry more than one meaning. He even argues that “the same photo [or media] can carry several, quite different, sometimes diametrically opposite
meanings” and that “there is no one, true meaning” (Hall 1997, p. 228) to a media. When having more than one meaning of which no one is the one true meaning, it is essential to find the ‘preferred’ meaning. Moreover, “images do not carry meaning or ‘signify’ on their own. They accumulate meanings, or play off their meanings against one another, across a variety of texts and media. Each image carries its own, specific meaning” (1997, p. 232).

Furthermore, Hall has gathered some arguments from different theorists in order to explain why ‘difference’ “is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist” (1997, p. 234).

One of the arguments is given by Saussure, who argues that ‘difference’ is a central aspect in the process of making sense of things. We use oppositions to find meanings, for example by comparing the ideas of ‘masculinity’ with the ideas of ‘femininity’. According to Saussure, meaning “is the ‘difference’ between masculinity and femininity which signifies, which carries meaning” (Saussure, cited in Hall, 1997, p. 234). Masculine/feminine are binary oppositions, which can be used to capture the diversity of the world within their extremes. However, there are gray areas within binary oppositions are also. For instance, men both have ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ sides although the masculine side might dominate a man’s personality. Jacques Derrida argues that it is usual that one of the oppositions is the dominant one (Derrida, 1974, cited in Hall, 1997).

Another argument is from Paul du Gay and Hall and highlights that “culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system” (1997, p. 236). I.e. the difference is emphasized by classification in order to distinguish meanings. When talking about classifications, binary oppositions are crucial as it is necessary to “establish a clear difference between things in order to classify them” (1997, p. 236).

Even though these arguments are mostly seen as positive, they contain negative aspects as well. According to the accounts we are formed through never-completed and unconscious dialogues with the ‘other’ and “the division within subjectivity can never be fully healed” (1997, p. 238) as we will in some way always lack the relations, which complete us since they lie outside of us. This has been claimed to be one of the main sources of neurosis in adults (1997).
3.2 Queer Theory
An important aspect of identity theory is the concept of queer theory and queer identity, which will now be explained.

In the 1980s, the term queer emerged as a political strategy as a result of questions about homosexual rights. The masterminds of this were “the gay and lesbian civil rights movements, the ‘sex wars’ over pornography and censorship amongst feminists, and the early 1980s AIDS epidemic” (Morland & Willox, 2005, p. 2). Gender studies, especially feminist studies, were the forerunner for queer theory, and the areas of study and the ideas behind queer theory have amplified the earlier gender studies (Griffin, 2009). Queer theory is “one of the most provocative analytical tools in the humanities and social sciences. It scrutinizes identity and social structures, which take heteronormativity for granted” (Alexander & Anderlini-D'Onofrio, 2012, preface).

In his dictionary of cultural studies, Chris Barker claims that the word queer has been re-articulated and re-signified over the years. It has been injurious but is now an expression of resistance. I.e., the term is now a provocative re-nomination that turns earlier, offensive descriptions of gay and lesbian life into more positive descriptions (Barker, 2004). Barker defines ‘to be queer’ as the adoption of a non-straight lifestyle and ‘to queer’ as the de-familiarization of identities, texts and attitudes, which had otherwise been taken for granted.

To Alexander and Anderlini-D’Onofrio, queer theory has appeared in the Western part of the world to examine the concept of ‘identity’ thoroughly. They claim that queer is a term “that does not question the social construction of heterosexuality as normative” (Alexander & Anderlini-D'Onofrio, 2012, p. 1). Additionally, the term ‘queer’ began as the complete opposite of the term ‘straightness’, and activists defined themselves as “everything not straight” (Griffin, 2009, p. 3). Queer activism was used to focus on, and get the acknowledgement of, marginalized sexualities in the period during and after the AIDS crisis. However, Griffin claims that queer theory ought to include every aspect of heterosexuality, namely “the bland, white bread, vanilla, missionary position, monogamous, married, patriarchal” (2009, p. 4), in order to tell that heterosexuality is as much a social construct as all the ‘abnormal’ sexualities (2009).

In chapter 1.2 Holm’s ‘identity policy’ was briefly described, and will now be further developed by means of the concept of queer. We perceive queer identities as abnormal and wrong since the traditional way of thinking about sexuality only includes heterosexuality. That is, queer behaviour is not wrong or abnormal as such. It is the continued articulation of the queer people as different and their ‘inappropriate’ behaviour, which keeps misinterpret queer identities.
3.2.1 Judith Butler
When pondering on queer theory, one of the names that come into mind is Judith Butler (1990), who has been one of the most influential theorists writing about queer theory. She is highly associated with queer theory and, according to her – even though Barker disagrees (Barker, 2004) – the term queer still wears a pejorative tone and cannot just be redefined in any way whatsoever. Additionally, as stated by Butler, the force of the concept comes from the repeated times it has been linked to accusation, pathologization and insult. It is an invocation formed through time by the homophobic communities. Nevertheless, Butler claims that the concept of ‘queer’ should keep changing through time (Butler, 2013).

When discussing what is meant by ‘identity’, Butler compares the concept of ‘identity’ with the concept of ‘gender’ and ‘sex’. She agrees with Giddens in the fact that when analyzing self-identity we almost always focus on which internal features of the person establish self-identity through time. However, she claims that when comparing identity and gender it is necessary to realize that the coherence and continuity of the person are norms of understanding, which are socially instituted and maintained. Furthermore, Butler claims that within identity convergences and divergences have the possibility to occur and that there is no definitional closure for them to obey (Butler, 1990).

According to Butler, we can only understand what a person is if we compare the person to genders in conformity with the standards of gender intelligibility that we already know of. Additionally, the notions of the person are assumed to be based on the fact that whatever social context the person is in is externally related to the structure of personhood. Persons are, according to Butler, defined by some “gendered norms of cultural intelligibility” (1990, p. 23). However, through time and culture ‘incoherent’ gendered beings have emerged, and these do not conform to these above-mentioned gendered norms. These ‘incoherent’ gendered beings are ‘queer’ identities, and as they develop and disseminate in society we get to know more and more about them.

3.2.2 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
Keeping in line with well-known queer theorists and their notions of queer, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is worth mentioning. She is a pioneer within the field of queer theory (Hall, et al., 2013), and she states that queer refers to “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses, excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of
anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (Sedgwick, 2013, p. 8). She deals with queer theory more critically than Butler and argues that the assumption that sexual identities are static identity categories is misleading and incorrect. She claims that our culture denies and despoils queer energies and lives, and she argues that this is the reason for the following statistics of adolescent suicides:

“queer teenagers are two to three times likelier to attempt suicide, and to accomplish it, than others, […] up to 30 percent of teen suicides are likely to be gay or lesbian; […] a third of lesbian and gay teenagers say they have attempted suicide” (Sedgwick, 2013, p. 3).

She enlarges on her statement that our culture is to blame, by arguing that the problem starts with the school system. According to her, teachers are fired for letting students know about the rights of the existence of queer people, desires, activities and children. Teachers can also be fired if they let the students know how adults, who may be queer, really live. Finally, she adds up by blaming the U.S. Government for implementing certain acts, which damage the research on sexuality and adolescent sexual behavior. She harshly concludes that our society wants queer children to either conform or to die.
4 Method

Due to the specific problem statement from the above mentioned introduction, the conceptual frameworks developed by Judith Butler (1990), Anthony Giddens (1991) and Stuart Hall (1996) will be employed in this thesis. They are all well-known sociologists and theorists, and they provide different views of identity, which are nevertheless similar in certain areas. Additionally, the most important aspects of some of the other theorists mentioned in the theory chapter will be employed on as well with the purpose of making this chapter, the following analysis and in general the entire thesis as thorough and clarified as possible.

Nevertheless, in order to explore the specific questions of the problem statement, the approaches of Butler, Giddens and Hall upon queer identity and self-identity have contributed to the gathering and obtaining of knowledge about the concepts and notions, which are important and relevant. A combination of these three theorists’ notions about the subject constitutes the foundation for the subsequent analysis.

To enlarge on the selection of the included theorists and their theories, a brief explanation of the most essential parts, which are most relevant for answering the problem statement, will be given here. As mentioned in the chapter about queer theory, Butler deals with this theory as something that must remain protean. As earlier mentioned, it is a term, which has changed from being injurious to being more positive and, according to Butler, it will keep changing. However, Butler also claims that the concept of ‘queer’ still wears a pejorative tone, and that it cannot just be redefined in any way whatsoever. That is, Butler contradicts herself a little bit but claims, in general, that queer theory must change through time, even if the change happens slowly. Giddens’ reflexivity theory is based on the idea of inconstancy, and is defined by the fact that identities are constantly developed and constructed through time and space, and Hall agrees in the fact that identity is never a unified concept. Therefore, you might say that the three theorists agree on the main concept of ‘reflexivity’. Furthermore, Hall discusses the spectacle of the ‘other’ and claims this to be quite essential to the studies and identifications of identities. In his examples, Hall has used the issue of black people versus white people. However, according to Hall, these are just examples and the theory can also be applied to questions of gender and sexuality (1997), which is exactly what will be conducted in the subsequent analysis. This is relevant to this thesis as it deals with gender and sexuality within the aspects of queer identity and self-identity.
According to Butler, the way an individual is constructed and the continuity of an individual derives from the norms socially instituted and maintained, which we know. Identity is a concept that allows multiple convergences and divergences, and that does not need to end in a definitional closure. This statement agrees with Griffin’s claim that all sexualities are social constructs.

In the next chapter I will use the knowledge obtained and gathered to examine and analyze academic and non-academic reviews of *Brokeback Mountain*, and to analyze how the main characters are constructed and reflect specific aspects of these aforementioned identity theories.
5 Analysis
After having explained the methodological framework adopted in this thesis, this chapter will provide analyzes of some significant and interesting reviews of *Brokeback Mountain*. These reviews will be compared to each other and discussed in order to deal with the issue: What the most significant differences between the academic and the non-academic reviews are and how they state and explain the main theme of the film.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, the second issue will be discussed: How *Brokeback Mountain*’s main characters reflect the construction of specific aspects of queer identity and self-identity. This will be done by means of analysis of Jack and Ennis’ behavior in the film and an examination of how the two apparently heterosexual men are affected by society’s attitude towards the concepts of ‘queer’ and ‘identity’.

5.1 Reactions and Reviews of Brokeback Mountain
Moving towards answering the first issue in full, this part of the thesis will account for some of the most interesting and prominent reviews of *Brokeback Mountain* and subsequently compare and discuss these reviews. The selected reviews, both academic and non-academic all discuss and focus on the debate about whether or not the film is mostly a story about homosexuality or mostly a love story. These reviews are the most suitable for the theme of this thesis, and have been selected for this reason.

5.1.1 Popular Contexts
After its release *Brokeback Mountain* received non-academic reviews in plenty. Since some of them contain irrelevant subjects for the aim of this thesis, only two reviews have been selected. They both mainly focus on the theme of the film instead of on the performances of the actors, the production of the film or other subjects, which have been discussed in many other reviews.

The first review is from the *New York Times* and was published on the release day of the film. It is called *Riding the High Country, Finding and Losing Love* and is written by Steven Holden (2005). The review is mostly positive and describes the film as an ‘epic western’ with a ‘heartbreaking story’. Holden briefly explains what the film is about and describes Ennis’ and Jack’s feelings by means of Brokeback Mountain and its “craggy landscape” (Holden, 2005). He compares these feelings to the landscape and the “lonesome chill that seeps through Ang Lee’s epic western”
Holden uses several adjectives to describe the relationship between the two young cowboys. The way he tosses off adjectives, mainly informal ones, matches the target group of the review as it was published in the New York Times and does thus not belong in an academic context. Holden does not question that the film is in fact a love story.

In addition, Holden compares the love story of *Brokeback Mountain* to other homoerotic films from American popular culture and thereby he lets the readers know that *Brokeback Mountain* was not the first film with a gay twist. However, Holden argues that even though “America's squeaky closet doors may have swung open far enough for a gay rodeo circuit to flourish” (Holden, 2005), these doors will remain closed in those segments of America, which are completely masculine, e.g. within the military and sports.

The next non-academic review is retrieved from www.cinema-crazed.com/blog/, which is an unofficial and informal web-page, that posts film reviews. This particular review was posted on January 21, 2006 by Felix Vasquez Jr., who has made several reviews for the web-page (Vasquez Jr., 2006).

Vasquez stands out from the other reviewers. He criticizes people who have judged the film without even watching it because of their prejudices against homosexuality. The way Vasquez expresses himself in the beginning of the review might be a bit exaggerated, but exaggerations are in general part of his review and he seems to like using overstatements and big words. Besides, these overstatements and big words tone in with the target group of the web-page.

The tone of the review is overall positive and Vasquez commends the heart-breaking love story *Brokeback Mountain* is and the plot twist “that will leave you with your jaw open” (Vasquez Jr., 2006). Furthermore, he argues that the film is very original in every conceivable definition, and that the film is not a ‘gay film’ – “it’s a film about love that can never be revealed” (2006).

However, Vasquez does not feel that the ending of the film lives up to the build-up, which is promised. It is clear that Vasquez had expected a resolution and maybe a happy ending for the two men, and when he realizes this is not the case he gets disappointed. Nevertheless, he is satisfied with the direction and production of the film and commends the way Ang Lee managed to distinct so well between the frame of mind and feelings in the different parts of the men’s lives – “they paint the world within these two men’s family as cluttering, artificial, murky, and often dim, while they paint Brokeback Mountain as a sanctuary for these two with rolling clouds, and amazing forests” (Vasquez Jr., 2006).
5.1.2 Academic Contexts
The film has not only been/is not only interesting in popular contexts. Essays and reviews have been printed in several academic papers and books, and the themes of *Brokeback Mountain* have been discussed by various academics, sociologists and theorists. In the following, two examples of academic reviews of *Brokeback Mountain* will be discussed and analyzed. Keeping in line with the non-academic reviews, these two also examine the main theme of the film.

The first academic review is made by Harry M. Benshoff (2009) and is called *A Straight Cowboy Movie, Heterosexuality according to Brokeback Mountain*. Benshoff mostly discusses why *Brokeback Mountain* has been called a ‘gay cowboy movie’, when the two main characters of the film, Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist, evidently behave perfectly heterosexual (Benshoff, 2009). That is, except when they are out on Brokeback Mountain enjoying each other’s company.

According to Benshoff, the focus of the film is “primarily on the daily routines of traditionally heterosexual institutions such as dating, marriage, child rearing, work, and extended family get-togethers.” (2009, p. 227). He argues that, because people in general judge quite rapidly, a person who is attracted to someone of the same sex, even for just an instant, is immediately denounced or labeled as a homosexual. However, the same principle does not seem to apply the other way around. For instance, if a gay man slept with a woman, he would not be identified as a heterosexual due to his act, because his “homosexual desires [are] no longer thought to be of consequence.” (2009, p. 228). With this, Benshoff wants to explain the way a heterosexist and patriarchal world is built. If a man or a woman in a heterosexist and patriarchal world shows just a little bit of desire for a person of the same gender, he or she will forever be excluded “from the socially privileged space of heterosexuality and its sustaining institutions.” (2009, p. 228).

One of Benshoff’s main wonderments of the film is the fact that had it been about two homosexual cowgirls (rather than cowboys) or about “two ‘queer eye’ interior decorators in New York City (Mendelsohn)” (2009, p. 229) in love, the film would not have caused such outcry. It is the film’s assumption that the American Cowboy, one of the most masculine and heterosexual characters in America, may have had homosexual desires that has caused such consternation.

To Benshoff’s question about whether or not *Brokeback Mountain* really is a ‘gay cowboy movie’ he himself answers: “It must be labeled ‘THE gay cowboy movie’” (2009, p. 229), as it resembles a straight cowboy movie so much that it makes people wonder what men have really been doing on their buddy-buddy fishing trips. It resembles all other Westerns so much that it should be called
‘THE cowboy movie’ in order to distinguish it from all the other films that share thematic concerns with Brokeback Mountain. Nevertheless, Benshoff agrees that the film is a love story.

The second academic review is called *Shepherding, Reviving the Politics of Romantic Love in Brokeback Mountain* and is given by Barbara Koziak (2009). There is no doubt that Koziak perceives the film as a love story, amongst other things because of her reference to David Schumway and his five key elements of all true romantic love stories (Schumway, 2003: cited in Koziak, 2009):

2. The union is thwarted by an obstacle, most commonly the marriage of one subject to another.
3. The married life of the romantic pair is never presented.
4. Love is an overwhelming, natural passion.
5. Narrative usually ends with the death of one of the lovers.”

Next, she uses these five key elements in an analysis of Brokeback Mountain that ends in a comparison of *Brokeback Mountain* and classical romantic discourses. For example, she sees the ‘triadic structure’ in the two adulterous triangles that are between Ennis and Jack and their families. As Ennis is already planning to marry when he meets Jack and their friendship and sexual union begins, Ennis is partly adulterous already from the start. This adultery continues at their reunions years later, where they are both betraying their wives and kids by being with each other, making love. Koziak claims that “adultery creates romantic love, and this demonstrates how the original conception of romantic love is centrally a rebellious, counter-marital practice” (Koziak, 2009, p. 5).

For the time being, she is on the mark in her comparison of classical romantic discourses and *Brokeback Mountain* but she continues. As key element number two suggests, the two cowboys are met by several obstacles to their love. One of these obstacles is the fact that Ennis’ father, when Ennis was a child, ingrained a great fear of homosexuality in Ennis’ head by bringing him to see a corpse of a murdered gay rancher. This has made Ennis refrain completely even from the thought of being seen as queer. This obstacle is connected with the “simple incomprehension of others for same-sex-unions.” (2009, p. 8) and altogether these obstacles prevent Ennis and Jack from ever
consummating their life together and leaving them with only one option, namely to go on semi-annual trips together.

The film’s advertising tagline *Love is a force of nature* and the scenery of the film – “the rushing rivers, the craggy mountain peaks, the rolling meadows, the rivers of sheep, and the singularity of two people alone in this expanse” (2009, p. 8) – represent another of the five key elements, namely “love is an overwhelming, natural passion”. The last of the elements, the fact that love stories usually end with the death of one of the lovers, is also included in *Brokeback Mountain*. Jack dies, and according to Koziak it does not happen by accident as told in the film. Koziak claims that Jack is beaten to death (2009). With all these elements of the film, which are equivalent to Schumway’s elements of romantic love narratives, and by means of other parts of the film that are identical to parts of love stories, Koziak compares in a great extent *Brokeback Mountain* to traditional love narratives, but she also argues that certain elements of the film rewrite the classical love story. *Brokeback Mountain* is a story that, as said by Koziak, “defies gendered positions and rewrites masculine ideals” (2009).

Keeping in line with Benshoff’s question whether or not the film should be called a ‘gay cowboy movie’, Koziak discusses this same topic in her review. She mentions other reviews, which have questioned the theme of the film, but she ends up saying: “The film’s effect is to both rewrite this classic justification for marriage, and at the same time to give romantic love a new serenity and dignity, taking love away from the favored to bestow it on the forlorn” (2009, p. 22). Thus Koziak does not see the film as a gay cowboy film but as a love story, a rewriting of the classical romantic narratives.

### 5.2 Comparison and Discussion of the Reviews

After having described and briefly analyzed the reviews from popular and academic contexts respectively, distinctions between them are clear. The academic reviews are basically more detailed than the non-academic reviews, and they deal with and focus on issues, which are not even mentioned in the reviews from popular contexts. The main reason for this is the expected target groups of the reviews. Popular contexts include magazines, newspapers etc., which are medias that do not need to base their texts on well-known sources, and whose target groups are people from the popular culture. On the other hand, academic contexts include amongst others academic papers and
books, which contain and refer to reliable theories and sources. They address a target group, which identifies itself with academic sources and references. An example of the difference between the popular and academic reviews is Koziak’s comparison of *Brokeback Mountain* to classical romantic narratives. Yes, the reviews from popular contexts also declare the film a love story instead of a gay story, but they only do it superficially. They do not find relevant background material and references to support their arguments like Koziak did with Schumway’s five key elements of true romantic love stories.

Furthermore, Vasquez states in his review that he is disappointed that the film does not end with a happy ending like it had built up to. On the other hand, Koziak argues that this kind of ending is exactly how a true love story should end, supported by Schumway’s fifth element, which suggests that “narratives usually end with the death of one of the lovers” (Schumway, 2003: cited in Koziak, 2009). This is another example of the difference between non-academic and academic reviews. Nonetheless, it is clear that all four of the reviews are inclined to determine that the main theme of *Brokeback Mountain* is love, not homosexuality.

Holden’s review stands out from the others as he states that not all parts of the US accept films about homosexuality, even though they in general are more accepted than earlier. I.e., even though he labels the film a ‘heartbreaking love story’, he does not completely deny the fact that the film also contains a gay theme and that it may not be accepted in all areas of the US.

**5.3 Queer Identity and Self-Identity Reflected in the Characters of the Film**

In this chapter, the concepts of self-identity and queer identity as stated by Giddens, Hall and Butler will be reflected in the main characters of *Brokeback Mountain*.

As stated and explained in the identity chapter, self-identity is based on reflexivity and biography. Thus, Ennis and Jack must identify themselves through the narratives and experiences they get during their summer on Brokeback and through the subsequent lives they have with their wives and children. The way the two men react to those narratives and to the experiences they have together help them to learn, which opportunities they have and how they can improve their personal situations. According to Giddens, by means of reflexivity Ennis and Jack should be able to do a ‘lifting out’ of the social relations and local contexts in which they are located. That is, they should be able to look at themselves detachedly from how ‘other’ people perceive them and, to include
Hall’s theory on ‘difference’, compare themselves to these ‘others’. This should help them identify themselves. Furthermore, according to Giddens’ ‘reflexive process’, Ennis and Jack are not able to move from youth to adulthood without having to explore and construct their altered selves. This ‘reflexive process’ is reflected in the way the two cowboys go from being young and innocent confused cowboys, to husbands who try to take care of and love their families, to worn men who on one hand try to make their marriages work and on the other hand secretly long to be with each other. They each fight an inner fight to repress their true feelings and passion. Ennis and Jack should develop their self-identity through the external events, which are continuously weaved into their ongoing narratives. Unfortunately *Brokeback Mountain* does not show many events which are external from Ennis’ and Jack’s lives, but we can assume that the men would include any external events (that would normally occur) in their development of their selves, as this is important in order to understand how we have become what we are and where we are going, and in that way to know oneself.

Ennis and Jack both appear heterosexual but exercise queer tendencies, even though none of them will admit it at first. The day after their first act of love Ennis initiates a brief conversation to show his bewilderment of the situation (see appendix 5.1). This conversation clearly demonstrates how the two men feel about being queer and that neither of them perceives themselves as having a queer identity. In fact, both men act homophobic, and especially Ennis seems to resist the thought of being queer and behaves like he wants to deny what happened between them. Jack, on the other hand, appears as if he would not mind if more were to happen between them, as long as nobody finds out. They both know that being queer is not accepted in society but Jack seems to be the brave – or maybe foolhardy – one. He is also the one who later in the film seems to long the most for the other’s love.

Both Jack and Ennis appear confused and with mixed feelings about their sexuality and identity. Especially Ennis had not expected a queer thing like his passion towards Jack to happen. When he went to Brokeback for the summer he had already planned on marrying his girlfriend Alma when he returned. He starts out by repelling the very concept of being queer, and seems chocked that he could allow himself to behave this way. Though, after a while he seems to accept the thought of him and Jack together, as long as nobody finds out about their relationship. However, he is cautious and takes precautions, which is demonstrated in one of their conversations during their first reunion after four years (see appendix 5.2). When Ennis says “Bottom line, we’re around each other and this
thing grabs on to us again in the wrong place, wrong time, we’ll be dead” (McMurtry & Ossana, 2005, p. 52) he once again shows that he is the saner of the two when it comes to their relationship. With the statement about the cow-and-calf operation, Jack shows that he would be ready to develop their relationship and be careless of what society thinks.

To reflect further on Hall’s concept of ‘difference’ as described in the theory part, Brokeback Mountain carries more than one meaning. As mentioned in the analysis of the reviews, it has been discussed whether the film should be seen as a story about two gay men or as a love story. The majority is inclined to believe that the main theme of the film is love, and even though the love and passion between the two men is not approved of, these notions exist and play an essential part of the story. Therefore the ‘preferred’ meaning of Brokeback Mountain is love.

In Brokeback Mountain, Jack represents ‘femininity’ or the ‘feminine’ side of masculinity because he marks his ‘difference’ from the traditional stereotypes of cowboy masculinity by using his maternal and loving side as a signifier. We know the traditional description of a stereotypical cowboy, but in order to clarify the signification of cowboys we need to look at its ‘others’. Cowboys are neither chefs, nor secretaries or merchants, and therefore the ‘differences’ of cowboys from these ‘others’ help clarify the meaning of what it means to be a cowboy. Jack signifies the cowboy side of his self by means of his clothing, pronunciation and job, while contesting (by his feminine side) that to be a cowboy, he must always be masculine. His feminine side can be seen in his way of taking care of Ennis during their shepherding season and in the way he long for Ennis’ company (see appendix 6). The character of Jack wants to affirm the possibility of being both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine', though the normal definition of a cowboy assumes that he is exclusively masculine.

Moreover, Jack is a perfectly good example of Saussure’s argument that we need ‘difference’ in order to make sense of identities and that we use binary oppositions to do so. Jack’s wife Lureen is his binary opposition as she is a woman and very independent in contrast to Jack. However, Jack also lives up to Derrida’s claim that grey areas within binary oppositions exist, and that cowboys can have feminine sides even though they are mainly masculine. Jack is not afraid to admit his passion towards men to himself. This is shown both in the way he acts towards Ennis and when we see him in Mexico, looking for male company (see appendix 5.3).
Mowing to the concept of ‘queer’, as mentioned in the queer chapter, the concept has over the years been re-articulated and was previously much more offensive and negative than it is today. With this in mind, the society that Ennis and Jack lived in did not approve of the notion of ‘queer’, and cowboys were seen as straight and masculine Marlboro men. However, one of the reasons for a great part of America as it was constructed in the year 2005 to approve of the film is that ‘to queer’ is a de-familiarization of identities that had otherwise been taken for granted. That is, even though the identity of cowboys was previously regarded differently, as society has changed, so have our associations of cowboys. We (or at least the people who approve of the film) can now accept the fact that a cowboy might be gay.

As Butler claims, there is no definitional closure for identities to obey and Ennis and Jack should therefore be allowed to live out their passion for each other. However, because we can only understand identities if we compare them to the standards, that we already know, and due to social constructivism, Ennis’ and Jack’s passions were not approved of. Ennis could not approve of himself as he could not help but compare himself to the dead queer cowboy his father had shown him as a child. The forbidden acts of the cowboy made Ennis think of his own thoughts and feelings as forbidden.

When this is said, when watching Brokeback Mountain, the perception that society will not allow the two men to be together, and the perception that people around them are homophobic is not stated very clearly. We see how Joe Aguirre (the rancher who hires Ennis and Jack to do the shepherding job) reacts when he sees the two men together, and the film expresses Alma’s disgust and rejection when she sees Jack and Ennis in a passionate embrace and kiss. But other than these two incidences, the film does not express further homophobia or rejection towards Ennis’ and Jack’s relationship. The fear of being discovered and thereby ostracized from society mostly takes place in the head of the cowboys, especially in Ennis’. Society perceives their actions and passion towards each other as wrong, and therefore they do the same.
6 Conclusion
The aim of this thesis was to examine, analyze and compare reviews of *Brokeback Mountain* from popular and academic contexts in order to find the most significant distinctions between them. Next, an analysis of queer and identity theory was to be carried out along with a comparison of the main notions of the theories with the purpose of answering how the film’s main characters reflect the construction of specific aspects of queer identity and self-identity. That is, the concepts of ‘queer identity’ and ‘self-identity’ were to be found in the film and its main characters with the intention of exemplifying the theories.

As mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, after examining the reviews, it is clear that the main discussion of these has been whether or not the film should be labeled a film about gays or a love story. After having analyzed and compared the reviews, it is undoubtedly clear that *Brokeback Mountain* is a love story. This led to a discussion as to which differences were to be found within academic and non-academic reviews and to which extent the love theme is supported in the reviews. It appeared that the academic reviews have built their arguments upon reliable references as opposed to the popular reviews, whose target group does not require proof of the results.

In conclusion, the examination and comparison of the reviews have revealed that *Brokeback Mountain* on the whole was received in a similar way within both popular and academic contexts, though with a much better foundation of the statements in the academic reviews.

Moving to the second part of the problem statement, of the theorists, the thesis has been based on, Anthony Giddens, Stuart Hall and Judith Butler have proven the most suitable for the purpose of the problem statement. Separately, the works of these theorists lack certain parts in order to answer the problem statement, but a combination of the three has proven apposite. They counterbalance each other in a way that altogether compensates for the lacks and absences of important angles to the concepts of ‘identity’. After having examined their perceptions of ’identity’, it is clear that all three of them agree on the fact that identity is a protean process, which is not fixed and never can be fixed. This fact is applicable whether or not it is a queer identity. The identity of an individual will keep changing through time as the individual develops, gets new experiences and differentiates from others.

Through the examination of identity theory it has been clear that the events that occur throughout an individual’s life are important to how this individual perceives him/herself. This applies to whether
these events are internal or external, but the external events are obviously not for the individual to control. The way an individual reacts to certain situations in life and how this individual improves his/her own possibilities in order to detach him/herself from social relations helps construct the self-identity of this individual. The concept of self-identity by Giddens was further developed by Hall’s spectacle of ‘the other’, which states that one can only truly identify oneself by comparing one’s actions and features to individuals who are different than oneself.

The study of queer theory revealed that the notions of ‘queer’ are related to the notions of ‘identity’, as ‘to be queer’ is a certain aspect of ‘identity’. Butler claims that we need to compare an individual to those standards of gender intelligibility that we already know of, in order to truly understand that specific individual. Each individual is defined by well-known gendered norms, but queer identities do not conform to these norms. The queer identities are ‘incoherent’ gendered beings as they behave differently than what we are used to, and these identities are therefore ‘queer’.

In the analysis of the main characters of the film, Jack and Ennis reflect the concepts of identity theory quite well. Their identities change throughout the entire film as they are subjected to different circumstances and thereby develop their selves, which is exactly what the three theorists mean by the aforementioned protean process. Furthermore, Jack and Ennis reflect Hall’s conceptions of ‘difference’, as they seemingly represent the idealistic masculine cowboy, but at the same time exercise queer tendencies, as in the case of Jack’s feminine features. The concepts of ‘queer’ are reflected in the secret passion between Ennis and Jack and in the way they behave when they are around each other.

In conclusion, the main characters of Brokeback Mountain reflect specific queer identity and self-identity features through their actions. However, as the film does not illustrate all external events that occur around Ennis and Jack, it is not possible to analyze the two men completely through the eyes of the theories.

For future research projects this analytical work would be a starting point for a comparison of films with this theme in order to map variations of queer identities and self-identity.
List of References


[Accessed 13 February 14 2014]

[Accessed 10 March 2014].


[Accessed 7 Marts 2014].


List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Review from the New York Times

Appendix 2: Review from Cinema Crazed

Appendix 3: Review from Hetero

Appendix 4: Review from Genders
Accessed 20 February 2014 from http://www.genders.org/g50/g50_koziak.html

Appendix 5: Parts of the script

  Appendix 5.1: P. 20
  Appendix 5.2: P. 52
  Appendix 5.3: Pp. 64-65

Appendix 6: Youtube clip, Scene from Brokeback, "I wish I knew how to quit you"
Accessed 10 April 2014 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTTytc_Dfnc

As it has not been possible to enclose the entire film in the appendix, pages from the relevant pages from the script and a film clip from Youtube have been included in the appendix with the purpose of demonstrate and illustrate Ennis’ and Jack’s behavior and features.