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„The Odd Man Out: Masculinity and Social Exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed*"

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I confirm to have conceived and written this Master thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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HINWEIS

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1. Introduction

Within the last decades various processes, such as the feminist movement or the two men's movements which ensued these attempts at social upheaval in the United States, have moved the concern with questions about men, boys, and gender from a rather small circle of masculinity researchers into the wider academic world and also into the public sphere. Likewise has the considerable increase in alarming reports about the often desperate situation of outsiders in educational institutions aroused large scholarly as well as general interest in the phenomenon of social exclusion. In the following analyses of two juvenile novels, namely Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed*, the sociological insights that have been produced by this enhanced academic and public preoccupation with masculinity and social exclusion will be used to examine institutionalized and individual male gender configurations, as well as processes of integration and isolation in the communities of students that are created in these narratives. By investigating in how far the statuses of selected characters in the respective schools' hierarchies are connected to their failure or success to meet generally accepted standards for men, it will furthermore be propounded to what extent the questions of masculinity and social exclusion are interlinked in these literary works.

The first part of this thesis, which consists of the ensuing three chapters, will be concerned with literary and sociological findings that form the theoretical basis of the subsequent analyses. Since the works that will be used in these succeeding investigations belong to the huge canon of American teenage novels, the first chapter of the theory part will focus on young adult literature in the United States. The research results that will be expounded in these elucidations will demonstrate how this genre has developed since the seventeenth century and what characteristics it has evolved. In this context, the relevance of the discrepancy between adult writers and conceptions of juvenile readers shall be highlighted, as well as the scope to which teenage novels represent actual adolescent living conditions. Moreover, it will be examined in how far the genre is subject of the academic literary discourse. In the ensuing chapter on men and gender, a brief introduction to various schools of masculinity studies shall be given, which will be followed by a presentation of the major conclusions that this branch of

sociology has produced. Afterwards, the development of prevalent male gender configurations in the United States will be traced from the 1980s to the first decade of the new millennium. In the last theory chapter, which will center on the problem of social exclusion, different conjectures on the process of becoming an outsider will be propounded, as well as possible ways of dealing with such a status.

In the second part, the findings which will be presented in the theory chapters shall be used as a framework for the analyses of masculinity and social exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed*. Both of these novels feature adolescent male protagonists who have to face various difficulties connected to their social environment. Therefore, the two works qualify for the investigation of masculine gender configurations and social isolation in teenage fiction, for although some of the issues that are addressed by the authors are also associated with other narrative art forms, such as gay literature, romance fiction, or sports fiction, the characteristics mentioned above justify their classification into the literary category of problem fiction, which is a sub-genre of young adult literature. In both analyses, the first step will be to identify the representatives and some typical features of the school's dominant version of masculinity. The results of this examination will then be used as a reference value for assessing the extent to which the protagonist and a second male character diverge from or conform to the community's ideals for men. Afterwards, it will be demonstrated in how far the protagonist's gender performances are interrelated with his social status in the school's hierarchy. The last two sections of each investigation will illuminate the main character's process of generating a deviant identity, as well as his attempts at coming to terms with the social rank that results from his display of masculinity.

2. Young Adult Literature in the United States

Juvenile fiction not only has a long tradition in the United States, but also constitutes a considerable part of the American book market. However, the genre has been given relatively little attention by literary scholars. This marginalization of young adult literature in the academic world is often reasoned by its addressing the rather particular audience of young – or 'unsophisticated' – readers, which is held responsible for the genre's allegedly inferior literary quality. Furthermore, teenage fiction is frequently understood as a mere pedagogical vehicle used for the distribution of moral and ethic lessons, rather than a literary genre of artistic value. These reasons for the discrepancy between presence in the public and academic investigation in the area of young adult fiction are certainly not a specifically American phenomenon, but there are also cultural factors connected to the nations coming of age that contributed to this mismatch. (see Isensee 33-37)

The following chapter of this thesis will be concerned with the various aspect of teenage fiction mentioned above. After presenting a short outline of the genre's history in the United States, the relevance of the adolescent reader for juvenile novels will be illuminated. The final section will focus on the difficult relationship between teenage fiction and literary studies. These expositions are meant to demonstrate a more differentiated picture of young adult literature and justify academic interest in the genre.

2.1. The Development of Young Adult Literature in the United States

The forerunners of today's teenage fiction appeared on the American continent as early as in the seventeenth century. The first books for young readers, such as John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes* (1646) and James Janeway's *A Token for Children: Being an Exact Account for the Conversation, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children* (1672), were deeply rooted in the English puritan tradition and undoubtedly didactic in character, as these works were supposed to circulate puritan values and ideologies. In the eighteenth century, so called hornbooks and chapbooks became very popular. These cheaply produced pamphlets were sold by

traveling salesmen and contained adventure stories as well as lectures in reading, proper conduct and religion. (see Isensee 47-48)

A thematic change away from religious propaganda was initiated in the first half of the eighteenth century by John Locke's work *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), in which he presented his idea of the child as tabula rasa. Jerry Griswold describes this paradigmatic change by arguing that “instead of Cotton Mather's sickroom, Locke championed the outdoors, instead of prayer and secret fasting, Locke advocated fresh air and exercise, and instead of exemplary biographies with tearful accounts of youthful martyrs, Locke endorsed a stiff upper-lip and Aesop's Fables.“ (872) Locke's concepts of youth and education affected the development of literature for young readers in a twofold way. By introducing a notion of education that had been built in opposition to traditional views, which were deeply rooted in religious beliefs, Locke's philosophy opened up new topical possibilities. Yet, his perception of the young reader as an empty slate contributed to the fact that literature for this particular audience was conceived as a didactic means by which this slate could be filled with knowledge. (see Griswold 872-873) A clear didactic intention was also prevalent during the time after the American Revolution, when literature for a juvenile readership was dominated by biographies of famous personalities like George Washington or Thomas Jefferson. These biographies drafted the national heroes' process of character formation in order to initiate a similar development in the young readers. (see Insensee 50)

The last half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century saw a first differentiation of the genre as more and more texts bent on pleasure reading rather than didactics emerged. Especially the motif of the 'bad boy', which broke with the traditional notion of literature as an educational tool, became increasingly popular during that time. Books like Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870) denoted a landmark in the development of juvenile literature, as they presented a much more realistic portrayal of adolescence by divesting the protagonists of the didactic constraints typically found in older texts. (see Howells 124)

Another milestone in the formation process of young adult literature was the establishment of juvenile departments in the major American publishing houses at the beginning of the last century. (see Swinger 16) At the same time, however, a new strand of teenage fiction that was antithetical to the literary conception of the big publishing houses evolved in the United States. This new strand had a strong commercial orientation, which led to a mass production of texts with recurring literary patterns. A typical characteristic of these texts was simple plots with central adventurous events taking place in some war zone of more recent American history. Later, these adventures were transferred to the school setting or the sports field. No matter what the situation was, however, the brave and highly moral juvenile protagonist always mastered the challenge with flying colors. Further attributes of these publications were a strategy of suspense that was meant to raise the readers' interest in the sequel which featured the same protagonists, as well as the separate addressing of boys and girls. (see Isensee 51-52) Understandably enough, this kind of young adult literature was met with refusal by librarians and educators, who were opposed to these texts because of their unrealistic and simplistic representation of adolescence and its value systems. (see Donelson 512-513)

Although the terms 'junior novel' and 'juvenile fiction' had already been in use for some time, a clear distinction between children’s and young adult literature was only made in the 1940s by the big publishing houses, as the question of what function literary texts ought to serve drew attention to age-specific peculiarities and needs. (see Isensee 53) The following two decades were characterized by a quantitative rise in the number of books written and sold. This development was not least due to an increased academic interest in the genre and the reading habits of teenagers, as well as the omnipresent debate about the role of contemporary juvenile fiction in the classroom. The theoretical foundations on which this debate was built also contributed to a reappraisal of the purpose young adult literature ought to serve, with the result that a significant role in the socialization process was allotted to it. (see Donelson 539) The themes and narrative techniques, however, were still largely determined by traditional conventions and taboos. Donelson convincingly argues that a realistic and comprehensive representation of adolescent living conditions was impossible in texts that almost exclusively focused

on conflicts connected to questions like “dating, parties, class rings, preparing for the school prom, senior year, the popular crowd (or learning to avoid it), and teen romance devoid of realities like sex“ (540). Characteristics of the dominant narrative technique were simple structures with a chronological story line, an omniscient narrator, and conflict potentials that were as obvious as their solutions. (see Isensee 56)

A literary realignment of the genre, however, was initiated by emancipatory movements in the 1960s. The social upheavals of that time had an impact on juvenile fiction in that they effected a removal of taboos and a differentiation of narrative structures. Especially with the emergence of the 'problem novel', young adult literature not only began to engage in new aspects of teenage reality, but also featured rather innovative narrative techniques. (see Isensee 56) Murray argues that for the first time in the history of adolescent writing authors had to choose between “creating stories mirroring traditional values and showing the consequences of antisocial behavior” (184) on the one hand, and dealing with themes “that accepted the teen subculture at face value and challenged adult prohibitions and mores” (184) on the other. Concerning narrative techniques, Roxburgh identified a shift away from an omniscient narrator towards a point of view of the juvenile protagonist, or a change “from an outer to an inner view, the consequence of which are a personalization and fragmentation of experience” (254). This development gave direction to the further evolution of the genre. Within the last four decades, teenage fiction has continuously been approximated to adult literature in terms of its esthetics, while at the same time it managed to get a firm foothold in the literary world as a distinct genre. (see Isensee 56)

2. 2. Adolescence and Literature

The following section of this chapter will focus on the interrelation between perceptions of the adolescent reader and juvenile fiction. Firstly, the relevance that adult authors and conceptions of young readers have for the genre will be illuminated. Secondly, an account of research on the representational power of teenage literature will be given in order to evaluate in how far texts for young readers reflect the reality of their readership.

2.2.1. The Adult Author and the Juvenile Reader

It has been argued that teenage fiction has continuously been assimilated to mainstream adult literature in terms of narrative techniques since the 1960s. However, it has also repeatedly been claimed that there are significant differences between texts written for adolescents and those for adults, which is explained by the unequal status of reader and author. (see Isensee 105)

In literary theory it is generally understood that the construction of a text is closely connected to the problem of power an author can exercise over the audience by consciously restricting and delimitating the thematic range as well as narrative structures, such as point of view, plot, chronology and vocabulary. This is especially true of juvenile fiction, where the relationship between writer and reader is substantially different than in other genres. Isensee even describes this tense relationship as a constructional feature inherent to young adult literature, and the way this tension unfolds in the text as a decisive factor for the character of the literary discourse in teenage fiction. (see Isensee 108) Hunt also highlights the uneven power relation between author and audience in texts for young readers, which he refers to as 'non-peer texts', when he says that the “audience is „created“ by the writer much more directly than with a peer text, in the sense that the text does more than display its codes, grammar, and contracts, suggesting what the reader should choose to be to optimise the reading of the text” (Hunt, 1988, 164). This imbalance between writer and reader is often held responsible for the assumed comparatively poor literary quality of the genre, for it is believed that juvenile novels have to be written in a comprehensible way that allows for the conveyance of some kind of lesson in social and moral values to the less competent readership of teenagers. (see Hunt, 1988, 163-164) Thus, it is necessary to take a closer look at reading abilities of adolescents on the one hand, and the differences between teenage fiction and adult literature as well as the function of juvenile texts on the other.

The widely spread conception of the young reader as inexperienced and immature in dealing with literary works gave rise to a strand of young adult literature that “tells

rather than shows, explicates rather than demonstrates“ (Hunt, 1988, 170), which was supposed to cater for the reportedly special needs of adolescents. Such a conception of youth as well as the works based on it reduce the teenager to a mere recipient of information, devoid of the mental capacities necessary to participate in the communication process of reading. (see Zapf 180) In order to counteract this simplified view on young readers, Hunt introduced the concept of the 'developing reader'. In his understanding, adolescents do not simply receive information from a text, but construct meaning by approaching literary works in manifold ways, since “the developing encounter with texts entails reacting against, as well as conforming to and manipulating, narrative conventions” (Hunt, 1991, 75)

The argumentation that the uneven power relation in juvenile fiction inevitably leads to poor literary quality is negated by Isensee, who claims that the narrative paradigms of texts for adolescents differ from the ones found in adult literature only in the explicitness of the author's superior status. Consequently, the differences between teenage fiction and mainstream adult writing are in degree rather than in kind. According to Isensee, the parallels between juvenile and mainstream texts revealed by such an approach invalidate the general conception of teenage fiction as a mere didactic vehicle that is used to circulate knowledge and value systems. (see Isensee 113) Besides, the belief that literary texts can be used as a means to teach specific lessons with clearly defined outcomes would be absurd. Hunt argues that young “[r]eaders may select completely different conceptual sets from the same texts (despite – or perhaps because of – the author's attempt to tailor texts to specific audiences).” (Hunt, 1991, 75) This quotation highlights the pointlessness of the endeavor to teach particular morals or other social values via literature, since individual readers receive and interpret texts differently.

2.2.2. The Scope of Realistic Representation in Juvenile Fiction

Conceptions of adolescence and the socialization process of teenagers have been of considerable interest in both the American public and academic discourse within the last decades. Literary studies has contributed to this ongoing discussion by examining older

as well as contemporary cultural configurations of youth. In this context, juvenile fiction has repeatedly been credited with the status of being a cultural memory which preserves concepts of boy- and girlhood as well as the value system of a given time. (see Murray 2) The perception of literature for young readers as a mirror of actual social conditions and developments is clearly expressed by Joel Taxel, who argues that "literature for children can illuminate the changing beliefs, values, principles, and assumptions that structure and give meaning to the visions of life and living" (5) and Gordon Kelly, who claims that texts for young readers "reflect the minds of the generation that produced them. Hence, no better guide to the history and development of any country can be found than its juvenile literature." (89-90) These quotations not only underpin the representational power of texts written for adolescents, but also reveal a problem that is related to the non-peer status of the author. Since writers are usually adults, their works can reflect different realities. This means that the construction of juvenile life in these texts can either be a representation of contemporary conceptions of adolescence, a reflection of the author's own youth, or an interweaving of both. (see Isensee 114) Moreover, it must be considered that teenage fiction – just like any other literary genre – legitimately uses its own compositional models to construct the world. These genre-specific representational means, however, are conceived differently in the academic world. Murray, on the one hand, restricts the function of juvenile texts as a "window into the culture" (2) by stating that the depiction of the world presented in these works is a distilled and simplified version of reality. (see Murray 2) Isensee, on the other hand, negates this claim by arguing that such a depiction results from the specific perspective young adult literature has on teenage reality – a perspective that does not discredit juvenile fiction, but rather distinguishes it from other literary genres. (see Isensee 58)

2.3. Juvenile Fiction and Literary Studies

The elaborations on the relationship between reader and author in young adult literature presented above have already suggested that the common perception of teenagers as unqualified readers has led to an extensive exclusion of the genre from academic

research. In the following section of this chapter, the development and scope of this marginalized status will be further illuminated.

A closer view on the history of the critical discourse about literature for young readers reveals that these texts have not always been excluded from the academic world. In the nineteenth century, juvenile fiction constituted an integral part of literary happenings, which can be seen from the fact that at this time “almost every major writer [...] wrote for children as well as adults” (Commager 10) on the one hand, and the intensive concern of literary critics with the genre on the other. Darling even states that “[a]t no other time have such fine critics, such gifted authors, such discerning minds, devoted so much intelligent energy to a critical examination of children's books” (250). From the turn of the century onwards, however, young adult literature has increasingly been neglected by literary scholars. Therefore, the academic interest in teenage fiction seems to have abated with the growing availability of texts for young readers on the book market. This has created a divide between academic literary criticism and criticism of young adult literature that still persists today. (see Isensee 82) The reasons for the increasing marginalization of the genre seem to be connected to the growing importance of the emerging professoriate, which replaced writers' clubs and magazines as the most influential literary arbitrators in the United States of the beginning twentieth century. (see Clark 150) At this time, literary studies in America was striving for professionalism and respectability, which included the necessity “to dissociate America and American literature form youthfulness” (Clark 153). In order to account for this development, it is indispensable to consider the cultural circumstances of the time. Renker argues that “[i]f nineteenth-century America was pervaded by the metaphor of America as a child, then America's emergence as a world power in the twentieth century was marked by the desire to put away childish things” (358).

Although young adult literature critics had demonstrated that theoretical frameworks like new criticism can be applied to juvenile novels since the 1930s, it was not before the 1970s that academic research paid attention to the literary aspects of texts for young readers. (see Isensee 84) Important contributions to the legitimization of teenage fiction were made by feminist theory, which highlighted the similar statuses of young adult and

women's literature in the academic context. Paul claims that “[w]hat feminist theory has done for children's literature studies – and for all fields of literary study – is to insist on the right to be included, but not just as honorary white men. As a result, not only have our interpretations of texts changed, but also our production of them and our access to them” (101-102). Feminist theory not only insisted on the genre's inclusion into the research area of literary studies, though, but also provided for an approach that made its legitimization possible. By re-reading juvenile novels from a different and new perspective that was based on critical concepts like deconstructionism, ideology and subjectivity, feminist theory recreated and rehabilitated these texts. (see Isensee 85-86) During the 1980s and 1990s, feminist criticism seized on postcolonial and cultural studies in order to unveil the ways “in which authority over the 'other' is achieved in the name of protecting innocence” (Paul 109). This approach challenged not only the marginalized status of young adult literature, but also the prevalent conceptions of adolescence. (see Paul 109) The lively discussion following this challenge, however, made clear that theories about teenage fiction were based on two rather different methodologies, namely an educational practical approach on the one hand, and an abstract theoretical one that focuses on esthetics on the other. (see Isensee 87)

This discrepancy between usefulness and literariness is still a much discussed issue in contemporary young adult literature criticism. It has already been mentioned that juvenile fiction must not be seen as a mere didactic vehicle. However, this does not mean that the literary value of texts for adolescent readers is acknowledged by all academics. Richard Alm, for example, argues that authors of teenage fiction “do not penetrate beneath the surface [...] [and] fail to breathe life into their characters [...] The stories are superficial and sometimes completely false representations” (qtd. in Megaliff 18), and Frank Jennings even claims that “[t]he stuff of adolescent literature for the most part is mealy-mouthed, gutless and pointless. The standard thing in contemporary juveniles is a formula which anybody can apply – all that is required is its application” (qtd. in Megaliff 18). Yet, it must be considered that these negative assessments were made before the rise of the 'problem novel', which featured more innovative narrative structures than older texts for young readers. (see Isensee 56) In the previous sections of this chapter, it has been demonstrated that more contemporary scholars highlight the

progressive approximation of teenage fiction to mainstream adult literature in terms of thematic range and narrative techniques. At the same time, however, the genre has developed its own specific characteristics, such as a strategy of identification or particular representational means and perspectives on juvenile reality, which distinguish it from other literary forms. This evolution undoubtedly qualifies young adult literature as an object of academic study.

The analysis of juvenile fiction in the United States has shown how the genre has developed from a pedagogical vehicle whose only raison d'être was the circulation of knowledge and value systems into a distinct art form which deserves to get academic attention. Major contributions to the genre's legitimization were made by feminist theory, which tried to rehabilitate juvenile novels by re-reading them from a viewpoint that combined various theoretical frameworks, such as deconstructionism, ideology, or postcolonialism. Nevertheless, the literary value of texts for adolescents has repeatedly been denied by scholars who justify this marginalized status by the uneven power relation between author and reader as well as the reputedly less competent audience of teenagers. Hunt's conception of the 'developing reader', however, has highlighted the fact that youths are capable of constructing meaning from texts in various critical ways. This notion of a more sophisticated reader is reflected in recent literary works, which feature a range of topics and narrative techniques that is comparable to the one found in mainstream literature. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that young adult literature is credited with the function of being a cultural memory which reflects and preserves actual value systems and conceptions of adolescence. This representational function allows for the analysis of juvenile novels on the basis of social-scientific research on masculinity presented in this paper. The theoretical framework of this analysis will be outlined in the following chapter.

3. Research on Masculinity

Questions about men and boys have been of considerable interest in various areas of life within recent years. The roots of this interest lie in the new feminism movement of the 1970s, which not only called the dominant gender system into question, but also raised issues about masculinity. In answer to the disturbance of the gender system caused by the feminist movement, two 'men's movements' based on new-age therapy and right-wing evangelism found big support in the United States in the 1990s. In other English-speaking countries, where these men's movements were not as strong as in the U.S., issues like male violence, men's health, and boys' assumed disadvantages in education were often intensely debated in public discussions. The fact that our knowledge and beliefs about masculinity and how boys grow into it can have far-reaching effects on spheres of general interest, such as education, health services, violence prevention, policing, and social services, has moved the concern with questions about men, boys and gender from a small circle of intellectuals into the public arena. Unfortunately, a school of pop psychologists took advantage of this development and circulated a drastically simplified view of what constitutes and complicates masculinity. Their central conception of today's men suffering from being cut off from a highly stereotyped true or deep masculinity is oriented towards nostalgia of a past when men were hunter-gatherers and providers for their dependent families. Nonetheless, by stressing men's emotional problems and highlighting the possible negative effects of masculine stereotypes, some of these pop psychologists also contributed to more serious and profound research on masculinity. The most important area from which valuable insights into the serious study of masculinity can be obtained, however, is the social-scientific research on men and gender that has been developing over the last two decades. (see Connell 3-6)

Before the major conclusions of recent masculinity studies will be presented, a short outline the history of this branch of social studies shall be given by very briefly introducing its various schools. The final section of this chapter will be concerned with concepts of masculinity in the United States.

3.1. Social Research on Masculinity

The forerunner of recent masculinity research was no less a figure than Sigmund Freud with his psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis demonstrates how adult personality, comprising such elements as sexual orientation and identity, is shaped by conflicting developmental processes. What is especially important for the study of masculinity is the fact that gender roles in one's family are seen as a key factor in the development of adult personality. (see Lewes, qtd. in Connell 8) Furthermore, case studies have revealed the internal divisions or even contradictions of male characters, which are often unstable and built on a number of psychological compromises. (see Chodorow, qtd. in Connell 8) The theory of psychoanalysis was later combined with social analysis methods by different scholars, most prominently by the Frankfurt School. This group of intellectuals wanted to find alternative ways that lead to the construction of masculinity, intending to support democracy and fascism with their work by focusing on class relationships. (see Holter, quoted in Connell 8)

Around the middle of the 20th century, however, the new social-psychological framework of 'sex roles' became increasingly influential, as many social sciences scholars grew suspicious of the usefulness of psychoanalysis in masculinity studies. This concept was the further development of the idea of 'social roles' originating from anthropological research of the 1930s. The concept of 'sex roles' was used to refer to patterns of social norms and expectations, which were supposed to be transmitted from one generation to the next in the socialization process. Therefore, masculinity was determined by the degree of conformity with society's expectations and norms for the behavior of men (see Hacker, qtd. in Connell 8). Although much of what was written about 'sex roles' did little more than circulate stereotypes, the concept still shines through in many recent discussions of masculinity (see Connell 8). Nonetheless, the framework of 'male roles' gave rise to some interesting and important discussions about boys' and men's difficulties with conforming to the norms and changing the society's expectations for men. (see Hacker, qtd. in Connell 8)

A third approach to the study of masculinity developed in the 1980s from sociology and other academic disciplines such as anthropology, history, and media studies. This concept, which is often referred to as 'social constructionism', builds on feminist ideas of gender as a structure of social relations, on sociological studies of subcultures, marginalization, and resistance, and on post-structuralist analyses of discursive identity formation and the connections between gender, race, sexuality, class, and nationality. The most prominent research techniques used by social constructionists were ethnographic and life-history methods, by which the social construction of masculinities in a specific setting and at a particular time were investigated. A major contribution from this school to the study of masculinity in general was its realism, which was needed as a rectification to the impalpable, abstract theory of sex roles. (see Connell 8-9)

3.2. Major Conclusions of Recent Masculinity Studies

In the following, the most significant conclusions of this vast body of research will be outlined, following Connell's (*The Men and the Boys*) synopsis of empirical data gathered by numerous scholars from various schools of masculinity studies. These conclusions will be of relevance for later chapters of this paper, as I will use the sociological findings propounded here in order to analyze literary works in terms of their representation of masculinity.

3.2.1. Multiple Masculinities

Social research – especially ethnographic studies – has shown that there is no one and only masculinity that is to be found everywhere around the world and throughout human history. In fact, each culture and each historical period construct their own gender patterns. This is why it is more appropriate to talk about masculinities rather than masculinity, even more so in the multicultural context of our globalized world, where myriads of dynamics come into play in the formation of gender systems. Diverse constructions of masculinity, however, cannot simply be explained by different cultures or ethnicities. Such diversity is also found within any one specific setting. (see Connell

10) Connell clearly expresses this idea by writing that "[w]ithin the one school, or workplace, or ethnic group, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using a male body." (10) Which way of learning to be a man one chooses, however, will be determined by various factors, such as individual personality, character, ethnicity, and culture as well as collective schemata of the social setting. (see Connell 29)

3.2.2. Hierarchy and Hegemony

The multiple masculinities within any given setting do not simply coexist in an egalitarian way, though. Each variety of masculinity displayed within a community has its specific social status that is defined by its relations to other ones. This system of relations leads to the formation of a hierarchy with certain masculinities dominating over more or less inferior or marginalized versions. This means that there is usually some hegemonic variety of masculinity that is desired by most men of the community. Yet, the hegemonic version is not necessarily the most common one. It is actually a very limited number of men – such as football stars or other sporting heroes – who can live as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, while most other men find themselves in some way incompatible with the honored and aspired masculine form and therefore in constant tension with the gender patterns. This tension results from anxieties produced by the omnipresent dominance of the hegemonic variant of masculinity, which can be subliminal or overtly enacted, as it has happened in violent attacks on homosexuals. (see Connell 10-11) In order to understand how such a hierarchy comes into existence, it is important to take the overall gender system into account, as it is done by Connell in the following observation.

> A strong cultural opposition between masculine and feminine is characteristic of patriarchal gender orders, commonly expressed in culture as dichotomies and negations. Hegemonic masculinity is thus often defined negatively, as opposite of femininity. Subordinated masculinities are symbolically assimilated to femininity (e.g. abuse of 'sissies', 'nancy-boys'). (Connell 31)

Consequently, hegemonic forms of masculinity commonly show as few traits of what is considered to be feminine conduct as possible. A blatantly obvious example of a

violation of this rule is homosexuality, for being physically attracted to men is clearly associated with femininity in western society. (see Connell 30)

3.2.3. Collective Masculinities

The fact that one man's pattern of conduct is always seen in relation to other male gender performances already indicates that conceptions of masculinity are developed collectively rather than individually. In social research on men and gender it is understood that institutions where men interact with each other on a regular basis, such as schools, workplaces, sports teams or – on a larger scale - the state, have an impact on members of the community in that they impose specific ideas of maleness, including a notion of what constitutes the hegemonic variety. As it has been outlined above, these shared ideas of what it means to be a man still allow for a multitude of masculine performances, and therefore also for the possibility to choose between different ways of enacting manhood. Nevertheless, the various forms of maleness are always constructed and evaluated within the gender framework of the community. Furthermore, the collective enactment of these different masculinities within their relational ordering helps to sustain, perpetuate, and disseminate the codes of conduct and the hierarchical system prevalent in an institution. It is also understood, however, that the relevance of various institutions for the process of gender formation and the circulation of masculine conceptions fluctuates. While a certain institution might be very influential at a specific place and time, it might be a different one the next moment or in a different locality. (see Connell 11) In other words, social settings institutionalize and circulate specific gender regimes in which various masculinities originating from collective processes as well as individual choices are embedded. However, different institutions are not equally influential in this process – competitive sports being very prominent at the moment. (see Connell 29)

3.2.4. Bodies as Arenas

Unlike earlier understandings of masculinity, such as biological essentialism or pop psychology, recent research does not see gender performances as conditioned by the

body. Nevertheless, the materiality of the body definitely influences the formation of masculinity, for male performances necessarily refer to body-reflexive practices like sexuality, violence, labor, and self-interpretation, which are all connected to the reproduction process. (see Connell 59) Studies on the relation between body and gender have furthermore shown that the maintenance of male gender with a female body is extremely strenuous for the woman performing such a gender crossing and vice versa. (see Connell 12) This can be explained by the fact that the female physiognomy is not an appropriate stage for male performances in that the displayed conduct cannot refer to the body, just like the male body cannot be the referent of female performances. Connell's argumentation that "bodies are arenas for the making of gender patterns" (12) suggests that the arena for the configuration of masculinity is the *male* body, which is therefore the only place where it can be performed authentically. Female conduct, however, is repugnant to the male body and consequently regarded inappropriate and transgressive. Vice versa, patterns of conduct also have an impact on bodies. Sociological research inspired by the work of Foucault and feminism shows how codes of conduct – or 'body practices' – imprint gender on the body. Referring to the work of Turner, Connell states that "[s]ociety has a range of 'body practices […] which address, sort and modify bodies. These practices range from deportment and dress to sexuality, surgery and sport." (58) However, there are limits to the embodiment of manhood, which can often be observed in professional competitive sports, where men's bodies are regularly driven to the point of destruction or filled with various chemical substances to push the boundaries of physical enactment of masculinity. (see Connell 12) In other words, recent sociological research emphasizes the fact that the male body does not determine masculine patterns of conduct, although it is where these patterns are developed and to what they refer. Moreover, the body and masculinity patterns correlate in that body-reflexive practices play a role in the formation of gender and that codes of conduct affect the body. However, it is often difficult to identify a clear direction of influence. Sexuality, for example, works both ways. The reproductive instinct of men clearly affects masculine patterns of conduct, while at the same time the concept of successful masculinity – including an active sex life – disciplines and shapes the male body (e.g.: sports in order to be attractive) and allows for physical pleasures (e.g.: regular sexual intercourse).

3.2.5. Active Construction

In contrast to earlier concepts of gender formation, more recent studies have shown that masculinity is neither biologically nor socially fixed, but actively constructed. Connell writes that "[m]asculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting." (12) This means that the formation of individual masculinities is the result of conscious negotiation and interaction in various institutions. (see Connell 31) This also has implications for the understanding of how boys learn to be men. What used to be seen as a simple passing on of behavioral patterns in the course of the socialization process by the sex role theory has been shown to be a complex and complicated search for one's place in the masculinity hierarchy of different institutions like school or family. (see Connell 12) This search is not always characterized by conformity, though. Patterns of conduct can also be constructed in opposition to what institutionalized schemata of masculinity promote as desirable, which cannot be done without negation and dispute. (see Connell 31) The hegemonic form of masculinity, however, can only be achieved and maintained via active scrutiny, adjustment, and conformity to the honored patterns of conduct within a given social setting - a process that sometimes comes at a high price, for example bodily damage, stress, or depressions. (see Connell 12)

3.2.6. Internal Complexity and Contradiction

Detailed research has shown that masculinities are commonly heterogeneous, which means that men's patterns of conduct often conflict with or even contradict their desires. Psychoanalysis has long been aware of such a conflict, but still the importance of this point has often been neglected. (see Connell 13) Contradictions, however, can arise not only between a man's conduct and desires, but also between different facets of his conduct or between his various desires. In this context, it is important to mention that the division of labor in western societies, which holds primarily women responsible for the raising of children, has further led to fact that many men display what is commonly understood as female conduct and desires. The gender ambiguities and contradictions

that may result from the absence of a strong bond with a male caregiver are incompatible with honored and aspired forms of masculinities. (see Connell 17)

3.2.7. Dynamics

In social-scientific research it is generally understood that collective as well as individual masculinities can vary and change. Numerous studies have demonstrated that male gender structures are alterable, as both individual and collective masculinities "[…] are created in specific historical circumstances and, as those circumstances change, the gender practices can be contested and reconstructed." (Connell 13-14) Nevertheless, the restructuring of a gender system including its hierarchy is a slow and tedious process, for such a system of relational ordering is always connected with power, wealth and certain privileges. (see Connell 13-14)

This summary of recent research on masculinity has shown that earlier frameworks, such as biological essentialism and sex roles, can no longer be underpinned. The male body does not determine masculinity, but it is where patterns of conduct are produced and to what they refer. Neither is gender a simple matter of conformity to passed on norms and expectations. It is essentially actively constructed and therefore highly complex or even contradictory, as well as changeable. Such an active construction is influenced by not only individual personality traits, but also by collective processes in various institutions. These institutions establish and circulate a relational system between the manifold masculine patterns of conduct represented in the community, with a hegemonic form and several subordinate ones. These key conclusions of recent studies on masculinity will be of relevance for the following chapters of this thesis, as I will refer back to them in my analysis of masculinities in contemporary American teenage fiction.

3.3. Concepts of Masculinity in the United States

The following expositions are primarily based on Brenton J. Malin's book *American Masculinity under Clinton* and trace the development of – mainly hegemonic – male

gender patterns from the 1980s to the first decade of the new millennium. Malin's analysis of popular media in terms of their representation of masculinity is a very promising one, as it depicts not only gender processes at work in the American society, but also how these processes are inscribed in media such as television and advertisement, as well as various forms of art like film and music. Although this work does not have an explicit literary focus, its findings are very fruitful for the analysis of any kind of art engaged with the representation of masculinities. Malin reiterates most of what has been outlined in the previous section of this chapter, for example the fact that gender structures are not inherited, but actively constructed and therefore changeable, that there are competing versions of masculinities with a dominating form that is circulated throughout institutions, which is in this case the United States, that the conception of masculinity correlates with the materiality of the male body, and most importantly, that masculinity is often highly conflicting and even contradictory. (See Malin 2-8) The subsequent analyses, however, will demonstrate how the principles of gender formation presented above operate and constitute a particular masculine zeitgeist. Moreover, it will be shown that the conception of masculinity in the United States have undergone substantial changes within the last three decades.

3.3.1. The 1980s

In the 1980s, American notions of masculinity were characterized by the image of the 'hard body' which featured traits like "muscular physiques, violent actions, and individual determination". (Jeffords 21) In her book *Hardbodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, Susan Jeffords offers an explanation for the development of such a masculine gender pattern by associating it with the 'Reagan Revolution', which saw the United States emerge as the only superpower after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. (see Jeffords 16-17) During this time on the fast track in the international competition for supremacy, the United States circulated a concept of masculinity that was marked by "individualism, liberty, militarism and mythic heroism" (Jeffords 16) and that celebrated men that "prove their own and America's massive strength" (Malin 8). The circulation of such a male gender conception was due in no small part to the film industry in Hollywood,

which presented its audience with a series of hypermasculine heroes in movies like *First Blood* (1982), *Terminator* (1984), *Lethal Weapon* (1987), *Top Gun* (1986), or *Batman* (1989). (see Jeffords 16-17)

The ‘hard body’ was not the only ground on which masculinity was constructed in the 1980s, though. Jeffords has demonstrated that the 'Reagan Revolution', which comprised “on the one hand a strong militaristic foreign-policy position and, on the other hand, a domestic regime of an economy and a set of social values dependent on the centrality of fatherhood” (Jeffords 13), gave rise to a conception of masculinity that combined the traditional hypermasculine ideal with the rather different notion of the sensitive family man. (see Jeffords 13) Towards the end of the decade, however, the coexistence of these two conflicting concepts lost its balance in favor of the more sensitive family man. This development away from hypermasculine patterns of conduct towards a more sensitive and domestic-oriented gender configuration for men was widely understood as a threat to traditional forms of masculinity, which explains why the concept of the 'hard body' was never entirely abandoned. (see Malin 29-30)

3.3.2. The 1990s

Although such contradictory and conflicting masculinity structures can be identified throughout the history of the United States, the move away from traditional gender patterns at the end of the 1980s was exceptional and induced what is often referred to as the ‘crisis of masculinity’ in the 1990s. (see Malin 8) Malin describes this crisis as follows:

> […] ‘90s men seemed caught up in contemporary arguments critiquing the heterosexist, patriarchal, classist, and racist values traditionally underwriting the standard picture of the “real American man.” […] [P]opular ‘90s men depict a conflicted masculinity that both embraces and puts aside a variety of masculine stereotypes. Such conflicting examples provide evidence of the ‘90s “crisis of masculinity”, a set of challenges to traditional masculinity identified by both popular and academic sources. With arguments regarding the identity politics of race, class, gender, and sexuality working to critique the standards on which traditional masculinity had been built, the notion of a true, real manhood underwent particular challenges. (Malin 8)

By challenging the traditional values of American manhood, the crisis marked masculinity, which had until then been "universally generalizable" (Kimmel 4), in that especially white, heterosexual, middle-class men had not been considered identities as such, but plainly citizens. The term 'gender' and all the labeling associated with it was applied to women, who were therefore seen as deviating from the common, general citizen. The unmarked status of men was clearly used to sustain power and to subordinate marked identities. By raising accustomed values like heterosexism and patriarchy to question, however, the gender structures became visible and masculinity lost its universally generalizable status. This process not only challenged older versions of maleness, but also opened up new possibilities and allowed for less traditional codes of conduct. By generating these changes, the crisis of masculinity produced what is commonly referred to as the '90s 'new man' (see Malin 9-10), who "can transform himself from the hardened, muscle-bound, domineering man of the eighties into the considerate, loving, and self-sacrificing man of the nineties." (Jeffords 153) However, this does not mean that more traditional values of masculinity were completely abandoned. It is rather the case that the 'new men' of the 1990s commonly showed qualities that were usually associated with older forms of maleness from which they had supposedly deviated. Such recurrences of traditional gender performances can be explained by anxieties connected to earlier configurations of masculinity. These anxieties about being regarded as effeminate or unmanly urged 'new man' to balance their novel conceptions of manhood by displaying features of older masculine patterns of conduct. Hypersexual talk or activities emphasizing one's heterosexuality, for example, were often used by sensitive men to fend off fears and rumors of being homosexual. (see Malin 10)

Another important characteristic of dominant American masculinity not only during the 1990s, but throughout the twentieth century was the striving for middle-class success. This idea is clearly expressed in Goffman's notion of the 'unblushing American'.

> In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports… Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior;

> at times he is likely to pass and at times he is likely to find himself being apologetic or aggressive concerning known-about aspects of himself he sees as undesirable. (Goffman 128)

This ideal, however, was conflicting with "the rugged individualism" (Malin 62) that constituted another defining trait of hegemonic male gender configurations. Goffman's 'unblushing American' was commonly regarded as a feminized, spineless bootlicker, who had traded his masculine identity and individuality for unmanly sensitivity and conformity with the cozy middle-class world of offices and neat houses in the suburbs. Working- and lower-class masculinities that violated middle-class values were still conceived ambiguously, though. On the one hand, they were celebrated as 'real American masculinities' of men who "know how to get their hands dirty and would rather experience the world than push papers across it" (Malin 63), while on the other hand they were subject of constant ridicule because of features like unpredictability in terms of behavior and frame of mind, as well as "convivial indulgence"[1] (Bourdieu 179). Such a concomitance of admiration of and contempt for middle-class values definitely contributed to the highly conflicted and contradictory character of American masculinities in the 1990s. (see Malin 62-63)

3.3.3. The New Millennium

According to Malin, the traumatic events of September 11, 2001, evoked another change in American conceptions of masculinity. While the 'new man' of the 1990s already represented a rather contradictory form of maleness by combining traditional values with a novel kind of middle-class sensitivity, the new hegemonic version of American masculinity is even more conflicted and contradictory, as it features both great heroism and deep vulnerability – a male gender configuration that was circulated and promoted by pictures of ashen-covered firefighters who break down in tears after heroically trying to rescue people from the collapsing Twin Towers of the World Trade

[1] "The art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living. In the face of the new ethic of sobriety for the sake of slimness, which is most recognized at the highest levels of the social hierarchy, peasants and especially industrial workers maintain an ethic of convivial indulgence." (Bourdieu, 179)

Center. (see Malin 146) The emergence of this new gender structure for men after 9/11 can be described as follows:

> Here, conflicting conceptions of masculinity combine with heroic celebrations of "manly virtues" [i.e.: courage and self-sacrifice], all alongside a celebration of new American unity that denies difference of race, class, and sexuality, much as white, abstract, masculine citizenship has traditionally done. In the midst of these conflicted negotiations of manhood, Goffman's unblushing, universal maleness returns with hyperbolic force, framing masculinity as the ultimate measure of nationhood, citizenship, and ethics more generally. (Malin 148)

Malin's analysis makes clear that the time immediately following the attacks of 9/11 saw the advent of a "nationalistic, hypermasculine" (Malin 145) man, who replaced the "pro-sensitive" (Malin 145) 'new man' of the 1990s. The 'new man' concept had already featured hypermasculine patterns of conduct in order to compensate for the newly discovered sensitivity, but the events of September 11 gave rise to an even extremer shaping of this male gender characteristic and justified it by the need to stave off the deep vulnerability experienced in this tragedy. (see Malin 163) Therefore, the new ideals for men of the 21st century can be regarded as a further development and accentuated version of 'crisis of masculinity' characteristics of the 1990s. (see Malin 171)

Another interesting aspect about the new conception of masculinities is the increased importance of homosocial rituals as a means of male bonding. Homosociality – the "brotherly contact, cooperation, and competition" (Malin 149) – has always had a special status in the United States, though, as the concept is linked to one of America's first heroes, the 'self-made man'. (see Malin 148-151)

> The central characteristic of being self-made was that the proving ground was the public sphere, especially the workplace. And the workplace was a man's world (and a native-born white man's world at that). If manhood could be proved, it had to be proved in the eyes of other men. From the early nineteenth century until the present day, most of men's relentless efforts to prove their manhood contain this core element of homosociality. From fathers and boyhood friends to our teachers, coworkers and bosses, it is the evaluative eyes of other men that are always upon us, watching, judging. (Kimmel 26)

Homosocial rituals, such as team sports, hunting, or bachelor parties, function as "*the arena* for demonstrating one's masculinity" (Malin 149) by establishing contact and allowing for competition between men, which is particularly needed in masculine crises like the one described above. A closer investigation of homosocial behavior, however, shows that these rites are no less contradictory than the notions of masculinity that caused the crisis. By providing a space where men can prove their virility in opposing as well as friendly interactions with each other, homosocial rituals can underpin and confirm maleness. Yet, they also challenge this maleness by opening up an opportunity for emotional and physical intimacy – characteristics that are incompatible with hegemonic concepts of manhood and therefore rather rejected by many men. Hypermasculine locker room conversations about sexual experiences, for example, are often an indication for some insecurity produced by the presence of other nude men. (see Malin 149-150) Therefore, "the homosocial space of the locker room seems to threaten the masculinity it seems intended to strengthen." (Malin 150)

The analyses presented above have outlined how the American conception of masculinity developed from the tough and traditional 'hard body' of the 1980s into the more sensitive 'new man' of the 1990s. This novel male gender configuration, however, was rather contradictory and conflicted, for it was also characterized by hypermasculine patterns of conduct which were meant to balance the newly acquired sensitivity. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, produced an even more pronounced version of this antithetic masculinity, so that the male hero of the new millennium is a hypermasculine and at the same time hypersensitive man.

In this chapter, it has been shown how the concern with questions about men and boys has developed into a fully-fledged scientific sub-discipline of sociology within the last few decades. More importantly, however, it has been demonstrated that this branch of research can pride itself on having produced a viable and comprehensive framework for the understanding and analysis of masculinity. The synopsis of the large body of social-scientific studies propounded here comprises the key elements of male gender structures as well as the main parameters for their formation, namely the coexistence of multiple masculinities and their relational ordering in a hierarchy, the influence of institutions

and the male body on the formation of patterns of conduct, and the notions of active construction, internal complexity and dynamics. These expositions are primarily based on Connell's book *The Men and the Boys*, since this work already represents an excellent summary of recent masculinity research. Moreover, the conclusions outlined by Connell are underpinned by the works of other contemporary scholars, such as Malin and Jeffords, who based their analyses of hegemonic masculinities on the same sociological findings. These interesting investigations of dominant male gender patterns in the United States have traced the transformation of the 'hard body' of the 1980s into the 'new man' of the 1990s and finally the hypermasculine and hypersensitive exemplar of manliness in the new millennium. All these findings will be relevant for the upcoming chapters of this thesis, which will be concerned with the analysis of literary texts along the lines of social-scientific insights into the study of masculinity.

4. The Problem of Social Exclusion

> Das Wort "Außenseiter" enthält eine Degradierung des mit ihm Gemeinten, eine negative Wertung, denn es ist bezogen auf eine als positiv, als gültig und verbindlich hingestellte und weithin verinnerlichte gesellschaftliche Norm, nämlich den Tüchtigen und Begünstigten, den Favoriten des gesellschaftlichen Rennsports, den Insider, den, der "in" ist, das heißt den von der Gesellschaft anerkannten und von ihr integrierten Menschen, den die kommerzielle Werbung mit Eigenschaften wie "erfolgreich", "jung", "gesund", "sportlich" und ähnlichen Attributen ausgestattet hat. Diesem gehört die Welt, er schmiedet sein Glück, und frohen Herzens tritt er über die am Boden Liegenden hinweg und wendet sich den erfreulichen Seiten des Daseins zu, so unbeschwert und so zynisch, wie der Privilegierte nur sein kann. (Weißenborn 21-22)

This quotation has been chosen as an introductory stimulus to the subsequent chapter on the outsider, for it expresses some of the most relevant parameters for the investigation of this phenomenon, such as social norms, which determine the status of the individual in- or outside a community, or the position of power that people conforming to these norms occupy and exert over those who cannot or do not want to meet the requirements set for them. Despite the perpetual topicality of social exclusion, the problem had been neglected by academic research for a long time, mainly because scholars feared that the preoccupation with outcasts would stigmatize themselves. This situation changed with the emergence of symbolic interactionism, a sociological subdiscipline that was developed by George H. Meads, and the Chicago School of Sociology, which became famous for its work in the field of urban sociology. (see Luckmann XIV) The results of this research, which will be briefly outlined in this chapter, form another theoretical basis on which the analysis of juvenile novels will be built. First, the social nature of human beings shall be illuminated. This will be followed by a survey of different theories on how people become outsiders and an outline of what possibilities a person who suffers from social exclusion has.

4.1. Men as Social Beings

In order to understand the phenomenon of social exclusion, it is necessary to take the relationship between the individual and society into consideration. Although the first

definition of the term 'individual' listed in the Macmillan Dictionary is “a person considered separately from their society or community”, human beings are essentially social. (see Thomas 69) This means that people not only operate within concrete communities and groups at all times (see Klugermann 115), but also identify themselves as members of these societal units. (see Thomas 250) Such an understanding of the interdependence between individual people and social entities also suggests that the development of personalities is impossible outside society. Symbolic interactionists express this idea by claiming that human beings are not born with a fully fledged personality, but with certain basic tendencies which can develop in various ways. Only the interaction with other people can give an exact direction to this process. (see Thomas 195) Furthermore, social groups also contribute to the understanding and definition of the 'self' in that they function as an organ of critical opinion on the one hand, and enable the individual to evaluate their personality by means of comparison with fellow members of the group on the other hand. Put another way, communities serve as controlling bodies that force their members to reconsider their 'selves' in regular intervals, and urge them to change and adapt if necessary. (see Thomas 43)

4.2. Reasons for Social Exclusion

The following section will be concerned with the various concepts that have been proposed in order to account for the phenomenon of social exclusion. Furthermore, evaluations of these concepts on the basis of symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School of Sociology will be presented. The findings outlined here are primarily premised upon the work of Becker, who combined the theory of symbolic interactionism with methods used by the Chicago School. (see Luckmann XIV) All concepts mentioned in this section share the assumption that social exclusion is the result of deviant behavior, which is why first of all a synoptic overview of the most influential definitions of deviance shall be given. This will be followed by a survey of what motivates the display of anomalous conduct. Finally, it will be shown how occasional deviance can turn into a stable pattern.

4.2.1. Definitions of Deviant Behavior

The simplest way of capturing divergence is a statistical comparison to average values. This approach, however, disregards the fact that not all differences from the majority are considered violations of the rules a community has agreed on. In modern western societies, for example, right-handedness is definitely the norm, but yet the mere fact that somebody is left-handed does not make them outsiders. (see Becker 4)

A less trivial and rather common definition sees non-conformist conduct as a kind of illness or symptoms of mental disorders. This conception bears analogy to medicine. Just like the body is considered to be sick if it displays deviances from what has been defined as healthy, behavior is considered to be sick if it displays deviances from what has been defined as normal. However, there is no definition of normal behavior that is as readily accepted as the definition of a healthy body. Moreover, this approach locates deviance primarily in the individual and is oblivious to important social components at work. (see Becker 4-6)

Structural functionalists like Merton and Parsons have propounded a concept that differentiates between functional and dysfunctional conduct. In other words, behavioral patterns that either support or impede the goals a community pursues. This thought impetus clearly puts the individual into a wider social context, but empirical studies have shown that it is difficult to pin down what performances are functional and which ones are dysfunctional. Since the aims of a social unit are often a political question that is connected to power, different fractions within the community or group try to enforce their own perception of what purpose ought to be pursued. Consequently, members of a community are usually at odds with each other over what demeanor can contribute to the accomplishment of their objectives and which performances are considered deviant. This political dimension is not accounted for by the functional approach. (see Becker 6-7)

The most promising concept of deviance identifies non-compliant behavior as disobedience of rules that members of a social entity have agreed on. Each community or group lays down rules of conduct that define appropriate behavior in certain

situations. If these rules can be enforced, anyone who does not observe them runs the risk of gaining a reputation as a traitor. The consequence of this is that people who are unable or do not want to live by the code of conduct that the community has laid out for them suffer from a greater or lesser extent of social exclusion – they become what is generally referred to as outsiders. (see Becker 1) Becker extends and supplements this concept by arguing that deviance is produced by the society. By saying that he does not mean that the social situation of a person leads to non-conformist performances, but that communities apply their rules differently to different people. Deviance is therefore not an inherent quality of an action, but rather the consequence of the application of rules by others. In simpler terms, whether an action is aberrant or not is determined by how people react to it. The mere fact that somebody transgressed a rule does not mean that other members of the community impose sanctions against the misdemeanant. Then again, such sanctions can be imposed even though no rule has been infringed. What shape the reaction to a contravention of principles takes depends on who commits the violation and on who is impaired by it. Such a differential application of rules has been proved by numerous empirical studies. Moreover, the reaction is also influenced by the point in time at which a transgressive act is made, since misdemeanors seem to be sanctioned differently at different times. (see Becker 8-11)

4.2.2. Motivations for Deviant Behavior

A widely accepted, although very general model of reasons for deviance has been proposed by Hans Mayer, who differentiates between 'intentional outsiders' who choose to lead a solitary life as freaks, and 'existential outsiders' who are forced into this unwanted role by some higher power. Mayer is further convinced that individual cases cannot always be included into either one category or the other, but that many mavericks are a hybrid form of both intentional and existential outsiders. (see Mayer 14-15)

Becker also distinguishes between two types of outcasts, namely those who display non-compliant behavior on purpose and those who do so unintentionally. The latter is simply explained by a person's unconsciousness of what constitutes appropriate conduct and

what is seen as anomalous. Deliberate nonconformity, however, is a much more complex issue. While psychological theories propose that the reasons for intentional deviance can be found in the need to satisfy wishes arising from an individual's early childhood experiences, sociological theories claim that contradictory social expectations force people to knowingly act in a divergent way in order to solve these contradictions. However, Becker argues that the problem has to be approached from a different perspective. He is convinced that most people are tempted to ignore the agreed on code of conduct every so often. Therefore, the question is not what motivates a person to do something that is disapproved of by the community, but rather what distinguishes them from people who do not acquiesce to their temptations. In some cases, the answer to this question can lie in the want of social bonding. Whereas most people go through a process of experiencing how the realization of personal interests is dependent on the observance of behavioral patterns, those who are said to act anomalously have successfully avoided getting involved with the group, community or society that passes such a judgment on them. Undesirable demeanor does not stake such a person's reputation. Most people that show deviant behavior, however, know and accept the guidelines set out by the social unit. What distinguishes them from the rest of the community is the way they interpret these directives. If the pursuit of putatively legitimate interests calls for non-compliant behavior, such comportment is viewed at least not entirely inappropriate by the individual. However, the community may be of a different opinion and sanction the transgressor's performance. People who diverge from behavioral standards in pursuit of what they perceive as legitimate interests usually want to maintain their reputation and will try to justify their actions by claiming that somebody else or the circumstances forced them to violate the code of conduct. (see Becker 22-26)

4.2.3. Stabilization of Deviant Behavior

Becker argues that the first step on the way to the formation of a stable non-compliant pattern of behavior is the adoption of divergent interests which arise from the interaction with people who are experienced in some kind of deviant comportment. If those people manage to get novices enthusiastic about their aims, the newcomers will

soon appropriate and display the code of conduct prevalent in a group of kindred spirits. (see Becker 27)

A second important step in this process is the experience of being publicly stigmatized as somebody who acts anomalously. Such a stigmatization has consequences for a person's social participation and self-conception in that it changes their social status. From that moment on, affected people are seen from a different angle. They are no longer considered to be 'normal', but some kind of labeling is attached to them. Stigmatization and labeling denote the point where a person's demeanor is rated generally rather than specifically deviant. Such a treatment produces a self-fulfilling prophecy, for it forces people into the roles that others have designed for them. Transgressors are often denied important ways and means to lead a conventional life, such as participation in compliant social groups, which makes it impossible for them to abide by rules that they in fact have never intended to violate. Therefore, stigmatization and labeling can lead to the contravention of more rules and an increasing display of deviant behavior. (see Becker 28-32)

The last step in the process of stabilizing divergent patterns of conduct is the affiliation with a group of other unconventional people who all display the same kind of deviance. Such a group gives the socially excluded person security by conveying the feeling that all members share the same fate and problems. These similarities and the ensuing social cohesion promote the development of a subculture which has its own conception of the world and its own code of conduct. If an individual agrees to those ideas and standards, being part of a subculture produces and solidifies a deviant identity. Furthermore, fringe groups circulate an ideology that justifies their existence. The acceptance of this rationalization, which is often characterized by a rejection of conventional institutions and moral values, allows outsiders to stick to their deviant behavior. (see Becker 34-35)

4.3. Possible Solutions to Social Exclusion

Now that reasons for divergent conduct and its stabilization have been presented, the last section of this chapter will be concerned with the alternatives a socially stigmatized

person has. Georg Hansen argues that there are three ways of dealing with the outsider status. These are segregation, assimilation, and partial assimilation. (see Hansen 18)

Segregation refers to the process outlined above, namely that people who display the same deviant behavior band together in a marginal group or subculture. Such a community exists alongside the majority group and as a societal unit takes the outsider position. In the case of segregation, the individual does not change their demeanor, but their social surrounding. The concept of assimilation relates to the exact opposite. Here, the stigmatized person stays in the community and tries to adapt to the prevalent value system and code of conduct. Former interests and patterns of behavior are waived in behalf of conventional standards and the hegemonic ideology. Therefore, assimilation cannot be achieved without a greater or lesser degree of self-abandonment. However, if the stigmatization is based on unalterable features like skin color or homosexuality, the outsider will never be able to fully adjust to social demands. Partial assimilation denotes a hybrid form of the two options mentioned above. The individual assimilates only to a point that makes communication with other people possible. This solution will not turn the outcast into a fully fledged member of the community, yet it does not involve self-abandonment either. (see Hansen 18)

In order to understand why social exclusion constitutes a serious problem for affected people, it is indispensible to acknowledge the essentially social nature of human beings. For this reason it has been shown that groups and communities have a considerable impact on their members' personality development as well as on the way people perceive and define themselves. As a second step, it has been demonstrated that social exclusion is dependent on a number of factors. In most cases, the process of becoming an outsider is initiated by the transgression of a rule that the group or community has agreed on. The reasons for such a deviant behavior can be found in the scarcity of social bonding or the broad interpretation of social directives in the pursuit of putatively legitimate interests. However, deviance is not primarily a quality that is inherent to an action, but arises from the rather arbitrary application of rules. Hence, divergent behavior is produced by the society. It has further been outlined how unconventional performances become a permanent feature of an individual's comportment. This process

has been traced from the pre-deviant stage of interacting with non-conformist people to the self-fulfilling prophecy of social stigmatization and the potential consequences of affiliating with a subculture. Finally, segregation, assimilation and partial assimilation have been presented as possible ways of dealing with the status of an outsider. These insights, together with the findings on masculinity that are propounded in the third chapter of this thesis, form the basis on which the subsequent investigation of American juvenile novels will be built.

5. Masculinity and Social Exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club*

The following chapter on male gender configurations and social exclusion in Brent Hartinger's novel *Geography Club* will show how the theoretical framework which has been outlined in the previous parts of this paper can be transferred and applied to the study of literary texts. Such a sociologically influenced approach to young adult fiction is possible and useful because of the genre's realism in the representation of actual juvenile living conditions that has been pointed out in the second chapter of this paper. The findings of social-scientific research on men and gender that have been presented in the third chapter will understandably form the main theoretical basis of the section on masculinity, which will be concerned with the identification of representatives and features of desirable manhood on the one hand, and individual characters' gender configurations as well as their strategies of coping with deviances on the other hand. The ensuing investigation of social exclusion, which will primarily draw upon the symbolic interactionist insights that have been expounded in the fourth chapter, shall demonstrate to what extent the protagonist's masculinity is interrelated with his status and social participation. In this context, the main character's rise and fall on the social ladder will be delineated. Afterwards, his process of generating a deviant identity shall be illuminated, as well as his attempts at coming to terms with his social status and non-compliant qualities. First of all, however, a short plot summary shall be provided in order to facilitate a better understanding of the ensuing reflections on the text.

5.1. Plot Summary

Brent Hartinger's first work *Geography Club* tells the story of a secretly homosexual sophomore student at Goodkind High School called Russel Middlebrook, who is also the first-person narrator of the novel. One day, Russel meets another boy from his school in a gay chat room and agrees to a face-to-face meeting. When he arrives at the meeting point, he can hardly believe his eyes, since the person waiting there is Kevin Land, one of the school's celebrated baseball stars and the boy who has repeatedly attracted Russel's attention. A few days later, Russel tells his best friend Min about his

same-sex preference and finds out that she is bisexual. Together with Ike, who is another homosexual boy from their school, Min, her girlfriend Terese, Russel, and Kevin start the Geography Club, which is in fact used as a platform for the discussion of problems which are related to the members' sexual orientation. This function does not change even when the first heterosexual person, Belinda Sherman, joins them. However, the Geography Club dissolves after a dispute about the eligibility for membership of Brian Bund, the school's unquestioned outcast. Parallel to these events, Russel goes out with Trish Baskin, since this is the precondition for his friend Gunnar's rendezvouses with Kimberly Peterson. On their third date, Trish makes unequivocal advances, so that Russel has no choice but to end this relationship which was based on the misunderstanding that he is sexually interested in women. Furthermore, Russel also joins the baseball team in order to spend more time with his meanwhile more than platonic friend Kevin, and after he hit a winning homerun, his membership in the group of athletes is fully accepted. Yet, this changes abruptly when Kimberly spreads the rumor that Russel is the homosexual student who has been mentioned by a health educator in an interview with the school newspaper. All of a sudden, he finds himself in the role of an outsider and makes friends with Brian Bund, who eventually whitewashes Russel by furnishing fake evidence that he is the one who entrusted himself to the health teacher. Although this altruistic act fully restores Russel's reputation, he refuses to return to the circle of popular students, which means the end for his relationship with Kevin. A few weeks later, Brian, Gunnar, and all former members of the Geography Club, except Kevin and Terese, found the Goodkind High School Gay-Straight Alliance.

5.2. Configurations of Masculinity

The subsequent investigation of masculinities will demonstrate how the findings of social-scientific research on men and gender, which have been outlined in the third chapter of this paper, apply to the community of high school students that is constructed in Brent Hartinger's novel. As a first step, the theoretical concepts presented above shall be used to identify the bearers of desirable manhood and to define some typical features of hegemonic male gender performances. Afterwards, the individual masculinities of

two characters, namely those of the story's protagonist Russel and the baseball star Kevin, shall be illuminated. In this context, it will be shown on the one hand in how far these characters deviate from the community's ideals for men, and on the other hand what strategies they have developed to cope with their non-conformist tendencies.

5.2.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

The following section will be concerned with the examination of hegemonic masculinity as it is presented in the world of Brent Hartinger's novel. Before some of the typical features that are associated with dominant male gender performances can be surveyed, it is necessary to identify the bearers of honored and desirable maleness, that is those boys who occupy the highest position on the community's social ladder.

5.2.1.1. Bearers of Hegemonic Masculinity

The text clearly lends itself to the assumption that the school's exemplars of desirable manhood are the 'jocks', a group of male athletes. This claim will be supported by an analysis of selected extracts from the novel in terms of the sportsmen's rank in the hierarchy of the school. Such an investigation necessarily has to focus on the validity of the group's rules of conduct, for it must be supposed that the status of a societal unit rises with the number of people who acknowledge their behavioral codex. The extent to which the jocks' precepts are accepted by other groups becomes especially obvious in situations where they humiliate fellow students. The main target of degradation is Brian Bund, the school's prototype of an outsider.

> Brian Bund, a junior, was sitting by himself at a table in the corner, his hunched, bony back to the room. Someone had flung a big spoonful of chili at him, and it had spattered across the back of his white T-shirt. [...] A lot of people were laughing at Brian now, but the jocks, sitting two tables away from him, were laughing the loudest. I was certain the projectile chili was their handiwork. [...] I wasn't surprised by any of this. Brian Bund was the unquestioned outcast of the school. The jocks teased him mercilessly, and almost everyone else watched and laughed while they did it. (Hartinger 7-8)

Although the action described in the passage above would probably be considered improper in most situations, it is absolutely acceptable for the majority of students at the Goodkind High School in the given context. Two factors are responsible for such an attitude. Firstly, deviance is produced by the society. Brian definitely does not conform to the desirable code of conduct, but that alone does not make him the object of constant humiliation. It is rather the case that for some reason the jocks have chosen him as someone to whom the rules that have been laid down by them are extraordinarily strictly applied. Secondly, the hegemonic and influential status of the school's athletes leads to the fact that most other students enthusiastically advocate their code of conduct, including directives on who is to be sanctioned for the contravention of rules as well as on the extent to which this may be done. If the jocks' position in the social hierarchy of the school were any other but the dominant one, the kind of behavior toward Brian described above would probably not be tolerated by the vast majority of students. However, the next passage highlights the sportsmen's supremacy even more explicitly.

> Brent and Nate acknowledged their deed [i.e. humiliating Brian Bund] with little smirks and tiny little bows. I doubted they'd get in trouble for their actions. Maybe they'd acted alone in this, but they hadn't really been alone. They'd been acting for the whole school. That's why no one, not even Brian, would tell on them. Besides, they were jocks. Jocks got special treatment. (Hartinger 184)

These lines leave no doubt as to who occupies the dominating position at Goodkind High School, for they indicate that the validity of rules laid down by athletes is accepted by all students and even the school staff. This idea is suggested by Russel's highlighting the fact that no one would question or publicly deplore the severe sanctioning of what the hegemonic group has defined as deviant behavior. Therefore, the rules of the school's athletes are obviously in force throughout the institution, and although this does not mean that everybody agrees to the precepts of the popular students, such a situation would be impossible if those precepts were not at least considered to be valid. This also means that in contrast to other groups, sportsmen can execute their rules without having to fear reprimand, which gives them the freedom to victimize anybody who acts in opposition to their standards. In this context it is important to note that exposing people to ridicule can be seen as a means of 'knocking others down a peg', which corroborates the prevalent hierarchical system. By constantly teasing subordinate groups, the jocks

protect the privileges their social rank entails and contribute to the preservation of the status quo.

5.2.1.2. Characteristic Features of Hegemonic Masculinity

Now that the athletes' supremacy has been proved by demonstrating that the validity of their rules is generally accepted, various characteristics of the male gender performance that is associated with the circle of these popular students shall be illuminated.

Sociological research has shown that one of the main criteria for the assessment of individual masculinities is the degree of divergence from or conformity to female gender patterns. Connell argues that "[h]egemonic masculinity is [...] often defined negatively, as opposite of femininity. Subordinated masculinities are symbolically assimilated to femininity" (31). The following quotation demonstrates that the importance of this criterion is also manifest in Brent Hartinger's novel.

> Sure enough, there was Brian Bund standing by a pair of double doors that led into the darkened school theater. Someone on the other side of those double doors had just pushed him out into the cafeteria. That wasn't all they'd done. They'd also wrapped a bra tightly around his chest, then smeared lipstick and rouge all over his face. A nanosecond later, the lunchroom exploded in laughter. [...] Meanwhile, Brian panicked. This was too much, even for him. (Hartinger 182-183)

This passage emphasizes that effeminate conduct and hegemonic masculinity are mutually exclusive in the school community, since it permits to make the justified assumption that the dominant group's deed of coercing Brian into displaying behavioral traits typically associated with women distances themselves from female gender performances. The reasons for this assumption lie in the interrelationship between the hierarchical system and patterns of conduct. Whether somebody is admitted to or excluded from popular groups is determined by their conformity to the dominant rules of behavior. Therefore, it is above all the demeanor of an outcast that is rejected by the hegemonic social unit. This is of course equally true in the case of Brian Bund. The school's hierarchy admits of no doubt that he and the jocks are at opposite ends of the

social ladder, which means that the bearers of honored masculinity deplore Brian's conduct and dissociate themselves from it. This suggests that they also dissociate themselves from the feminine behavior of the kind that is displayed by Brian in the situation described above. The fact that Brian was forced into such comportment does not invalidate the assumption that the jocks' act of humiliation distances themselves from female gender performances. On the contrary, such a deliberate coercion further proves that the popular group sees the display of features that are typically associated with women as a major deviance from the hegemonic pattern of conduct for men, for otherwise they could not have expected the humbling effect that their deed was meant to achieve. Moreover, the extract from the text explicitly expresses that Brian's effemination is regarded as humiliation by not only the athletes, but also most other groups represented in the institution. Hence, it must be assumed that the display of features that are characteristic of women's demeanor is considered undesirable for boys by the school community as a whole, which corroborates the claim that female gender performances are incompatible with hegemonic masculinity. The undesirability of featuring feminine behavior is also reflected by Brian's own reaction. Unlike in previous incidents of humiliation, he does not simply walk away this time. Even for him, who is used to ridicule and contempt from his fellow students, being dressed up as a girl has crossed a borderline and cannot be ignored. He desperately tries to divest himself of the signs of femininity that have been forced upon him, but "while the makeup was thick, it couldn't cover the terror on his face" (Hartinger 183).

Another essential characteristic that constitutes the hegemonic notion of manhood is also connected to the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity. It has just been demonstrated that one of the school community's generally accepted rules for boys purports to strictly avoid the display of features that are associated with female patterns of conduct. However, the analysis presented above has not been concerned with the ultimate violation of this rule, namely homosexuality. Various scholars who engaged themselves in the study of masculinity have propounded that the physical attraction to other men is a compelling criterion for exclusion from the group of men who can function as exemplars of desirable maleness. From Goffman's 'unblushing American' of the 1960s to Jeffords 'hard body' of the 1980s and Malin's 'new man' of the 1990s, as

well as the more pronounced version of this ideal in the new millennium, all concepts of hegemonic western masculinity emphasize the imperative of heterosexuality. This repeated corroboration leaves no doubt about the veracity of the claim that homosexuality and the dominant version of manhood are incongruous. In the following, the validity of this claim for the community that is created in the novel will be examined. The subsequent quotation makes clear that the hegemonic code of conduct provides clear guidelines for the physical contact between men. “So far, the other guys on the team had patted, slapped, prodded, and hoisted me – pretty much everything one guy could do to another guy in a public place and not get arrested.” (Hartinger 145) This sentence unequivocally suggests that any contact that goes beyond a rather short touch may be rated as a transgression of rules. In certain situations, however, more intimate bodily contact like embracing seems to be classified as absolutely appropriate behavior. After hitting a homerun, Russel is hugged by nearly all members of the baseball team, who form a fundamental part of the hegemonic group, and nobody considers this conduct to be deviant. Yet, the acceptance of this kind of physical contact is based on the assumption that all men involved are heterosexual and does definitely not imply that homosexuality is tolerated. This claim is supported by Russel's reasoning which finds its expression in the following quotation.

> [T]he fact that I even thought about getting naked with a guy in a sexual way was something that Kevin and Leon and Brad and Jarred and Ramone would never ever understand. [...] [O]ne sure way to *become* the least popular guy was to have people think you might be gay. And not being gay wasn't just about not throwing a bone in the showers. It was a whole way of acting around other guys, a level of casualness, of comfort, that says, “I'm one of you. I fit in.” (Hartinger 3-4)

Russel's conviction that the jocks would never approve of homosexual predilections underpins the theory that being physically attracted to other men is seen as a severe contravention of the dominant rules of conduct. This and the fact that anybody who commits such a violation has to envisage social isolation prove the mutual exclusion of homosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, the above passage highlights two further important aspects. Firstly, social exclusion does not only result from actual homosexuality. It is rather the case that the way that other people perceive someone's sexuality determines whether this person is sanctioned. Secondly, the evaluation of

people's sexual orientation is based on behavioral performance. This means that if a man or boy manages to hide his same-sex preference and successfully constructs his individual masculinity in compliance with the hegemonic variety of maleness, the social status of this person will not be negatively affected by his homosexuality. Conversely, heterosexual men may be excluded from popular groups because their patterns of conduct give reason to infer that they feel physically attracted to their own sex. Hence, social isolation does not result from being homosexual, but from displaying behavior that is generally associated with homosexuality. By implication, heterosexual performances conform to the dominant code of conduct and can increase a man's social rank, which is also suggested by the following extract from the novel. “I knew he wasn't joking about the added status he thought a girlfriend would give him. And to be absolutely frank, Gunnar was right about the whole girlfriend/status connection.” (Hartinger 25) Having a relationship with a girl is the prototypical heterosexual behavior for boys, as it underlines their physical attraction to the opposite sex. More, it is seen as a proof of heterosexuality, which is why it allows occupying a higher position in the social hierarchy of the community. These deliberations are related to two of the main theories about maleness that have been proposed by social research on men and gender. For one thing, the understanding of the interrelationship between social exclusion and same-sex preferences that has been outlined here demonstrates that masculinity is actively constructed, since it underlines that it is the behavior which a man chooses to display that is evaluated, not his actual characteristics. Moreover, Russel's reasoning that the desirable form of manhood can only be achieved by actively adjusting to the dominating patterns of conduct highlights the fact that male gender configurations arise out of interaction in social institutions. Therefore, individual masculinities are not specified by genes or inherent to personalities, but necessarily have to be produced by the way that men act around other people. For another thing, the mutual exclusion of hegemonic masculinity and homosexuality as well as the correlation between having a heterosexual relationship and social status emphasize the fact that dominant rules of conduct are influenced by body-reflexive practices, since only the union of a man and a woman can satisfy the reproductive instinct. Vice versa, the popular students' behavioral codex has an impact on their bodies, for being a sportsman definitely shapes and modifies one's physiognomy. This assertion is

supported by Russel's thoughts on the jock's appearance. “I glanced away, but there were more visual land mines to avoid – specifically, the bodies of Leon and Brad and Jarred and Ramone, other guys from our P.E. class, all looking like one of those Abercrombie & Fitch underwear ads come to life.” (Hartinger 3) Yet, it is not only the dominating form of maleness that affects men's bodies, nor is this affectation always evaluated positively. Brian's “hunched back” (Hartinger 7), for instance, can be understood as being conditioned by – and hence also expressive of – his subordinated gender configuration and the low status that is attached to it. The same ideas of active construction and the reciprocal influence of bodies and patterns of conduct can be found in sociological literature on men and gender.

So far it has been shown that the hegemonic form of masculinity in Brent Hartinger's novel is essentially heterosexual and does not permit the display of features which are typically associated with femininity. Yet, being an exemplar of desirable manhood involves more than distancing oneself from female patterns of conduct and homosexuality. The protagonist's reasoning, which is outlined in the above quotation, suggests that such a status also requires a high level of self-confidence, for anyone who strives for admittance into the circle of boys who are seen as bearers of the dominant variety of maleness by the majority of the school community necessarily has to act in a way that highlights his personal conviction that his gender performance justifies membership in this group. The connection between self-confidence and hegemonic masculinity is also stressed by Kevin's explanation of the reason why he feels attracted to men, namely that he likes that “they're bold and confident”. (Hartinger 129) It is reasonable to assume that this characterization refers primarily to the jocks, for since he is on the baseball team himself, this is the group Kevin knows best. He also appreciates that men are “not afraid to take risks” (Hartinger 129), which indicates that intrepidity and audacity are two further qualities that constitute the coveted form of maleness. This idea is further supported by the jocks' habit of chewing tobacco during practice, for the taking of drugs – especially at the age of a high school student – usually involves a greater or lesser degree of aberrance from a healthy and legal way of living, which means that the baseball players risk not only their state of health, but also being punished by teachers, parents, or other authorities. However, self-confident, dauntless,

and venturous conduct is not restricted to certain situations like baseball practice, nor is it always displayed as obviously as in the case of chewing tobacco. It is rather the athletes' everyday pattern of behavior that extraverts these characteristics. The frequent use of swearwords, such as “dickheads” (Hartinger 145) or “cocksucker” (Hartinger 204), as well as Russel's observation of two jocks' “even cockier swagger than usual” (Hartinger 183) imply that the school's sportsmen have a language and even a specific way of walking that highlight the honored masculine features mentioned above. Hence, it can be assumed that other aspects of the popular students' general demeanor are equally expressive of these qualities.

The analysis of hegemonic masculinity in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* has revealed that the community's honored and desirable version of manhood, as it is represented by the school's athletes, features characteristics such as a strong opposition to female patterns of conduct and a heterosexual imperative, as well as self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity. These qualities are typical of all conceptions of dominant masculine gender performances that have been proposed since the 1960s. However, the apparent absence of sensitivity as an essential element of hegemonic maleness suggests that the masculine ideals represented in the text correlate best with the 'hard body' conception of the 1980s, which would mean that the author found inspiration for the novel in his own teenage experiences rather than in contemporary adolescent life. This reasoning is supported by the writer's own assertions. The following quotation is taken from an interview between Brent Hartinger and Teenreads.com. “The truth is, Russel isn't me exactly. But he thinks like me, acts like me, and looks like me (at least he looks like I looked in high school).” (Teenreads.com) These lines emphasize that although the book is not an autobiography, it is still strongly related to the writer's personal experiences. Since it is reasonable to suppose that Hartinger was a high school student in the 1980s, this statement corroborates the claim that the jocks in the novel are exemplars of the 'hard body' conception of manhood.

5.2.2. Individual Configurations of Masculinity

In the previous section, an analysis of male gender performances that are regarded as desirable by the community of students at Goodkind High School has been presented. However, Connell's argumentation that “[w]ithin the one school, or workplace, or ethnic group, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using a male body” (10) makes clear that not all boys are exemplars of the hegemonic form of maleness. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that masculinities are not fixed, but actively constructed. This idea implies that individual versions of manhood can be built not only in accordance with dominant gender configurations, but also in opposition to these honored and generally accepted standards. Either way, the construction of masculinity always involves a lot of negotiation and sometimes even dispute and negation. These processes will be the focuses of the subsequent section of this paper, for it will be shown how two of the novel’s characters, namely the protagonist Russel and the baseball star Kevin, constitute their individual manhood.

5.2.2.1. Russel's Configuration of Masculinity

The story's protagonist Russel is a generic example of the dispute which can arise from the process of constructing one's gender configuration, as he is in a constant state of being torn between the hegemonic version of maleness on the one hand, and a subordinate form of masculinity that corresponds to his desires and personality on the other hand. The reasons for this internal conflict as well as the way that the protagonist deals with it shall be presented in the following analysis. As a first step, qualities of Russel's character that are considered to be deviant from the dominant male ideals will be illuminated. Afterwards, it will be shown by what means he tries to build his masculinity in compliance with the honored variety of manhood despite these deviant features. Finally, an investigation of homosociality shall be presented, for these situations provide interesting insights into the main character's process of gender formation.

5.2.2.1.1. Deviances

The doubtlessly most decisive factor that contradistinguishes Russel from prevalent masculine ideals is his sexual attraction to men. These feelings are clearly expressed in the subsequent phrases. “I liked guys. Seeing them naked, I mean.” (Hartinger 3) However, the lines immediately following this confession highlight the protagonist's hesitant handling of his homosexuality. “But – and this is worth emphasizing – I liked seeing them naked on the Internet; I had absolutely no interest in seeing them naked, in person, in the boys' locker room after third period P.E.” (Hartinger 3) Obviously, Russel feels rather uncomfortable in situations that could reveal his sexual predilections, such as undressing in front of other nude men. This malaise can be accounted for by the assumption that he is familiar with the dominant rules of conduct for boys, including the heterosexual imperative, which rate same-sex preferences as transgressive behavior. Since he is also well aware of the possibility that a violation of the heterosexual imperative causes severe sanctioning, he has decided to keep his physical attraction to men a secret and to indulge in his desires only privately and anonymously. Russel does not only keep his homosexuality from being made public, though, but also any characteristics that could suggest his more than platonic interest in men, which can be seen in the following extract from the novel. “As for me, I didn't want to see either the romantic comedy or the erotic thriller. I wanted to see the animated Disney musical, which I guess just proved that I really was the gay boy that I'd been thinking all along that I was. But once again, I knew enough to keep my opinion to myself [...].” (Hartinger 83) These thoughts prove Russel's awareness that it is not his desires and inclinations that are evaluated by others, but his performances. Consequently, he has no reason to fear any sanctions for being attracted to men as long as he does not display features which are generally associated with homosexuality. The deliberations presented so far emphasize the protagonist's anxiety to distance himself from his sexual interest in men. However, it is important to bear in mind that this behavior does not arise from personal conviction, but rather from the fear of possible consequences that a violation of the heterosexual imperative entails, namely to become an outsider. The subsequent quotation underpins the idea that Russel's denial of his same-sex preference is a rather involuntary act by showing that in the private sphere of his cogitations he dissociates himself from hegemonic heterosexuality and instead identifies with the marginalized

group of homosexuals. “I was the first to admit I didn't know how these crazy straight people did their dating thing. (I didn't know how we crazy gay people did our dating thing either, but that was a whole other story).” (Hartinger 101) The above remarks about this passage bear on the interesting use of pronouns, as the story's protagonist refers to heterosexual people with the third person plural pronoun 'they' and consequently marks them as the 'others', whereas homosexuals are related to by using the inclusive first person plural pronoun 'we', which implies the speaker's membership in the denoted group of people.

Another characteristic that is featured by Russel but does not correspond to the dominant rules of conduct for men is sensitivity. In the previous section, it has been demonstrated that the popular boys at Goodkind High School represent the 'hard body' conception of masculinity, which implicates that emotive behavior is rated as undesirable by the community. However, in the following it will be shown that the story's protagonist nonetheless features this unpreferred quality. One indicator for Russel's sensitivity is his consideration for other people's feelings in the subsequent three instances. Firstly, Russel abandons the thought of making Gunnar feel guilty for urging him to go on a double-date against his will, since he supposes that his friend already suffers enough from being treated dismissively over the course of the evening. These notions are clearly expressed in the succeeding quotation. “There was no reason to make him feel worse for having set me up with Trish. [...] The only reason I hadn't said anything Saturday night was because I didn't want to make him feel any more miserable than I assumed he already did.” (Hartinger 98-99) Secondly, Russel empathizes with his date Trish, although it is her sexual advances and the leverage she exerts that leave him no choice but to reject her. The ensuing sentence from the novel encapsulates these deliberations. “I felt bad I'd hurt Trish's feelings, but there wasn't much I could do about it.” (Hartinger 176) He even feels responsible for the girl's dejection and wishes to make his refusal of intimacy bearable for her, which can be seen in the following passage. “Did I owe her an explanation? It seemed like I did. But what could I say? “It's not you,” I said. “It's me. This was just a bad idea.” (Hartinger 177) Thirdly, Russel is haunted by guilt over bringing Brian Bund into derision together with two other boys from the baseball team. This idea is suggested by the short but honest

apology to the victim of his ridicule. “Look,” I said. “I'm really sorry about the other day in the hallway.” (Hartinger 196) The next extract emphasizes the main character's guilty conscience even more explicitly. “[...] I especially had a responsibility to help him, to make up for what I'd done to him in the hallway with Jarred and Nolan.” (Hartinger 168) These lines also imply that the uneasiness that arises in the protagonist from hurting another person's feelings makes him want to amend his wrong, which in the end he does by becoming friends with Brian. However, Russel displays his sensitivity most obviously in Kevin's car after he prematurely ended his third date with Trish because of her sexual advances. “I started to tell him what had happened, but I'd barely even begun when I burst out bawling. “Hey,” he said. “Sokay.” Then he held out his arms for me, and I buried myself against his chest. I'd never cried in anyone's arms before, but I have to recommend it. It felt really good.” (Hartinger 180) This quotation describes an action that violates the dominant rules of conduct in a twofold way. On the one hand, the close physical and at the same time emotional contact between two boys can be regarded as a contravention of the heterosexual imperative. On the other hand, crying is an explicit exhibition of emotions and therefore stands in marked contrast to the community's hegemonic ideals of masculinity which classify sensitivity as undesirable.

5.2.2.1.2. Attempts at Concealment

The investigation of Russel's masculinity that has been presented so far highlights qualities which most members of the school community rate as deviant from the dominating code of conduct. Yet, Russel makes considerable efforts to comply with the desirable gender configuration by trying to keep his deviance from the hegemonic behavioral codex a secret.

To begin with, it shall be demonstrated how the story's protagonist strives to conceal his homosexuality by displaying strictly heterosexual demeanor. This claim can be inferred not only from the fact that Russel goes out with a girl three times, but also from the way he behaves during his rendezvouses, for the following quotations suggest a perfectly appropriate dating conduct. “When we were through eating, Gunnar and I paid the bill.”

(Hartinger 113) This sentence points out that the boys bear all costs incurred from the date, just as it is expected from cavaliers with suave manners. The next phrase further underpins this assertion. “We'd just gotten there, and I'd just dropped twenty bucks getting us both inside.” (Hartinger 113) Moreover, Russel also takes actions that suggest sexual interest in the girl with whom he goes out, such as asking for a dance and kissing her. “Then we kissed. Her face was in shadow, so our mouths kind of missed at first. But then we made contact.” (Hartinger 86) He even keeps his heterosexual facade by leaving the door open for a deepening of their relationship when the evening is over, which is indicated by their farewells. “Trish pulled away first. “Call me?” she said. “Definitely,” I said.” (Hartinger 86) Such a splendid dating conduct makes the self-projection as a straight boy a very convincing one. The main character's own thoughts reflect the success of his attempts at adjusting to hegemonic patterns of behavior. “For the first time in my life, I was the kind of guy a girl snuck out of her house at night to meet (except I wasn't really).” (Hartinger 112) Furthermore, the assumption that the story's protagonist manages to construct his masculinity to a considerable extent in compliance with the dominant version of manhood is also corroborated by other people's reactions, just like the one of two boys who Russel and his date pass by in the local mall. “They both looked at Trish, their eyes scanning her like an X-ray machine. Then finally they looked at me, and I knew what they were thinking. They were jealous.” (Hartinger 84-85) Yet, the heterosexual facade seems to crumble in the face of the possibility to actually have sexual intercourse with a girl. When Trish makes an unequivocal advance, it is extremely difficult for Russel to sustain the image of a straight boy. This point is proved by the discussion which results from his inhibition to accept her offer:

> “You haven't done it before,” Trish said. “Have you?” “What?” I said, shocked and appalled. “Yes! I've done it!” “When? With who?” [...] “You sound like I'm on trial,” I said. “This girl on my block.” This was a complete lie. There was no girl. There never would be a girl, not if I could help it. “It's okay if you haven't. It's no big deal.” I didn't say anything. “What?” Trish said. “Are you gay or something?” “No! Of course not!” Obviously another lie.” (Hartinger 118)

Although Russel is doubtlessly cornered and pilloried by Trish's inquiries, he manages to shuffle out of the situation without losing his face by admitting to be a virgin. This

confession placates Trish and induces her to give Russel more time. A further interesting aspect about the main character's dealing with his physical attraction to men is the fact that even in a private conversation with another homosexual boy he considers heterosexual experiences to be important. At their first meeting, which they arranged in a gay chat room, Kevin asks Russel if he has ever had sex. The answer to this question as well as the thoughts on which its formulation is based underpin the claim made above. “Well,” I said, “not with a guy.” Notice the careful wording on this. I wasn't actually saying I'd had sex with a girl, because I hadn't. But it was phrased in such a way to make Kevin think that I had.” (Hartinger 21)

In order to keep his rather pronounced sensitivity a secret, the story's protagonist embarks on a strategy of reserve and discreetness. This means that Russel is most of the time anxious not to expose his feelings beyond an extent that is rated as acceptable by the community's standards, which can be seen in the subsequent passage. “I had told Kevin that I felt out of place too, but I'd left out the part about feeling lonely, because I thought it sounded a little too Oprah.” (Hartinger 23) Furthermore, he makes sure that incidents of emotional bursts, such as crying in Kevin's arms, are restricted to situations where it can be expected that this kind of comportment is tolerated by the people surrounding him. It has to be considered, however, that Russel's sensitivity is primarily represented in his thoughts. Since it is the behavioral codex of a community that prompts people to withhold thoughts whose voicing and display may result in undesirable demeanor, it can be concluded that the verbalization and enactment of the main character's emotions is equally constrained by the dominant code of conduct. Hence, Russel's effort to keep his sensitivity a secret, that is to construct his masculinity in accordance with the hegemonic gender conception for men, is emphasized by the presence of emotive thoughts and the comparatively small number of feeling-based actions.

5.2.2.1.3. Attempts at Adjustment

The above deliberations about the protagonist's gender configuration have highlighted not only his deviances from the honored ideal of manhood, but also strategies he

pursues in order to deal with – or rather conceal – characteristics which are classified as undesirable by the generally accepted rules of conduct. Since Russel intermittently aspires to be admitted to the popular group of athletes, however, he has to function as an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity, which requires more than just disguising one's deviances. What the story's main character has to do to gain the status of a jock shall be examined in the following.

The first step on the way of becoming a genuine sportsman is initiated by Kevin's suggestion to join the baseball team, and even though he has a rather low opinion of the sport, Russel accepts the proposal in order to spend more time with his friend. Yet, he soon realizes that throwing balls and swinging bats is not enough to be eligible for authentic membership in the circle of admired students, since an essential component of being an athlete is the display of features that have been identified above, namely intrepidity, self-confidence, and audacity. In what way the story's protagonist adjusts his own performances to this code of conduct can be seen in the subsequent passages from the text. The first quotation presented in this context highlights Russel's urge to prove his suitability for the popular group by not flinching from taking a risk:

> I'd never chewed tobacco before. (I'd only smoked cigarettes twice.) And the thing was, I didn't particularly *want* to chew tobacco. When it came to putting cancer-causing toxins into my body, I was no Gunnar, but I was a bit of a health nut. Then I remembered what Kevin had said about liking his guys bold and confident and willing to take risks. Besides, I was a baseball player now; I had to try chewing tobacco at least once, right? (Hartinger 133)

Although it may be argued that chewing tobacco is a comparatively small risk, the main character's thoughts make clear that it costs him quite an effort to ingest harmful substances and that he only suppresses his fear of health-endangering behavior for the sake of adapting to the jocks' pattern of conduct. The fact that Russel strives to impress Kevin rather than the whole team does not invalidate this claim. Being an admired athlete himself, Kevin not just represents the values and rules of the dominant group, but also appreciates them as much as any other sportsman. This means that only by acting in compliance with the jocks' behavioral codex will Russel be able to make a good impression on his friend. The next extract from the novel stresses his striving to

exhibit self-confidence. “Kevin had told me that baseball was as much a psychological game as a physical one, and that intimidating the pitcher with a confident stare was an important part of playing [...] Okay, I thought. No more negative thoughts.” (Hartinger 141-143) These lines clearly express that baseball players must not be daunted by their adversaries, but are expected to oppose them intrepidly, which in turn implicates that athletes need to exhibit a high level of self-confidence. Although this is apparently none of the protagonist's most distinctive characteristics, he does his best to believe in his skills and to cast aside self-doubts. More importantly, however, the main character's self-confidence is also represented in his comportment. This idea can be inferred from Russel's cogitations on his preferential treatment after he hit a homerun. “A week earlier, I might've been freaked out by all this attention, but I'd already become an old hand at the fame game, so I took it all in stride.” (Hartinger 153) Such thoughts suggest that as the school's new baseball star Russel displays a more relaxed and self-assured demeanor. The feature typically associated with the jocks' behavior that corresponds least with the protagonist's personality is audacity. However, the following quotation shows that the peer pressure exerted by his team members betrays Russel into exhibiting bold and insolent conduct. “How'd you hit it like that?” Jarred asked me. “Huh, Middlebrook?” “Shoot, that was easy,” I said. “I just pretended the ball was the pitcher's head!” I was no fool. I knew what sort of material would work on a crowd like this.” (Hartinger 146) This passage shows not only that the story's main character scoffs at his opponent, but also that this action is taken in order to meet the sportsmen's expectations. A more radical and momentous manifestation of Russel's adjustment to the hegemonic behavioral codex in terms of audacity comes to light when two boys from the baseball team coerce him to ridicule Brian Bund:

> “Hey, Middlebrook, what do you think he looks like?” So here I was. Suddenly, I'd found myself in another one of those defining, do-or-die moments. [...] There weren't any crowds watching me this time, just Nolan and Jarred. But I felt a lot more pressure from the two of them than I had from the crowd and the team the Friday before. It felt more important too. This wasn't just about some stupid baseball game. It was about someone else's feelings. [...] I said to Jarred and Nolan, “He looks like a mouse trapped in the coils of a python. Look at his face – you can almost see his whiskers quivering.” [...] I laughed too, but I felt the exact opposite of happy. I'd never teased Brian before for anything. I'd never even laughed at him. (Hartinger 157-159)

These lines stress that the protagonist's newly acquired status as an athlete produces an area of internal tension, which can be explained by the fact that his personal values, which he developed in other groups, conflict with the ones of the sportsmen. While the jocks reassert Brian's subordinate position on the social ladder of the community by constantly exposing him to ridicule, Russel feels sympathy for the school's outcast. Yet, the extract presented above leaves no doubt as to what values have a stronger influence on the main character's comportment during the time of his membership in the baseball team. The pressure applied by the popular boys as well as the wish to be accepted as one of them cause Russel to adapt to the dominant code of conduct, and consequently also to deride the jocks' favorite victim. His thoughts, however, reveal that he does not act from conviction in this situation.

5.2.2.1.4. Homosociality

In the chapter on the study of men and gender, it has been shown that social-scientific research has identified occasions where men come in close contact with each other as "*the arena* for demonstrating one's masculinity" (Malin 149). The subsequent extract from the novel renders a conversation between two boys at the jocks' table in the school cafeteria. This conversation reveals that the concept of homosociality and its functions is equally applicable to the community which Brent Hartinger creates in his novel. "Then what happened?" Nolan was saying to Jarred. [...] "What do you *think*?" Jarred said. "Man, she was *begging* for it, squirming around like a baby!" "Yeah?" Nolan said. "Oh yeah!" Jarred said. "And then once I started going at her, she couldn't get enough. She was begging me for more!" (Hartinger 181) This kind of hypermasculine talk makes clear that the boys at Goodkind High School use homosocial situations as stages for the performance of manhood. Jarred's boasting about his sexual experiences underlines the correlation of his individual gender configuration with desirable values for men, such as heterosexuality and virility, which in turn stresses his status as an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity.

Yet, not everybody takes the stage of gender performances as readily as Jarred. Homosociality can also be perceived as a threat, especially if one's own version of

maleness is not in line with the community's ideals, as it can be seen in the following quotation:

> I WAS DEEP BEHIND ENEMY LINES, in the very heart of the opposing camp. My adversaries were all around me. For the time being, my disguise was holding, but still I felt exposed, naked, as if my secret was obvious to anyone who took time to look. I knew that any wrong action, however slight, could expose my deception and reveal my true identity. The thought made my skin prickle. The enemy would not take kindly to my infiltration of their ranks, especially not here, in their inner sanctum. (Hartinger 1)

By 'opposing camp' and 'inner sanctum' the story's protagonist refers to the men's locker room, and his 'enemies' are the jocks, the bearers of hegemonic masculinity. This military analogy unequivocally puts Russel's uneasiness and indisposition in the homosocial space of the changing room beyond dispute. It is especially the need to undress in front of attractive, naked boys that bears a challenge, for his sexual interest in men makes it difficult for Russel to display indifference, which, as a sign of heterosexuality as well as self-confidence, is rated the only appropriate behavior in such a situation. Hence, the passage presented above highlights two important aspects about the main character's gender configuration. Firstly, the feeling of not belonging implies that he is aware of the fact that he features certain characteristics which distinguish him from the group of popular students. Secondly, his difficulty with adhering to the generally accepted behavioral codex suggests that the gender configuration Russel has constructed for himself at this point is incongruent with the hegemonic version of masculinity, for otherwise he would have no reason to be anxious about entering the arena for demonstrating one's manhood. This differentiation is relevant in that a man's pattern of conduct is not primarily determined by actual characteristics of his personality, but rather by those characteristics that he has decided to display. Consequently, Russel can exhibit heterosexual demeanor despite his physical attraction to men, just like he may act in a self-confident way although he feels intimidated. The next extract from the novel demonstrates that this is exactly the strategy he pursues. Furthermore, these lines explicitly express that homosocial situations are used as arenas for challenging and proving manhood.

> "Hey, Middlebrook!" Kevin said to me. "Nice ass!" Leon and Brad and Jarred and Ramone all laughing. Big joke, not exactly at my expense, but in my general vicinity. Some tiny part of me wondered, *Do* I have a nice ass? Hell, I didn't know. But a much bigger part of me tensed, because I knew this was a test, the kind enemy soldiers in movies give to the hero who they suspect isn't one of them. [...] I bent over halfway, sticking my rear out in his direction. "You really think so?" I said, squirming back and forth. "Middlebrook!" Kevin said, all teeth and whiskers and dimples. "You are such a fag!" Mission accomplished, I thought. My cover was holding – for another day at least. (Hartinger 4-5)

Although this passage shows that Russel handles the situation appropriately, it is also obvious that the insecurity arising from the deviance of his individual gender configuration from the hegemonic version of masculinity produces a constant tension which makes it impossible for him to be relaxed and comfortable in the presence of the school's sporting heroes. Even when he decides to join the baseball team, the story's main character is still daunted by the homosocial sphere of the boys' changing room, which is implied by the following cogitations. "And I dreaded the thought of spending even more time every day in a locker room full of bone-headed, swaggering jocks." (Hartinger 109) However, Russel's insecurity and feeling of not belonging subside after he hit the winning homerun, which can be seen in the subsequent quotation:

> [S]omething incredible occurred to me. I was actually enjoying myself. Enjoying myself? I had never *enjoyed* myself in the boys' locker room before! Always before, it had felt like I was a spy in hostile territory, and it was only a matter of time until I was exposed. [...] But now here I was, laughing and joking with the best of them. Sure, it was a little distracting that half the guys were naked or waltzing around in just their jockstraps. I also knew most of these guys were boneheads who couldn't talk their way out of a paper bag. But at the same time, I felt this strange sense of camaraderie. (Hartinger 147)

Russel's sudden sense of belonging and self-assured conduct are the result of his gender performance during and after the baseball game. Via defeating his opponent and the ensuing hypermasculine talk in which he condescendingly comments on the other team's pitcher, he displays behavioral patterns that are expressive of the desirable characteristics for men which have been identified earlier, namely self-confidence, intrepidity and audacity. Hence, he exhibits a form of manhood that conforms to the dominant code of conduct and makes him eligible for membership in the group of athletes. These deliberations further prove that the perception of masculinity is not

based on a man's actual qualities, but on his pattern of behavior. Russel is still the same sensitive boy who feels physically attracted to men, but his demeanor suggests that he is a jock who possesses all the characteristics that are usually associated with this status. If it were not the case that the latter is evaluated by the community, the protagonist's affiliation with the popular boys would be inconceivable. However, in the further course of the story Russel reconstructs his masculinity once more, but this time in opposition to the dominant version of manhood. By making friends with Brian Bund, he emphasizes his sensitivity and consequently loses his membership in the circle of athletes.

The analysis presented above has revealed that the story's protagonist deviates from the masculine ideals of the community because of his sexual interest in men and his rather pronounced sensitivity. Yet, it has also been demonstrated that he has developed strategies to keep those deviances from the hegemonic form of masculinity a secret, such as displaying strictly heterosexual comportment and withholding emotive thoughts. The deliberations outlined in this section have not only shown that Russel has found ways of concealing undesirable qualities, though. By exhibiting patterns of behavior which signify valued characteristics for men he manages to assimilate his version of maleness to the one that is represented by the athletes. The effects of this process of adjusting to the dominant code of conduct and restructuring of masculinity become most obvious in homosocial situations. The investigation of these arenas for challenging and proving manhood has shown that Russel's newly developed gender configuration enables him to substitute his former insecurity and uneasiness in the presence of the school's sporting heroes for a sense of belonging and self-confidence, which makes him eligible for membership in the circle of admired students. However, it has also been mentioned that Russel's efforts to adapt to the behavioral codex of the popular group produce an internal conflict, for some of the jocks' values contradict his individual morals. This conflict eventually induces him to reconsider the process of adjusting to the dominating code of conduct and to reconstruct his masculinity in a way that suits his personality better than the hegemonic version of manhood.

5.2.2.2. Kevin's Configuration of Masculinity

Kevin's situation is comparable to the one of the story's protagonist in that he features the same deviant characteristics, and consequently also has to deal with the inner conflict that has been outlined in the analysis of Russel's gender configuration. However, Kevin's initial situation for the negotiation of his manhood is fundamentally different from the main character's, since he already is one of the school's sporting heroes and, therefore, also a bearer of hegemonic masculinity. These factors doubtlessly wield influence on the way he copes with his non-compliant tendencies. In the subsequent investigation, Kevin's deviances from the honored form of maleness shall be illuminated, as well as the interdependence of his status and possible ways of dealing with his non-conformity. Afterwards, it will be presented which strategies he has developed to sustain the role as a model for desirable masculine conduct.

5.2.2.2.1. Deviances

It has already been mentioned that Kevin possesses the same deviant qualities as Russel, which are homosexuality and sensitivity. The first becomes obvious by not only the fact that his user name in a gay chat room is “GayTeen” (Hartinger 13), but also the intimate physical and emotional relationship he has with Russel. The subsequent passage highlights Kevin's more than platonic interest in the story's main character by explicitly describing near-sexual contact between the two boys.

> “Man,” Kevin said. “I've wanted to do that for so long.” It took me a second to catch my breath. Then I said, “What?” “I wanted to kiss you. Ever since that first night when we met here? I wanted to kiss you then. Before that even. [...]” [...] He stepped closer to me, and I felt his arms circle around me again and his hands rest on the small of my back. [...] We kept kissing, only this time there may have been some groping and fumbling and hugging. (Hartinger 127-129)

These phrases show that Kevin has been aware of his same-sex preference over a longer period of time, which suggests that the intimate action delineated above does not result from uncertainty about his sexual orientation, but rather from the conviction that he is homosexual. This conviction is also implicated by the degree of activity Kevin displays in this bodily exchange of caress, for he purposely approaches Russel rather than merely

receives his friend's expressions of affection. These deliberations allow for the conclusion that Kevin does not entertain any doubts about his same-sex inclination.

Manifestations of the character's sensitivity can predominantly be identified in situations where he is alone with Russel. This is in line with expectations, since the intimate relationship between the two boys qualifies the assumption that in the protagonist's presence Kevin at least partly drops the mask of the sporting hero and to a certain extent comes out in his true colors. Hence, these are the incidents in which his actual characteristics shine through the facade of the tough baseball star. Some of these events which reveal Kevin's sensitivity shall be considered next. The first quotation that is presented in this context reproduces excerpts from the conversation which the two friends have after Russel's second date with Trish.

> “Sup?” His voice was soft and measured, like a surgeon talking to an anxious family in a hospital waiting room. [...] Then he said, “Man, that really sucks. Trish sounds like a real bitch.” [...] “Still,” Kevin said. “She didn't have to say those things. She didn't have to say you were gay. It was like she was tryin' to scare you into doin' her.” (Hartinger 122-123)

Kevin's gentle manner of speaking and ability to empathize with the collocutor clearly underline his consideration for the main character's feelings, and consequently also his sensitivity. Yet, the application of profanities like 'bitch' or 'doin' her' as well as the use of vocabulary such as 'sucks' and 'man' as a term of address show that Kevin has difficulties with casting off his role of the hypermasculine athlete. This can be accounted for by his strong affiliation and identification with the school's sportsmen. In contrast to Russel, Kevin does not have to strive for being admitted to the circle of popular students in the course of the story, but already is a key member of this group. As such, he has been adjusting his gender configuration to the dominant code of conduct for many years. The result of this process is that Kevin is accomplished in the display of desirable demeanor, but insecure when it comes to expressing emotions, since the behavioral codex of the popular students does not provide any guidelines for coping with sensitive feelings apart from the precept not to exhibit them at all. Therefore, it can be assumed that the comportment described above costs Kevin quite an effort, as it constitutes a major deviance from the version of manhood which he has

constructed for himself. Moreover, his pursuance of the strategy to mitigate against his deviant behavior by repeatedly relapsing into the acceptable pattern of rough parlance highlights the malaise that arises from his contravention of the rule not to display sensitivity. However, Kevin seems to become more comfortable in dealing with feeling-based conduct as his relationship with Russel deepens. In connection with the investigation of the main character's gender configuration, it has been mentioned that after Russel's third date with Trish, Kevin holds out his arms for his friend and allows him to cry against his chest. In other words, he comforts the story's protagonist on his own free will after he actively encouraged him to give vent to his emotions. This suggests that Kevin has chosen to handle situations which call for his sympathy in a way that is assimilated to Russel's behavioral pattern, although it contradicts his own gender configuration. Furthermore, the next extract from the text allows for the conjecture that he no longer perceives emotive behavior as a transgression of rules. “[Kevin] told me [...] that I didn't have anything to be ashamed of by crying.” (Hartinger 180) Yet, it is reasonable to assume that Kevin's acceptance of conduct which exhibits sensitivity is restricted to meetings between him and Russel, for due to his status as a jock, such an attitude is disallowable in the wider community. The thoughts presented so far have highlighted that Kevin has learned how to express sympathy, although this behavior stands in opposition to his conception of masculinity. However, this does not mean that he has decided to deal with all his emotions in a way that diverges from the behavioral codex of his social group. The subsequent quotation demonstrates that in order to cope with the pain which results from the end of his relationship with Russel, Kevin embarks on a strategy that is ratified by the dominant code of conduct. “He'd been drinking, and I could smell the beer on his breath and clothing.” (Hartinger 221) Obviously, Kevin tried to drown his sorrow in alcohol. Such a course of action in an emotional crisis conforms to the hegemonic rules of the community, since the overindulgence in alcohol is seen as a means of forgetting and suppressing, which in turn enables a man to keep his feelings a secret. Yet, the consumption of intoxicants can also have exactly the opposite effect. “When I did pull away, he started to shake and sob [...] It was weird to have the tears on his face for a change.” (Hartinger 223) For some people, alcohol has the property of unearthing the truth, which means that in a state of inebriation their sensitivity may be given expression, even though it is successfully

concealed when they are sober. The phrases presented above suggest that Kevin is one of those people. More importantly, however, they also emphasize his emotionalism, for alcohol can only unveil what is already there. Consequently, the exhibition of feelings as it is described in this short extract from the novel would be impossible if sensitivity were not one of Kevin's inherent characteristics.

5.2.2.2.2. Status vs. Deviance

The analysis of Kevin's gender configuration that has been presented so far has highlighted that he secretly features characteristics which are deviant from the hegemonic code of conduct. However, at the same time he is one of the school's most popular students. This predicament shall be the focus of the subsequent investigation. After Kevin's position in the school's social hierarchy has been defined, the interdependence of his status and ways of coping with qualities which are rated undesirable by the community will be illuminated.

As a member of the baseball team, Kevin is strongly affiliated with the school's dominating group. However, even within the circle of jocks, he occupies a rather prominent position, which can be inferred from the protagonist's thoughts during baseball practice. “Halfway through practice, Coach told the team to pair up, and before I could stop myself, I glanced over at Kevin. A couple of guys looked like they were trying to catch Kevin's eye too [...].” (Hartinger 130) These lines show that not only Russel, but a number of other baseball players too strive after Kevin's attention, which enables him to choose with whom he wants to practice. Therefore, this passage highlights not only his popularity with the rest of the team, but also his super ordinate status in the ranks of the athletes and by implication also in the social hierarchy of the entire school community. The next quotation also underlines Kevin's popularity with his fellow sportsmen. “Yo, Lando!” Nate said as he and Ramone approached. (Lando was one of Kevin's many nicknames. In case you are wondering, I didn't have any nicknames, and now I never would. Not the friendly kind anyway.)” (Hartinger 201) Russel, who is at this point stigmatized as homosexual, propounds in this thought that having a friendly nickname is an indicator for popularity, for his ineligibility for such an

honor is explained by the low position he occupies in the community's social ranking. Consequently, the fact that Kevin has even more than one friendly nickname can only mean that he is at the reverse end of the hierarchy, namely on top.

The reflections on Kevin's status at Goodkind High School have proved that he is admired by not only subordinate groups, but also the jocks themselves. It has further been shown that this popularity invests him with a super ordinate rank in his own social unit as well as in the whole community. Previous deliberations have demonstrated that one of the major preconditions for such a high social position is the display of hegemonic masculinity. Hence, the deviances from the dominant code of conduct which have been outlined above pose a considerable threat to Kevin's status, and consequently also to his social life in general. This idea is explicitly expressed by Russel's thoughts when he discovers that Kevin is the boy who he met in the gay chat room. “It was true – Kevin could start a rumor about me, tell everyone at school that I was gay. But I could start a rumor about him too, and let's face it, I was just Russel Middlebrook. He, on the other hand, was Kevin Land, Baseball Jock Incorporated. He had a hell of a lot more to lose.” (Hartinger 20) These lines leave no doubt as to the severe repercussions which the revelation of Kevin's failure to observe the heterosexual imperative entails. Unlike Russel, he would fall down the social ladder from the top to the very bottom. His ideally constructed masculinity has opened all doors for him, but these doors may be shut immediately if people discovered his same-sex preference. Nevertheless, he decides to take the risk of leaving the secure, anonymous sphere of the chat room to disclose his secret to somebody from his school in a face-to-face meeting. This step of expressing his homosexuality in his behavior outside the protected area of the Internet is of vital importance, since deviances can only be identified in people's public conduct, but not in unlived or covertly acted out desires and predilections. Kevin is well aware of the fact that this action puts his social status on the line, and in the last furlong this awareness turns into fear. “GayTeen,” I said to Kevin. It wasn't a question [...] He looked like he wasn't even breathing. Finally, he whirled on me, anger in his eyes. “What the hell does that mean? Are you calling me a fag or what?” (Hartinger 19) These phrases imply that Kevin regrets his decision to come to the meeting point and now tries to remedy the situation by denial and hypermasculine talk and behavior. However, Russel cannot be

deceived by this performance, so Kevin eventually has to admit his physical attraction to men although his actual plan for dealing with this deviance is a rather different one. “The big deal,” Kevin said, “is that nobody at Goodkind knows about me! And they *can't* know!” (Hartinger 21) This statement makes clear that he has no intention to make his sexual interest in men public, and the next passage explains why. “He spun away from me. “Russel, I'm not that strong! The pressure – it's just too much! I *like* being popular!” (Hartinger 221) In these lines, it is strongly suggested that Kevin's fear of losing his social status is responsible for his endeavor to keep his homosexuality a secret. In summary it can be stated, therefore, that actions which are expressive of Kevin's sexual interest in men pose a major threat to his social status, since his eligibility to a position in the highest ranks of the school's hierarchy is based on his ideally constructed masculinity. This implies that in order to sustain his status, he must not display any behavior that could suggest his violation of the heterosexual imperative. These principles of causal connections between social rank and gender performance are valid for all boys of the community. Yet, Kevin's case is extraordinary in that he combines an extremely high position on the school's social ladder and one of the most serious transgressions of the dominant rules of conduct for men. This contrast is too violent to persist over a longer period of time and forces Kevin to make a choice. He chooses his status, since he is not prepared to risk all his privileges and everything he knows and appreciates for the chance of a happy relationship. Hence, Kevin's status as an exemplar of desirable manhood, which has so far opened all possibilities for him, in the end impedes his happiness.

5.2.2.2.3. Attempts at Concealment

The above deliberations have demonstrated that Kevin strives to keep his deviant tendencies a secret in order to sustain his high position in the community's social hierarchy; however, it has not been shown how he attempts to achieve this concealment. Therefore, the subsequent investigation will be concerned with strategies which Kevin applies to keep his role as a model of hegemonic masculinity, such as the display of strictly heterosexual behavior and conduct which is expressive of valued characteristics

for men, as well as dissociation from people who are stigmatized as violators of the dominant behavioral codex.

In the analysis of homosociality which has been presented in the context of the protagonist's gender configuration, it has been illustrated that Kevin is one of those boys who challenge and prove manhood in the men's locker room by hypermasculine comportment. Yet, the following quotation points out that these performances are just disguise and pretence. “[Kevin]'d told me how out of place he felt around his jock friends, and that all his macho posturing in the locker room was really just an act to make sure no one ever questioned his sexuality or whatever.” (Hartinger 22) These lines make clear that although Kevin feels threatened by homosocial situations which call for constant corroboration of his ideally constructed masculinity, he has found ways of hiding his deviant tendencies and meeting the demands which the community makes on his status as a jock. By exhibiting self-assured and relaxed demeanor on the one hand, and performing hypermasculine acts like challenging the maleness of fellow students on the other hand, he suggests being indifferent about the other boys' nudity and prevents the emergence of doubts about his sexual orientation. Furthermore, the next extract from the novel shows that Kevin even furnishes the ultimate proof of heterosexuality. “You must have turned a lot of girls down,” I said. He hunched his shoulders. “Not as many as I should've.” I wasn't jealous at the thought of Kevin having sex with girls.” (Hartinger 123) This short dialog and Russel's ensuing cogitations reveal that despite his physical attraction to men, Kevin has had sexual intercourse with girls. Moreover, the tactic of underpinning his heterosexuality by means of hypermasculine acts justifies the assumption that his sexual experiences with girls are a subject of ostentation and therefore publicly known, at least in the group of athletes. These reflections highlight that Kevin's pattern of conduct in the presence of other people, as well as those private actions which he makes known to fellow students, allow for no doubts about his supposed sexual interest in women. Hence, the gender configuration which he displays in public is perfectly compliant to one of the major prerequisites for hegemonic masculinity, namely heterosexuality.

It has already been mentioned that Kevin exhibits behavior which stresses desirable characteristics for men in the homosocial space of the boys' locker room. In the following, however, a more comprehensive analysis of this conduct shall be presented. Since Kevin's role as a jock and consequently also as a bearer of desirable manhood involves that his actions imply features such as self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity, the success of his endeavor to conceal his deviances and to sustain his status is essentially dependent on comportment which indicates exactly these qualities. The subsequent passage from the novel shows that even in difficult situations he manages to act in accordance with the dominant behavioral codex. “Suddenly, he was the old Kevin Land again, the one with the smirk and the upper hand.” (Hartinger 21) This sentence points out that after only a few moments of insecurity, Kevin again exudes self-confidence, although Russel has just found out about his homosexuality. Furthermore, such a demeanor also suggests that the fact that his fate now rests with a boy he hardly knows cannot intimidate him, even though it must be assumed that he is not only aware, but also scared of the severe consequences which Russel's possible divulgence of his secret may entail. The next quotation emphasizes that the last characteristic which has been identified as typical of hegemonic masculinity, namely audacity, finds equally expression in Kevin's conduct. “Kevin Land, snickering with the rest of the jocks, wasn't throwing anything, but he'd probably been the one to throw the chili that had started it all.” (Hartinger 8) Although these lines do not describe an actual insolent action, they clearly connote that Kevin is inclined to display this kind of conduct. The protagonist's speculations are thereby based on his own experiences. “After years of teasing by Kevin and guys just like him, it was fun to have the upper hand for a change.” (Hartinger 20) Russel's thought already puts Kevin's display of audacity beyond question; nevertheless an actual incident of insolent comportment shall be presented here in order to underpin this claim. “Min's a big ol' lesbo, huh?” Kevin said. Kevin was gay, but he could still sound like kind of a stupid jock sometimes.” (Hartinger 33) The situation from which this extract is taken, that is a conversation between Russel and Kevin, does definitely not require behavior which corroborates the ideal gender configuration of the latter, since both collocutors know about each other's homosexuality. The fact that Kevin notwithstanding comments contemptuously on somebody who features the same deviant quality demonstrates that the display of

audacious demeanor is a pattern he has deeply internalized. This internalization can be accounted for by the antagonistic relationship between audacity and sensitivity. It can be assumed that in order to conceal his emotiveness, Kevin has been embarking on a strategy of exhibiting conduct which stresses a counteractive characteristic for many years, so that eventually the display of audacious comportment developed into a stable behavioral pattern. Consequently, it can be stated that Kevin's conception of masculinity correlates with the dominant code of conduct also in so far as his demeanor is expressive of self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity.

Yet, the way that other members of the community see Kevin seems to be determined by not only his own behavior, but also the comportment of people with who he associates. This idea is suggested by the following passage from the novel. “Just because I was now an outcast, that was no reason to take him down too. And so in public, Kevin needed to treat me like any other jock would – namely, like shit.” (Hartinger 202) Russel's thoughts emphasize that the social intercourse with him, who is at this time stigmatized as homosexual, would have a negative influence on Kevin's status. The reason for such a mutual manipulation of two people's ranks in the social hierarchy lies in the fact that groups usually share the same code of conduct. If one person provides grounds to believe that his code deviates from the dominating behavioral codex, it is therefore assumed that all people in his social vicinity feature the same deviance. Hence, in order to sustain his status, Kevin has to dissociate himself from those students whose demeanor is considered to violate the generally accepted rules of conduct. The next excerpt from the text demonstrates that this is exactly the strategy he pursues. When he is asked whether Brian Bund should be admitted to the Geography Club, he answers as follows. “I'm against it.” [...] “It's too risky,” [...]” (Hartinger 166) At this time, all members of the Geography Club are regarded as heterosexual by the school community, whereas Brian has gained a reputation for having sexual interest in men. Kevin's decision and ensuing explanation therefore highlight his endeavor to distance himself from people who are considered to be homosexual, and imply that he fears that being associated with those people could cause him problems. The same strategy of dissociation is applied when Russel becomes stigmatized as homosexual. This is clearly expressed by Kevin's reaction to the

protagonist's attempt at arranging a meeting after school. “He glanced back at the school. “I don't think I can make it,” he said. “What?” I said. “Why not?” “I just can't.” “Tomorrow then.” “I can't then either,” he said.” (Hartinger 200-201) In this short dialog, Kevin makes clear that he has no intention to maintain his relationship with Russel. Since the emergence of this attitude coincides with the main character's stigmatization as homosexual, it is justified to assume that the general disapproval of Russel's supposed pattern of conduct is responsible for Kevin's dismissive demeanor. Yet, the avoidance of social intercourse with Russel does not create a sufficient distance between Kevin and his former friend. The next quotation shows what drastic measures Kevin adopts in order to achieve the necessary degree of dissociation:

> “What about it, Middlebrook? Find any wieners?” Nate and Ramone and Kevin laughed some more. Finally, Kevin said, “He don't want a wiener – he wants a big ol' sausage!” As he said this, Kevin made this really wide gesture with his hands, the kind a fisherman makes when he's talking about a fish. There was finally a smile on Kevin's face, but it wasn't the one I'd been expecting. It was a cruel sneer, the kind that Brian Bund was usually on the receiving end of. (Hartinger 203)

By displaying such an audacious and insolent behavior, Kevin stresses his contempt for Russel's asserted same-sex preference, which in turn corroborates his own purported heterosexuality and as a consequence also his construction of hegemonic masculinity.

The analysis presented above has demonstrated that although Kevin features characteristics that are considered to be repugnant to the community's ideal of manhood, that is homosexuality and sensitivity, he has managed to construct his gender configuration in conformity with the dominating code of conduct. Furthermore, it has been shown that his popular status makes Kevin's dealing with his deviances extremely difficult, as his super ordinate rank in the school's hierarchy and all the privileges connected to it are based on the public display of a version of masculinity which is absolutely incompatible with his secret desires. Since he has no intention to abandon his position and prerogatives, Kevin has no choice but to hide those qualities which are classified as undesirable and deviant by the community. Finally, it has been shown how he achieves this concealment, namely by exhibiting strictly heterosexual as well as self-

confident, intrepid, and audacious conduct on the one hand, and by dissociating himself from alleged violators of the dominant behavioral codex on the other hand.

5.3. Social Exclusion

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, it has been propounded that symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School of Sociology claim that social exclusion results from the contravention of rules which have been laid down by society. An essential part of such a codex, which can be found in any community, is the prevalent code of conduct for men. Consequently, boys' and men's deviances from the generally accepted male patterns of behavior are deviances from the rules of the society and may cause social exclusion. These reflections on the interrelationship between gender configurations and social membership suggest that Russel, who is in contrast to Kevin not persistent in his public display of hegemonic manhood, is not immune from becoming an outsider. In the subsequent investigation, it shall be shown how the story's protagonist climbs up and falls off the social ladder of the school community during the ongoing process of restructuring his masculinity. Afterwards, Russel's way of generating of a deviant identity and his strategies for coming to terms with his status and his non- conformist qualities will be discussed.

5.3.1. Up and Down the Social Ladder

The analysis of gender configurations has already revealed that together with the form of manhood Russel displays in public, his status also changes in the course of the story. In the following, however, a more detailed investigation of the protagonist's changes in social rank shall be presented.

Right at the beginning of the narrative, Russel makes an attempt at defining his position in the school's hierarchy. “I wasn't the most popular guy at Robert L. Goodkind High School, but I wasn't the least popular either. (Kevin Land at least spoke to me, even if it was only to ask for shampoo.)” (Hartinger 3-4) These cogitations indicate that his initial place in the social ranking is high enough to be spared severe humiliation and too low to

arouse admiration. He rather stands somewhere between these two extremes, but probably closer to the less honored one. This idea is also expressed in the next quotation. “[...] Min and Gunnar were both like me, occasional visitors to the border region of high school respectability.” (Hartinger 6) Russel's thought clearly connotes the lower intermediate status of his best friends and himself, who together are categorized as “Nerdy Intellectuals” (Hartinger 8). Furthermore, this sentence intimates two important aspects about the social structure of the school community, namely that the separate groups are arranged in a stable hierarchy on the one hand, and that all members of any given societal unit share the same status on the other hand. The protagonist's assessment of Belinda Sherman's rank at their first meeting further underpins this assumption. “She was a junior, and a member of the orchestra, which put her somewhere between the Computer Geeks and the Lefty Radicals in terms of popularity.” (Hartinger 105) These lines not only explicitly express that each of the school's many groups has its particular place in the community's hierarchy, but also suggest that the students are aware of and familiar with this system of relational ordering. Moreover, if not all members of a societal unit had the same status, Russel would not be able to immediately find a definition of Belinda's popularity which is as precise as the one presented above on the mere fact that she plays in the orchestra. Hence, it can be stated that together with their membership in a group, individuals also acquire the rank which the community has assigned to this social entity. By implication, people lose their status if their membership in a group is no longer valid. This social phenomenon finds expression in the following passage in the text:

> “There was no neutral territory on a high school campus. The land was all claimed, and the borders were solid. We couldn't just cross them at will. [...] [T]here were consequences for spending too much time outside the borders of your own country. Eventually, they wouldn't let you back in. In other words, you ended up exiled and alone [...].” (Hartinger 54)

This extract also highlights that regular social intercourse with other people weakens the cohesion with one's own group and may lose alleged traitors their memberships and ranks. Although the fact that the quotation above renders the main character's own thoughts makes clear that he is well aware of the possible consequences that spending

time outside one's group entails, he repeatedly takes that risk by affiliating with various groups and people in the course of the story.

The first person outside his circle of friends with whom Russel strives to establish bonds is Kevin. In the context of investigating the protagonist's gender configuration, it has already been outlined that in order to achieve this goal he joins the baseball team and adjusts his performance of manhood to the generally accepted code of conduct. The reward for these efforts is his membership in the group of the school's most popular students, and consequently also a considerably higher position in the community's hierarchy. This newly acquired popularity can be seen from the subsequent description of his fellow students' reaction when he hits a decisive homerun. “People cheered at me all the while. I'd never been cheered for anything before, and it felt good.” (Hartinger 144) Yet, he arouses admiration not only on the baseball field by winning the game for his team, but also in everyday school life. “Now people I had never spoken to before, people who I didn't even think knew who I was, called out my name in the hallways. Two times during the day, groups of people actually fell silent as I walked by. (It is impossible not to feel incredibly flattered by this.)” (Hartinger 153) These two passages leave no doubt as to the main character's place in the highest ranks of the community's hierarchy. However, this ascent up the social ladder takes its toll. While Russel becomes successively more integrated in the circle of jocks, the distance between him and his old friends grows ever wider. Finally, an argument with Gunnar about dating Trish and the dispute with Min about Brian Bund's membership in the Geography Club detach him from his clique, which is pointed out in the subsequent quotation. “The following Monday, I had no one to sit with at lunch. Min still wasn't talking to me, and I sure as hell wasn't sitting with Gunnar. So I sat with the Jocks. Now that I was a member of the baseball team, this seemed perfectly normal.” (Hartinger 180) It is important to note, however, that both these conflicts are ultimately connected to the protagonist's striving to become and remain eligible for membership in the circle of athletes. This assumption can be inferred from the fact that Russel only agrees to go out with Gunnar and the two girls for a third time because he is scared into it by the following words out of his friend's mouth. “It just seems funny. I mean, a big baseball star like you, but you don't have a girlfriend? Don't you think that's funny? I think people might think that's funny.”

(Hartinger 152) Consequently, it is the protagonist's wish to sustain his status as an athlete that induces him to go on his last and fatal date with Trish. As far as his controversy with Min is concerned, Russel only refuses to admit Brian to the Geography Club because he fears the consequences which the expression of an opinion that is in contradiction to Kevin's may bring for their relationship. Hence, it is again his endeavor to act in accordance with the jocks' standards, which are in this case represented by Kevin, that gives rise to a dispute with an old friend.

So far, it has been outlined that by adjusting his gender performance to the dominant code of conduct for men the story's main character rises from a lower intermediate status to the highest ranks of the school's social hierarchy. However, this development not only loses Russel old friends, but also comes to an abrupt end when Kimberly Peterson destroys the gender configuration he has constructed for himself by spreading the rumor that he is the homosexual student who the whole school is trying to find out. The severe effects of this stigmatization are clearly expressed in the next extract from the novel:

> And so began the worst day of my life. Suddenly, I was The Gay Kid. [...] People I had never spoken to before whispered my name in the hallways. Groups of kids fell silent as I walked by. But, of course, people weren't noticing me in awe and admiration. Now they were looking at me with pity and contempt – mostly contempt." (Hartinger 194-195)

These lines make obvious that in the blink of an eye, the story's protagonist sees his popularity plummet all the way from the top to the very bottom of the community's social ladder. Especially the athletes, who were still his friends the previous day, meet Russel with rejection and disdain. "[Nate] and Ramone and Kevin started walking away, like I was an inanimate object, like the Dumpster itself, not worthy of even the vaguest of good-bye nods. "Cocksucker," I heard Nate mumble." (Hartinger 204) Yet, the reason for the main character's demise is not just his disqualification for being a member of the jocks, who, as the representatives of hegemonic masculinity, are obligated to observe and enforce the heterosexual imperative. It is also his dissociation from Gunnar and Min, who could have caught him on the way down, which makes his fall unbroken. Now that he hit the ground at full speed, however, the only person in the

school cafeteria he can dare approach without having to be afraid of being met with refusal is Brian Bund. As Russel sits down at Brian's table, he reflects on his ride on the popularity roller coaster and the supposed hopelessness of his momentary situation.

> I'd covered the whole terrain of a typical high school. I'd gone from the Borderlands of Respectability, to the Land of the Popular, and now to Outcast Island, also known as Brian's lunch table. I'd made the complete circuit. But Outcast Island was the end of the line. In the world of high school, you could go from Respectable to Popular, or from Popular to Respectable, but you couldn't go anywhere from Outcast. Once you were there, you were stuck. (Hartinger 196)

Despite these bleak prospects, the protagonist's situation also has positive aspects. Soon after his stigmatization cut all ties with the group of athletes, Russel reconciles with his old friends Gunnar and Min, which further corroborates the claim that their detachment was related to his affiliation with the school's sportsmen. Furthermore, Russel comes to know Brian and makes friends with him.

Yet, the main character unexpectedly gets the chance to climb up the social ladder once again as Brian furnishes fake evidence that he is the homosexual boy for whom everybody is looking. Through this altruistic action, Russel regains his image as a representative of desirable manhood and therefore also his eligibility for membership in the circle of athletes, which is clearly expressed by Kevin's invitation to him to sit down at the jocks' table. However, this time Russel deliberately chooses 'Outcast Island' over the 'Land of the Popular' and turns his back on Kevin as he approaches Brian's table. The following cogitations highlight that he is well aware of the consequences which this action entails. “If I went through with this – if I actually sat down at Brian's table again – there'd be no turning back. This time, there were things I'd be giving up forever. My visa to the Land of the Popular, for one thing, and probably even my return ticket to the Borderlands of Respectability.” (Hartinger 219) Despite these impending repercussions, Russel waives his claim to popularity and instead decides to enter the gray area between social exclusion and respectability, where he can display a more sensitive form of masculinity which suits his character better than the hegemonic ideal that he would have to represent if he returned to the circle of jocks.

The deliberations which have been presented in this section have shown that with the adjustment of his gender performance to the dominating patterns of conduct for men the story's protagonist becomes eligible for membership in the group of the school's most popular students, and as a result rises from his initial lower intermediate position to the very top of the community's social ladder himself. At the same time, however, his striving to answer the hegemonic group's expectations intermittently loses Russel his old friends Gunnar and Min. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated how this process is reversed by the destruction of the main character's gender configuration. This means that Russel falls off the social ladder from one day to the next when he becomes stigmatized as homosexual, but soon afterwards reconciles with his old clique and even wins a new friend. Finally, it has been revealed that despite his opportunity of returning to the circle of jocks and consequently also to the highs of the school's social hierarchy, the protagonist deliberately chooses a low status which allows for the display of a more sensitive variety of manhood.

5.3.2. The Process of Generating a Deviant Identity

In the chapter on the problem of social exclusion, it has been outlined that Howard Becker proposes a model that describes the stabilization of deviant behavior, which eventually produces a deviant identity, as a process that consists of three distinct phases, namely interaction with people who display anomalous conduct, stigmatization, and membership in a subculture. In the following, it shall be examined to what extent this sociological framework is applicable to the main character's development.

As far as the first phase is concerned, that is the arousal of interest in divergent behavior through social intercourse with people whose demeanor is rated inappropriate by the society or community, it must be assumed that the nature of Russel's major deviance, which is his homosexuality, determines a chronology of events which is different from the one that is presented in Becker's theory. Since a person does not actively choose a specific sexual orientation, it is clear that Russel's erotic interest in men does not arise from interaction with homosexuals, but is already there before he comes into contact with other people who share his same-sex preference. This idea is underpinned by the

protagonist's thoughts in the subsequent extract from the text, for they reveal that it is his deviance that causes interaction with homosexuals rather than the other way round.

> My secret mission – four years in an American high school – had been an involuntary one, and now I desperately wanted to be somewhere where I could be honest about who I was and what I wanted. I had plenty to say on the topic, but no one to say it to – not my friends, definitely not my parents (don't get me started). The Internet gave me people to say it to. Problem is, they weren't real. (Hartinger 11-12)

This passage explicitly expresses that Russel has tired of concealing his secret predilections and is now longing for face-to-face interaction with people with whom he can be frank about his desires and interests, which proves that the main character's initial step in the process of generating a deviant identity differs from the model which has been proposed by Becker. Nevertheless, the subsequent reflections on Russel's development after he has established contact with other homosexual teenagers suggest the theory's general validity for his case, as they underline Becker's point that being in the company of kindred spirits encourages the display of the deviance which is shared by all members of the group. Before this is possible in Russel's situation, however, a solid foundation of trust must be laid, since behavior which connotes homosexuality may entail severe consequences and is therefore not readily exhibited. The following passage reveals how this precondition is met. “However much we said to each other, there always seemed to be more to say. And no matter what anyone said, it seemed like everyone else understood it perfectly.” (Hartinger 44) The sympathy for each other's problems which is emphasized in these lines conveys a sense of belonging and facilitates social cohesion between the individual members of the group. This strong company as well as the approval of and understanding for his desires encourage Russel to verbalize his same-sex preference outside the anonymity of the Internet. “I guess I do like Kevin,” I said at last. It was a relief to finally say it out loud. But kind of scary too.” (Hartinger 47) Although this confession is formulated in a rather hesitant and careful way, it is still an important step towards Russel's self-acceptance and identity formation, since it is the first time that he performs an action which is expressive of his sexual interest in a boy in the presence of another person. The ensuing thoughts further emphasize the main character's inhibitions to lay bare his secret predilections, but at the

same time suggest that only by giving vent to his feelings he will be able to come to terms with himself. This more or less subconscious and hazy notion turns into full awareness in the course of the following weeks, which can be seen in the following extract from the novel:

> I turned to face him, to tell him I was tired not just of lies, but of loneliness. Meeting the other members of the Geography Club, being open with them, had been important, but it had only been the preparation before the start of my journey. I'd learned about the places I wanted to go, I'd talked about them with my friends, but I hadn't actually set foot outside my door. The terrain of my own heart, the landscape of love, was still entirely unexplored. But people are right when they say the hardest step of every journey is the first, and I was scared. (Okay, I was terrified.) (Hartinger 124)

Russel's cogitations stress that even though he is still afraid of performing unequivocally homosexual acts, his membership in a group of kindred spirits has made him determined to conquer his fear in order to attain happiness. Finally, he gathers all his courage and kisses Kevin, which is the beginning of their relationship. These reflections demonstrate that the first phase in the main character's process of generating a deviant identity is in accordance with Becker's model to the extent that the regular social intercourse with other homosexual teenagers invigorates his wish to live out his formerly secret desires, which eventually results in the performance of actions that are perceived as aberrant by the wider community. Yet, it has also been shown that Russel's development differs from Becker's theory in that his deviant interests do not result from membership in a group of people who display behavior which is generally rated anomalous.

The second phase in Becker's model is stigmatization, which is considered to produce a self-fulfilling prophecy and consequently an increase in non-compliant behavior. This stage can also be identified in the main character's development, even though it lasts for only one day. Within this short period of time, however, he experiences most of what Becker deems typical of this phase. As it has already been outlined in the previous section, Russel's status changes abruptly and drastically as soon as he gains a reputation for being sexually interested in men, which has a negative impact on not only his social participation, but also his self-perception. The following quotation clearly expresses that

the story's protagonist falls into a sort of limbo immediately after he has become stigmatized and as a result also excluded from the circle of popular students. His thoughts in this passage refer to the vandalized Children's Peace Park, where he goes after school that day. “It reminded me of a cemetery, which seemed fitting somehow. It could have been [...] a remembrance garden for my worth as a human being.” (Hartinger 205) Furthermore, Russel's exclusion from all of the school's many groups causes him to involuntarily infringe the rule never to sit at the same table with Brian Bund, which puts him exactly in the position which the community has assigned to violators of the heterosexual imperative. These deliberations qualify the claim that in the second phase of generating a deviant identity, the main character's development proceeds in compliance with Becker's theory. Moreover, it is important to note that although Russel's reputation is technically restored after only one day, he more or less perpetuates his stigmatized status by staying friends with Brian.

The third and last phase which has been identified by Becker is the affiliation with a subculture or a fringe group that consist of people who all display the same kind of deviance. This stage is only to a certain extent discernable in the protagonist's development, for he doubtlessly builds a strong social cohesion with other homosexual teenagers on the one hand, but never joins a group that put the homosexuality of their members beyond dispute for the wider community on the other hand. Not even the Gay-Straight Alliance reveals Russel's secret to the rest of the students, as the group have decided not to disclose who of them is homosexual, and although both the Geography Club and its successor have a specific code of conduct which allows for the display of behavior that is expressive of homosexuality, this codex is clearly restricted to the group and not enacted in the wider school community. Hence, neither of the two clubs circulate ideologies or rationalizations that justify their members' deviance outside their own boundaries.

The reflections on the process of generating a deviant identity have demonstrated that the main character's development proceeds to a large extent in accordance with Becker's model in the first two phases. The third phase, however, is not completed since Russel does not accept a rationalizing ideology which would permit and justify the display of

his deviance outside the secure sphere of the circle of kindred spirits. Consequently, it can be stated that at the end of the story, the protagonist is still in the process of developing a deviant identity.

5.3.3. Coming to Terms

The previous chapter of this thesis has shown that according to Georg Hansen, there are three ways of dealing with the low social rank which results from con-conformist behavior, namely assimilation, partial assimilation, and segregation. In the following, it shall be demonstrated which option the story's protagonist chooses in order to come to terms with his subordinate status and his deviant qualities.

The analysis which has been presented so far has demonstrated that for a short period of time, the novel's main character successfully adjusts his behavioral pattern to the dominating code of conduct, which means that he assimilates to the conventional standards of the community. Yet, the fact that he has no possibility to divest himself of the main reason for his non-compliance, that is his sexual interest in men, makes this assimilation a false pretence, which is rather arduous and foredoomed to failure. Therefore, it is in the nature of Russel's deviance that assimilation is no option for him. However, it is not the only one he tries, as can be seen from the subsequent quotation. “The Geography Club wasn't really about being gay, we all seemed to agree. It was ultimately about something else, some sense of being an outsider, a vagabond, with no place to call home.” (Hartinger 139) These thoughts clearly imply an attempt at segregation, for they highlight the function of the Geography Club as a place where outcasts can exist alongside the majority community. Yet, Russel's and the other members' inhibition to make their same-sex preference public strongly suggests that not even as a group they are prepared to take the outsider position in the school's social hierarchy. Hence, the protagonist's only option to come to terms with his low rank as well as his deviant qualities is partial assimilation. According to Hansen, this would mean that he adjusts his demeanor to the hegemonic code of conduct only to a point which makes communication with members of the majority group possible. The

following passage from the text implies that this is exactly the status quo at the end of the novel:

> Ever since I started sitting with Brian at lunch three weeks before, I'd been called my share of names, and I was definitely on the outs with the jocks (and Kevin). But incredibly, people still didn't think of me as gay. Brian was the Gay Kid (even if he wasn't really gay), and I was just being nice to him. (Hartinger 224)

These lines reveal that by keeping his sexual orientation a secret outside the Gay-Straight Alliance, Russel prevents the complete social exclusion which unavoidably results from the violation of the heterosexual imperative. Nevertheless, his affiliation with the school's unquestioned outcast, who is on top of it also considered to be homosexual, relegates him to the lower ranks of the community's hierarchy. This position in the vicinity of social isolation qualifies the assumption that at the end of the story Russel embarks on a strategy of partial assimilation.

The above deliberations on masculinity and social exclusion in Brent Hartinger's novel *Geography Club* have shown that the protagonist's gender configuration and his social status not only change in the course of the story, but also correlate with each other. The first part of this chapter has identified a hegemonic version of maleness which resembles the 'hard body' conception of the 1980s in that it features not only a heterosexual imperative and a strong opposition to comportment which is usually associated with femininity, but also characteristics such as self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity. This generally accepted and honored form of manhood has afterwards been used as the standard to which Russel's and Kevin's gender performances have been compared in order to determine in how far the behavioral patterns of these two characters diverge from the dominating code of conduct. What has been revealed by this comparison is that although both boys possess similar deviant qualities, Kevin publicly displays a form of male demeanor which leaves no doubt as to his eligibility for the status as a bearer of hegemonic manhood, whereas Russel only intermittently constructs his masculinity in compliance with the generally accepted codex. The ensuing reflections on the protagonist's status have outlined how his position on the community's social ladder changes as he restructures his gender configuration. By adjusting his public comportment to the dominant rules of conduct for men, Russel rises from a lower

intermediate rank to the top of the school's hierarchy, but in the blink of an eye becomes an outsider as his construction of hegemonic masculinity is destroyed by the rumor that he is sexually interested in men. When his reputation is restored after only one day, he deliberately chooses to turn his back on popularity for the benefit of being able to display a version of manhood which suits his personality better than the community's ideal. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the main character's development in the course of the story is to a large extent in accordance with Howard Becker's model of how people generate a deviant identity, even though this process is not finished at the end of the novel. Finally, it has been shown that in order to come to terms with his low status and his deviant qualities, Russel pursues a strategy of partial assimilation. This means that he adapts his public behavior to the dominant code of conduct only as far as it is necessary to make communication with the majority group possible.

6. Masculinity and Social Exclusion in Patrick Jones' *Nailed*

The next juvenile novel which shall be investigated on the basis of the theoretical framework that has been outlined and used in the preceding parts of this thesis is Patrick Jones' second work *Nailed*. The structure of this analysis will follow the one presented in the previous chapter. After a short plot summary has been provided in order to expound the chronology of events and to facilitate an easier and better understanding of the subsequent reflections, the investigation of the text will first of all focus on conceptions of manhood. In this context, the bearers of hegemonic masculinity shall be identified, as well as some features which are typically associated with these students. Furthermore, the individual gender configurations of two male characters, including the story's protagonist, will be illuminated to determine the scopes of these boys' divergence from the community's ideals. Afterwards, it shall be demonstrated in how far the main character's deviances from the generally accepted code of conduct for men lead to social exclusion. For this purpose, not only his status in the school's hierarchy will be examined, but also the process of generating a non-conformist identity. Finally, it shall be shown what strategies the protagonist pursues in order to come to terms with his non-compliance and the position on the social ladder which results from it.

6.1. Plot Summary

The novel's protagonist Bret Hendricks, who is also the first person narrator of the story, is a junior student at Flint Southwestern High School and the son of a poor working-class family. Together with his friends Alex Shelton and Sean Dupont, Bret plays in a punk band called Radio-Free Flint. Furthermore, he is also a passionate and gifted actor, which he has proved in several of the school's theater productions. These artistic talents and interests, however, cause constant friction in his family, since Bret's father had rather that his son concentrated on more practical skills with which a working-class man can earn a living. The result of these diverging attitudes is a tense and inharmonious father-son relationship. In school, Bret has an equally hard time, as he is repeatedly subject to humiliation by not only jocks like Bob Hitchings, but also his English teacher Coach King. The protagonist's unwillingness to condone such a treatment leads to a first

suspension from school. The same punishment is inflicted after Radio-Free Flint has given a concert in the school's parking lot during the Homecoming dance without principal Morgan's permission. Between these two events, Bret starts a relationship with Kylee Edmonds, a dancer and senior from Central High School, whose parents are very involved in charity work and fighting for the rights of underprivileged people. Kylee is Bret's first big love, but after only a few months she betrays him with Sean. When Bret catches his girlfriend in an unequivocally sexual act with his second-best friend, the world collapses on him, since his observation of this deceitful and disloyal deed means the end not only for his relationship, but also for his band. Yet, this event has not just negative effects, for it gives rise to the first conversation between father and son that is not marked by animadversion and disdain after several years – a positive development which continues throughout the rest of the story. Only a few weeks later, Bret reconciles with his big love, the pain of her betrayal notwithstanding. Moreover, Will Kennedy takes Sean's position as the drummer of Radio-Free Flint, which allows Bret and Alex to further practice and give concerts. This regained happiness is rather short-lived, though, since Kylee returns to Sean after a ferocious dispute over Bret's tight time schedule, which ends their relationship for good. During the difficult time which ensues this final separation, Bret realizes that he has to stand up for himself if he really wants to precipitate a change in his life. This reason induces him to run for presidency of the Student Council, as he knows that the election campaign gives him the opportunity of delivering a speech in which he can point out the injustices of the school's social structure. However, his attacks on the status quo do not remain without consequences. On the one hand, Bret is again suspended, and if it were not for Mrs. Edmonds, her lawyer, and the theater teacher Mr. Douglas, this third suspension would have caused his expulsion from Southwestern High School. On the other hand, Bob Hitchings answers his speech by causing him grievous bodily harm in a fistfight at the school prom. It takes Bret several weeks to recover from his injuries, but in the end he is back on the stage for the summer play, dates Becca Levy, the new Student Council President, and has a significantly better relationship with his father.

6.2. Configurations of Masculinity

The following section on male gender configurations will first of all be concerned with the analysis of hegemonic masculinity as it is presented in Patrick Jones' novel. Afterwards, the findings of this investigation shall be used as a reference value for the ascertainment of the extent to which two individual forms of maleness conform to or deviate from the desirable and honored masculine ideals of the community. The two characters that will be examined in this context are the story's protagonist Bret and Sean, his disloyal friend. The sociological insights which form the basis of the ensuing deliberations have been expounded in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

6.2.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

The subsequent analysis will for one thing focus on the determination of those students who are considered to function as exemplars of desirable male gender configurations, and for another thing on the identification of some qualities which are typically associated with this social unit. This means that as a first step the school's most popular and admired boys need to be discerned, since the sociological findings which have been outlined in the fourth chapter suggest that their high status is based on the observation of the community's rules of conduct, and consequently also on the display of masculine performances which are to a large extent in accordance with the hegemonic ideals for men.

6.2.1.1. Bearers of Hegemonic Masculinity

At various stages of the story, the protagonist's thoughts and remarks leave no doubt as to the athletes' supremacy on the school campus. In the following, some of these passages shall be presented in order to prove the jocks' unquestioned position on top of the community's social ladder, and therefore also their role as models of ideal manhood. The subsequent extract, which is taken from the very beginning of the story, already explicitly expresses the sportsmen's super ordinate status:

> “Nine,” Alex says, slapping my knee as a Mona Lisa Cheerleader, a girl from our school who remains unattainable to all but members of the jockarchy, walks by. The jockarchy is what we call the ball-bouncing bloc at school. Bob Hitchings, a former elementary school friend who now punches me for kicks and ridicules Alex like it was an Olympic event, is the three-letter king of that hill. At our school, these knuckle draggers score points and win rewards, but from most of us in theater, they earn only our scorn and ridicule. It's not just that they kick the ball; it's that they seem to think that they deserve to walk on water and stomp on those less privileged. They are so admired at school that standing up to them isn't an option; it's a daydream. (Jones 6)

Although Bret's thoughts also reveal that not all groups advocate the sportsmen's hegemony, they make clear that the state of play is undisputed. Nobody would dare publicly deplore the jocks' actions, regardless of how much they actually disapprove of them. This fact qualifies the assumption that the validity of the athletes' rules is generally accepted throughout the school community, which makes their code of conduct the dominating one. Moreover, Bret's cogitations show that the school's sportsmen engage in certain practices which underline and corroborate their high rank in the community's hierarchy, such as relegating other people who do not comply with their standards to a subordinate status by humiliating them in various ways. The athletes' supremacy is furthermore also reflected by the term which Bret and others use to refer to this group, as the suffix -archy in 'jockarchy' implicates some kind of rule or dominion. In the last speech of his election campaign which he runs for presidency of the Student Council, the story's protagonist carries this notion of unequal power relations to extremes by calling the school's prevalent social system a “tyranny of the strong over the weak” (Jones 180). Notwithstanding the truth content of this statement, which arises from Bret's personal experiences with the dominant group's strategies of sustaining the status quo by continuously humbling less popular students, the previous quotation strongly suggests that the jocks' high social position is primarily based on admiration rather than oppression. The same idea is implied by the next short passage from the text. “Water walkers like Hitchings are surrounded by people who prop them up, like it was a privilege.” (Jones 27) This thought connotes not only that the athletes are usually at the center of attention at Southwestern High School, but also that this attention is an amiable and voluntary one. Therefore, it underlines the popularity of those young men rather than supports the idea of a tyranny. The general acceptance of the sportsmen's rules of conduct, their regular performances of actions which emphasize

an elevated status, and their extreme popularity with other students furnish evidence for this group's supremacy within the school community. Since it is impossible for men or boys to attain such a high position in any social ranking without the display of male gender performances that are largely in compliance with the institutionalized behavioral codex for men, it is only reasonable to assume that the jocks function as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity in the community under investigation.

6.2.1.2. Characteristic Features of Hegemonic Masculinity

Now that it has been demonstrated that the athletes occupy the highest position in the school's social hierarchy and are, consequently, representatives of desirable male gender configurations, some of the qualities which can be considered to be typical of this group shall be examined. In the third chapter of this thesis, it has been shown that sociological research on men and gender has identified a pronounced dissociation of female patterns of conduct to be a major characteristic of hegemonic masculinity. In how far this claim is also valid for the community that Patrick Jones creates in his novel can be seen from the subsequent passage. “Pussy!” Hitchings keeps shouting, pointing at me. He's got my hat on his thick head, and his hands on his thin crotch, which he keeps thrusting towards Kylee, but I'm helpless to stop this humiliation.” (Jones 159) This extract from the text describes a situation in which Bob Hitchings, the school's prototypical jock, underpins his own manhood by hypermasculine comportment and at the same time humiliates the story's protagonist, who is not included in the circle of popular students, by using a term which denotes effeminacy. In sociological research, it is understood that a person's admittance to or exclusion from a social unit is dependent on the extent to which their demeanor is perceived to be in compliance with the group's standards. Hence, the fact that somebody whose behavioral pattern is considered to feature qualities which are usually associated with femininity is not part of the clique whose members are seen as exemplars of preferable manhood justifies the assumption that the display of typically female performances is contradictory to the jocks' precepts, and as a consequence also divergent from the dominant code of conduct for men of the whole community.

In the course of the last decades, numerous masculinity scholars have furthermore repeatedly claimed that desirable forms of manhood are essentially heterosexual. The subsequent quotation suggests that this theory is equally true of the community at Southwestern High School. “Stop looking at my crotch,” Hitchings says loudly enough for everyone to hear. It gets a laugh. He silently mouths “faggot” for my fringe benefit only.” (Jones 100) These lines imply that the community's representatives of hegemonic masculinity have clear guidelines for same-sex interaction which classify any behavior that could signify a boy's more than platonic interest in men as inappropriate and therefore also as a transgression of their rules of conduct. The laughter of derision which results from Hitchings' drawing attention to this violation further highlights the general acceptance of that rule, as the situation described above occurs in a classroom with students who are affiliated with various subgroups of the community and not just the dominating one. Moreover, the use of the derogatory term 'faggot' to denominate somebody from whom Hitchings and his fellow sportsmen clearly distance themselves implicates that the circle of popular students likewise distance themselves from the characteristic and the behavior to which this expression refers, that is homosexuality and homosexual practices. The jocks' marked dissociation of same-sex preferences becomes even more obvious in the following passage from the text. “Blow me, faggot!” Hitchings shouts, slamming his right knee into my face.” (Jones 196) This short extract from the description of the fight between Bret and Hitchings at the school prom connotes that the latter justifies his action by declaring his enemy homosexual. Since Bret's heterosexuality has at this point been proved by two relationships with girls, however, Hitchings' accusation is a rather arbitrary one. It would be more logical if he claimed that Bret has contravened any other of the jocks' rules, but apparently the violation of the heterosexual imperative is the only rationalization he can think of that vindicates a form of punishment which is as severe as the one described above. This strategy of justifying sanctions against certain people by stigmatizing them as homosexuals can also be identified in the interview between an athlete from Columbine High School and *Time Magazine* which Bret chooses to read out during the last speech of his election campaign for presidency of the Student Council because it reflects the circumstances of his own school.

> “'Columbine is a clean, good place except for those rejects. Sure we teased them. But what do you expect with kids who come to school with weird hairdos and horns on their hats? It's not just jocks; the whole school's disgusted with them. They're a bunch of homos. If you want to get rid of someone, usually you tease 'em. So the whole school would call them homos.'” (Jones 182)

The rationalizations for the humiliation of fellow students which are propounded by Hitchings and the sportsman at Columbine High School point out two important aspects about male gender configurations. For one thing, homosexuality is regarded as a major offense of the dominant rules, which can be seen from the stiff penalties that have been inflicted in the cases presented above. For another thing, such a punishment does not necessarily result from actual homosexual predilections or practices, but rather from the way a boy's or a man's gender performance is evaluated by others. This means that various kinds of deviances from the hegemonic code of conduct, such as particular looks or styles, may be interpreted as manifestations of same-sex preferences and be sanctioned accordingly. Consequently, it can be stated that the dominant version of manhood is characterized by an extraordinarily strict heterosexual imperative which is incompatible not only with actual engagement in homosexual practices, but also with performances that the community has more or less arbitrarily classified as being expressive of sexual interest in other men.

Yet, the status as a bearer of hegemonic masculinity is not exclusively attributable to the display of behavior which emphasizes a strong opposition to female patterns of conduct and is void of any indices that could suggest homosexual predilections. In the subsequent section of this chapter, passages from the novel will be presented which portend some more qualities that are associated with the group of sportsmen and therefore constitute – among others – the desirable form of manhood. One of these features is according to expectation intrepidity, as can be seen from the ensuing extract. “Hitchings is slurring his words, drowning in the Jack swimming in his skull. “You two faggots are fucking gutless.” (Jones 194) Again, Hitchings' use of derogatory expressions to denominate somebody of whom it is clear that he and the rest of the clique of popular students dissociate themselves strongly suggests that the jocks in equal measure dissociate themselves from the feature that the terms denote, which is in this case besides homosexuality also cowardice. Furthermore, these lines reveal that the

athletes indulge in the consumption of strong alcohol, which is strictly prohibited for minors in the United States. The fact that they break the law that boldly at the school prom, which puts them at risk of getting caught at any moment as this is a rather public event, indicates that intrepidity is a valued quality among the bearers of hegemonic masculinity. A characteristic which is closely connected to fearlessness and can consequently be assumed to also contribute to the construction of a desirable male gender configuration is self-confidence. The following quotation connotes the sportsmen's possession of exactly this feature. “I bend down to pick up my hat, but Hitchings stomps it. “Just try and take it,” he says.” (Jones 159) This action and the ensuing challenge imply that Hitchings is well aware of his superiority and assured that he would emerge the winner from any fray between him and the story's protagonist. Moreover, the next passage from the novel demonstrates that such a self-confident demeanor is neither exclusively exhibited by Hitchings, nor restricted to controversies with students who are considered to be a thorn in the jocks' side. “I think a lot of you are fed up with a jockarchy who thinks the world revolves around them and harass those who are different.” (Jones 181) This sentence from Bret's speech at the school assembly emphasizes that the dominating group's general appearance and manner is expressive not only of self-assurance, but also of more pronounced and negatively connotated versions of this actually positive quality, that is pretension and arrogance. Furthermore, the protagonist's remark points out another characteristic which is frequently displayed by the popular students' comportment, namely audacity. Corroboration of this assumption can be found in the abundant use of profane expressions, such as “[f]reak faggots” (Jones 192), “gutless pussy” (Jones 196), “ass” (Jones 194), or “[f]uck you very much” (Jones 159). Just like self-confidence, however, this trait is occasionally taken to extremes in the athletes' conduct, which means that it is transferred from a verbal to a physical level. This is proved by the severe injuries that Hitchings causes Bret during the school prom, as well as the subsequent description of happenings during a baseball game. “Hitchings rushed the mound and threw this savage body block, knocking the guy down, and then he started punching out his lights.” (Jones 193) These two events are clear indications for the jocks' proneness to violence, and although the text only reveals that Hitchings indulges this inclination, the other sportsmen's reaction to his brutal actions at the prom, which is outlined in the following quotation,

propounds that such comportment is ratified by the dominant group's code of conduct. “I see that some of the bullyboys are blocking the door, while Bison holds his arms out, keeping away anyone who might wish to stop the slaughter.” (Jones 196) Hence, it is justified to claim that audacity is a characteristic feature of hegemonic masculinity. The extreme and physical manifestation of this quality, that is violence, is definitely tolerated, but not necessarily displayed by all students who function as exemplars of desirable manhood.

However, the dominant version of masculinity, as it is represented by the group of athletes in Patrick Jones' novel, does not exclusively feature hypermasculine qualities like the ones that have been outlined above. In a conversation with the story's main character, Becca Levy points out a rather different side of the school's prototypical jock. “Both you and Bob have plenty of heart.” (Jones 177) This short but explicit statement implies that in contrast to Bret's experiences, Hitchings also exhibits a kind of demeanor which gives expression to sensitivity. Since it can be assumed that Bob's status as a key member of the most popular clique does not allow for any deviances from the dominating code of conduct, Becca's remark furnishes evidence for the assertion that the behavioral codex of the community's admired boys rates the display of sensitivity as appropriate in certain situations.

The reflections presented in this section have first of all shown that the bearers of hegemonic masculinity in the community that Patrick Jones creates in his novel *Nailed* are the school's sportsmen, which has been proved by the fact that both their popularity and the validity of their rules are beyond dispute. Afterwards, some characteristic features that constitute the admired gender configurations of these students have been identified. This analysis has revealed that desirable forms of manhood in the community under investigation are characterized by a strong opposition to behavioral patterns which are usually associated with femininity, as well as a heterosexual imperative which does not only prohibit actual homosexual practices, but also a number of performances that are for more or less arbitrary reasons considered to be expressive of same-sex preferences. Furthermore, it has been evinced that the dominating group's rules of conduct require anybody who strives for full membership in the circle of

popular students to display performances which exhibit intrepidity, self-confidence, and audacity. Behavior which gives expression to exaggerated and as a consequence also negatively connotated versions of these qualities, such as pretension, arrogance, or even violence, does not necessarily have to be featured by boys who function as exemplars of desirable manhood, but is doubtlessly approved by the group's rules. Yet, it has also been demonstrated that the popular students' gender configurations are not built on hypermasculine performances only, as they likewise allow for the display of sensitivity. The amalgamation of hypermasculinity on the one hand, and sensitivity on the other hand which has been identified in this analysis suggests that the masculine ideal of the community in the novel corresponds best with the concept of the 'new man' which is associated with the 1990s, or its more pronounced version that emerged at the beginning of the new millennium. This assumption is underpinned by the fact that the story's protagonist repeatedly refers to the Columbine High School massacre, which occurred on April 20, 1999.

6.2.2. Individual Configurations of Masculinity

In the third chapter of this thesis, it has been outlined that two of the major findings which have been produced by sociological research on men and gender propound that in any institution there are multiple versions of maleness which are essentially actively constructed in a complicated process of negotiation and interaction. Since it is also understood that this process does not necessarily lead to results which are in compliance with the society's honored standards, it is clear that not all students at Southwestern High School can function as representatives of the community's ideals for men. In the following, the form of masculinity which has just been identified to be the hegemonic one will be used as a reference value for the determination of the extent to which two boys in the novel deviate from or conform to the desirable version of manhood. The two characters whose gender configurations shall be examined in this context are the story's protagonist Bret and his disloyal friend Sean.

6.2.2.1. Bret's Configuration of Masculinity

In order to ascertain in how far the main character's variety of maleness corresponds to or diverges from the community's ideals for men, the subsequent analysis will as a first step be concerned with performances that can be considered to be violations of the dominant rules of conduct. Afterwards, however, it shall be shown that Bret also displays demeanor which is in compliance with the hegemonic group's behavioral codex.

6.2.2.1.1. Deviances

For the investigation of the main character's divergence from the generally accepted code of conduct for men it is important to bear in mind that perceptions of gender configurations are not based on actual qualities that a person possesses, but on the evaluation of one's actions. This notion is of relevance in so far as the ensuing reflections will show that some of Bret's performances are rather arbitrarily interpreted as indications for violations of the community's rules that have been identified above. Yet, it will also be demonstrated that the protagonist in fact does disregard some of the precepts which have been laid down by the dominant clique.

The reasons for the majority group's assumption that Bret commits major offenses against the prevalent masculine standards lie in his uncommon appearance and the pursuance of his non-conformist interests. The ever changing color of his long hair, which he usually wears in a ponytail, and his “lanky and ludicrously unathletic six-foot frame” (Jones 2) clearly distinguish him from the sportsmen. This difference becomes even more marked by his predilection for eccentric clothes, which is highlighted in the subsequent passage from the text. “This is my summer of great fashion experimentation, as I reject my sophomore-year Goth and Megan-inspired black state, for every goofy T-shirt that Alex and I could acquire at the Goodwill during its two-for-one sale [...].” (Jones 17) The look which results from this combination of a gangling body, an extraordinary hairstyle, and a singular way of dressing is regularly met with disapproval by various people in Bret's social environment. His fellow students repeatedly call him a freak, and even his own father and principal Morgan recurrently express their

deprecation of the main character's appearance, as can be seen from the next quotations. “Why the hell do you dress like that? Where do you think it's going to take you?” (Jones 168) These questions emphasize that Bret's father can neither understand, nor endorse his son's fondness for peculiar clothes. Likewise, he is unable to condone Bret's habit of dying his hair, which can be inferred from the following thought. “Every time I add tint to my hair, I blow a colorful cruel wind into my dad's black-and-white world.” (Jones 32) In school, the protagonist has to face an equally hostile attitude towards his looks, which becomes obvious by the ensuing remark from the principal's mouth. “Have you ever thought, Mr. Hendricks, that if you didn't act or dress so oddly things would be easier for you?” (Jones 34) The passages which have been presented so far leave no doubt as to the main character's failure to meet the community's expectations for men in terms of appearance. Yet, it must be assumed that this non-compliant look is only the superficial manifestation of a certain attitude which is incompatible with the prevalent masculine ideals. The subsequent extract from the novel explicitly points out a mental posture that can account for Bret's way of dressing and wearing his hair. “We aren't full-blown punks or real rappers, but we share their attitude [...].” (Jones 50) The at least partial affiliation with subcultures that is underlined in this thought already strongly suggests that Bret does not only superficially diverge from the majority group's standards, but also mentally and attitudinally. This conjecture is further underpinned by his unconventional preference of art disciplines such as music and theater over generally highly valued activities like football or baseball. The next excerpt from the text clearly expresses that the protagonist both shows and pursues interest in acting, and at the same time implies that this inclination stands in stark ideological opposition to the popular students' engagement in competitive sports. “We both prefer to hit the hardwood of the stage rather than the gym, where the pituitary cases that make up the starting five of the Flint Southwestern Spartans bang bodies.” (Jones 7) Since Bret loves acting in plays but disapproves of the jocks' characteristic occupation, it can be supposed that these two activities are mutually incompatible in that they require different mentalities. This presumption is corroborated by the ensuing cogitations, which have also been presented in the investigation of hegemonic masculinity. “At our school, these knuckle draggers score points and win rewards, but from most of us in theater, they earn only our scorn and ridicule.” (Jones 6) These lines reveal that the

protagonist is not the only one who holds the athletes' practices in low esteem and consequently provides reason to assume that the involvement in theater activities is attitudinally opposed to competitive sports. It is rather the case that this opinion is vindicated by most students who share the predilection for acting, which justifies the claim that the contradictoriness of the jocks' interests and those of the school's drama club is firmly established in the community under investigation, and not just discernible in the main character's mental posture alone. Furthermore, the subsequent passage, in which Bret tells the school counselor Mrs. Pfeil about his childhood, implicates that it is his and not the athletes' activities which are generally considered to be deviationist.

> “I never played baseball or football with the guys. [...] I liked to read, watch movies on TV, that kind of stuff. Sometimes I'd see neighbor kids outside playing ball, but it just never interested me. [...] When I got in sixth grade, we had a teacher who wanted us to put on a Christmas play. I figured if I did the play, then I had a reason to give my dad for not playing basketball, which he was pushing me to do. Then we did another play, and this time I got a chance to sing, and I found something else that I could do pretty well [...]” “Your father must be very proud of you.” “Not really,” I say, shaking my head. “He's not proud of me at all.” (Jones 63)

The fact that the jocks are extremely popular with the majority of students at Southwestern, which has been demonstrated in the preceding section of this chapter, is an unequivocal indication for the enthusiastic approval of competitive sports. Moreover, the wish that Bret had also engaged in this occupation connotes that his father agrees with the community's standards as far as the desirability of pursuing certain interests is concerned. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the disappreciation of Bret's involvement in theater, which becomes obvious in the above extract from the text, in equal measure corresponds to the general and hegemonic opinion on the appropriateness of this occupation for boys and men. In summary, it can therefore be stated that Bret's affiliation with subgroups, such as punks and rappers, as well as his love of acting, which is ideologically incompatible with the community's desirable activities for men, underline that his attitude and interests diverge from the prevalent masculine ideals. However, Bret's performances which result from these unconventional qualities, that is acting in plays, wearing an unusual hairstyle, and dressing in a peculiar way, are interpreted as indications for non-conformist characteristics which are rather different

from the ones he actually possesses. Both at school and within his own family, the protagonist's actions are seen as evidence for effeminacy. This claim is corroborated by principal Morgan's statement that “[he does not] understand a young man who wears his hair like a girl [...]” (Jones 78), as well as the following comment by Hitchings at the school prom. “You surprise me, Hendricks [...] I thought you'd be wearing a dress tonight and Alexandra the tux.” (Jones 193). At home, Bret is likewise confronted with such an evaluation of his gender performance, as can be seen from the next passage. “Why don't you go inside with the women?” my dad says in a voice that kills. “Go bake cookies with your mother or play dolls with your sister, Robin.” (Jones 1) This opinion on his son's enactment of manhood can be explained by the connection that Bret's father establishes between acting and female patterns of conduct, which finds expression in the ensuing excerpt from the novel. “So what, you think you're gonna be some Hollywood star who squats to piss?” (Jones 70) Moreover, the subsequent remark which Kylee utters at the beginning of her relationship with Bret points out that a man's involvement in theater is commonly associated with homosexuality. “I thought you were gay like most of the theater guys at Central,” she says, laughing.” (Jones 17) Consequently, it can be supposed that the jocks' repeated contemptuous comments, such as the one presented below, are also motivated by the main character's non-conformist activities. “That faggot wouldn't know what to do with a hot chick like that, anyway,” Hitchings voice booms behind me.” (Jones 59) The next extract, which is taken from a conversation between Bret and Alex, implies that not only teenager, but also adults infer more than platonic interest in men from the protagonist's performances. “Don't you know by now what kind of girls I like?” “None, if you ask your dad!” Alex chortles. My dad thinks both Alex and I are gay.” (Jones 10) The same perception of the main character's sexual orientation is intimated by Mr. King, his English teacher, in the following short dialog. “Hey, Mr. King, aren't you going to ask me who I'm taking to the dance?” I ask. [...] “I assume you're taking Alex Shelton.” (Jones 30) The quantity as well as the explicitness of these passages prove that Bret's deviant performances, which result from a non-conformist attitude and interests that diverge from the community's standards for men, are generally interpreted as indications for effeminacy and homosexuality – two major contraventions of the masculine rules of conduct.

In addition to this reputation as a violator of the heterosexual imperative and the precept not to exhibit feminine patterns of behavior, Bret also displays demeanor which connotes the absence of the desirable male qualities that have been identified in the previous section, namely intrepidity, self-confidence, and audacity. This is suggested by several incidents throughout the course of the story in which he flinches from the jocks' threats. One of those situations occurs at a party in Will Kennedy's house, when Hitchings and his friend Bison make clear that in their opinion Bret is out of place and unwelcome at this event. How the novel's protagonist reacts in the awkward predicament which arises from the athletes' request to leave can be inferred from his thoughts in the ensuing extract.

> I'm frozen in the heat of the moment. The only way out is through the door that Hitchings blocks with his massive frame. I'm trying to figure out what to do to get by Hitchings without humiliating myself [...] I slip by Hitchings, who manages to give me a slight shove. As I balance myself, Hitchings laughs loudly and then points his nose toward the sky. “I smell chickenshit.” (Jones 59)

These lines highlight that the sportsmen's attempts at intimidation successfully make Bret feel insecure and daunted. More importantly, however, Hitchings' remark reveals that these sentiences are also exhibited in the victim's comportment, which is therefore evaluated as being expressive of a lack in the intrepidity and the self-confidence that are necessary to face such a challenge as audaciously as it is stipulated by the dominant rules for men. The assumption that the main character's conduct in certain situation is regarded as being deficient of the display of honorable male features is further underpinned by the subsequent excerpt from one of Kylee's diary entries. “He's real gutless sometimes about standing up to people like Hitchings or letting his dad boss him around.” (Jones 131) Moreover, even Bret himself considers his behavior to be inappropriate, which is implied by the following thoughts in a conversation with his mother. “I told her about the taunts but lacked the nerve to mention my lack of courage as I let Hitchings assault me in King's class.” (Jones 35) This self-acknowledgement of his failure to meet Hitchings' offenses with actions that connote the characteristics mentioned above as well as the inhibition to talk about it emphasize that Bret is aware of the fact that his conduct in such situations is not in accordance with the community's expectations for men. Hence, it is justified to claim that various people, including

himself, his big love Kylee, and the jocks, repeatedly deem Bret's gender performances unsatisfactory as far as the display of intrepidity, self-confidence, and audacity is concerned.

In the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in Patrick Jones' novel, it has been demonstrated that the dominating code of conduct ratifies the exhibition of sensitivity, but only under certain circumstances. In the following passages from the text, incidents will be pointed out in which the story's main character apparently sets the guidelines for when and to what extent emotions may be shown at defiance. The first quotation that shall be presented in this context reveals Bret's intention to perform an act which is strongly associated with the expression of sentimental feelings, namely reading out a self-written poem, in a rather unsuitable situation. “Can I read something I wrote instead of something from the text?” I ask over more laughter, determined this year I won't let jockarchy intimidate me into inane conformity.” (Jones 29) The protagonist's thoughts as well as the other students' laughter underline that by prevalent standards a classroom is definitely not the right place for disclosing emotions in that way, if such an action is endorsed for men at all. Although Bret eventually abandons the plan to lay bare his sensitivity by rendering a poem of his own composition, the mere verbalization of such an intention is already seen as a performance which contravenes the community's rules of behavior. The next extract from the novel, which is taken from a conversation in which Bret invites his father to one of his plays, describes a more explicit exhibition of emotive feelings.

> I say with my voice cracking, “Please.” But the words don't matter. He's deaf to me or I'm dumb to him. Dumb, and becoming dumber as I continue speaking with far more emotion than is usually allowed in my father's presence. “Please, just this once.” “Are you crying? [...] Be a man, Bret. For God sakes, be a man.” [...] My acting skill is now just another tool, like the ones scattered around in this garage that I am too stupid to know how to use. (Jones 68-69)

Although the condemnatory reaction of Bret's father, who has to be supposed to represent masculine ideals which differ from the ones of high school students, cannot be regarded as evidence that his son's comportment in this situation is not in conformity with the adolescents' code of conduct, the protagonist's wish that he could conceal his

emotionalism with his thespian abilities makes clear that he, who is subject to the behavioral codex of his generation, likewise disapproves of his demeanor. This self-critical attitude suggests that Bret's performance is classified as deviance not only by his father's rules for men, but also by the precepts of his peers. Consequently, it can be argued that the excerpts which have been presented above are indications for the main character's inclination to exhibit sentimental feelings in improper ways or at inappropriate moments and places, which makes his display of sensitivity deviant in certain situations, even though it is basically ratified by the dominating code of conduct.

6.2.2.1.2. Conformances

So far, the investigation of the protagonist's gender configuration has highlighted several areas in which this character's comportment deviates from the school community's hegemonic rules of behavior for men. Yet, the ensuing reflections will demonstrate that he also performs acts which can be considered to be in compliance with the generally accepted codex.

The deliberations outlined above have shown that Bret's peculiar appearance and his engagement in acting are widely interpreted as intimations of effeminacy and homosexuality. Yet, his sexual relationships with Kylee and Becca furnish clear evidence for the refutability of at least the latter, so that even the jocks, who before all others staunchly adhere to their defamatory opinion on the main character's sexual orientation, have to accredit his heterosexuality, as can be seen from the following comment. “Pussy!” Hitchings slurs. “Maybe you ain't no faggot, but you're still a pussy.” (Jones 159) Although the sportsmen still repeatedly attack Bret with words that denote same-sex preferences after this acknowledgement has been uttered, Hitchings' statement implies that the protagonist's heterosexuality is actually attested by his relationships and also accepted by the group of popular students. Furthermore, Bret displays hypermasculine performances that counteract the reproach of effeminacy. One of these acts which are supposed to prove manhood is delineated in the next quotation.

> “She's a seven,” I say as we spy a gorgeous Gothwannabe girl [...]. Alex and I started this girl-rating ritual on a trip to Stratford, Ontario, for a Shakespeare

> festival. The number represents the number of fingers or toes we would sacrifice to any deity who could arrange for us to spend horizontal time with these unattainable angels.(Jones 5)

The practice which is described in these lines emphasizes the boys' masculinity in so far as it is on the one hand rather misogynic, and, on the other hand, expressive of lust. The latter is of relevance for the corroboration of manliness in that such an accentuation of carnal desires clearly connotes virility, which is an essential element of honorable forms of maleness. The same quality is highlighted in the next extract, which is also taken from a dialog between the two friends. “Bret, my pants are getting tighter,” Alex whispers. “No wonder they call it longing,” I say. (Jones 7) Consequently, it can be argued that although he is under strong suspicion of being homosexual and effeminate, the main character's sexual relationships with girls as well as his display of hypermasculine performances are indicative of the opposite.

Moreover, Bret also exhibits behavior which connotes his possession of the three qualities that have been identified as desirable for men in the community under investigation in the previous section. One of these valued characteristics, namely self-confidence, is definitely suggested by the protagonist's demeanor when he is on stage with his band or in the theater, but often not represented by his general conduct, as it has been shown above. Nevertheless, the subsequent passages will point out incidents in which his attempts at poise are also successful off stage. The first excerpt that shall be presented in this context is taken from the conversation in which Bret asks Kylee on their first date. “Nice hat,” she says [...] “Can I keep it?” [...] “Sure if...” “If what?” “If you'll go out with me.” I deliver the line like a pro, even if I'm shaking inside.” (Jones 16) Although it is obvious that this proposition costs Bret considerable effort, his thoughts indicate that he nonetheless manages to make it confidently. The same kind of self-reliant behavior is exhibited by the main character's reaction to principal Morgan's refusal to publish the speech with which he has won a debate contest in the school newspaper. “Are you through?” Morgan says, hands on hips, disgust on his dour, flat face. “And I want my speech published,” I say, my confidence growing.” (Jones 82) Again, Bret's cogitations imply that although he is intimidated by the situation, he is able to perform a rather self-confident action. The second quality which has been

demonstrated to be not only typical of hegemonic masculine conduct, but also frequently not or only to an unsatisfactory extent discernable in the protagonist's demeanor, is audacity. Yet, two acts which are precipitated by Kylee's first betrayal, that is stealing his unfaithful girlfriend's diary and causing severe damage to Sean's car, explicitly show that in fact his comportment does feature this characteristic under specific circumstances. Furthermore, the thoughts which accompany his deeds highlight that Bret's actions are not only expressive of, but also motivated by, audacity. Via reading Kylee's journal, he expects to get the “chance to strip her emotionally naked” (Jones 125), and Sean's “SUV is the most visible, available source of revenge” (Jones 126). Hence, it is justified to argue that the story's protagonist possesses this desirable male trait and also displays it in certain situations. The third quality, which is intrepidity, is of special relevance for Bret, as its absence in his behavior is repeatedly pointed out by the jocks and even Kylee. At the school prom, however, he performs an action that clearly connotes this characteristic by not avoiding a fight with Hitchings, which can be seen from the next passage. “Fine, let's do this,” I sing out, and feel as free and unafraid as I do onstage. [...] Hitchings laughs as I put my hands in front of me and shout. “Hitchings, I'm not afraid of you!” (Jones 195) The act of physically and verbally standing up to Hitchings as well as the cogitations that are presented in these lines emphasize that Bret manages to display intrepid demeanor which results from the actual conquest of his fear. It can be stated, therefore, that the novel's protagonist possesses all three qualities that have been identified to be typical of the school community's hegemonic version of masculinity. More importantly, however, he also exhibits these valued male traits by his performances – at least on a non-regular basis.

The analysis presented above has shown that the main character's enactment of manhood is marked by a number of contradictory attributes. First of all, it has been demonstrated that Bret's unconventional activities as well as his peculiar appearance, both of which are the result of a non-compliant attitude and interests that diverge from the community's standards for men, are regularly interpreted as indications for effeminacy and homosexuality. Yet, it has also been pointed out that his two more than platonic relationships with girls furnish unequivocal and irrefutable evidence for his heterosexuality, whereas the hypermasculine acts which he occasionally performs

attenuate the accusation of effeminacy. Furthermore, the investigation of whether the story's main character displays the desirable traits of self-confidence, audacity, and intrepidity has revealed that all three qualities are both present and absent in the behavior that he exhibits. Moreover, it has also been shown that actions which are expressive of Bret's sensitivity are sometimes rated as inappropriate in the given situation, although the hegemonic code of conduct ratifies the display of emotive demeanor in the abstract. These insights make clear that all characteristics which have been identified to be typically associated with hegemonic masculinity are to a greater or lesser extent represented in the protagonist's comportment. It must be considered, however, that Bret's conformances are rather exceptional, which makes his deviances predominantly a matter of inconsistency.

6.2.2.2. Sean's Configuration of Masculinity

The following section of this chapter will be concerned with a rather different embodiment of manhood, as the protagonist's first second-best, then disloyal friend Sean is influenced by two social groups which feature dissimilar versions of masculinity. These two groups are the members of the band Radio-Free Flint on the one hand, and the jocks on the other hand. However, it will be shown that the latter has apparently been far more influential in Sean's process of gender formation, for he displays only minor deviances from the dominant code of conduct. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that in the course of the story even those slight divergences are adjusted to the popular students' rules.

6.2.2.2.1. Deviances

It has already been mentioned that Sean's pattern of behavior is to a large extent compliant with the hegemonic group's standards. Yet, he contravenes the athletes' precepts by affiliating with Radio-Free Flint and of course also his fellow band members, with whom he shares a certain attitude and interests. This idea is expressed by the main character's thoughts in the subsequent extract from the novel. “Sean should be part of the jockarchy like his neighbor Bob Hitchings, but he's not. It's not really about

sports aptitude, but a superior attitude. Sean's common love of radio-unfriendly music, smartass comments, and offbeat books and movies make him one of us.” (Jones 7) Although these lines clearly point out that Sean's mentality and predilection for alternative music and other unconventional forms of art distinguish him from the circle of popular students and provide common grounds for his friendship with Bret and Alex, they also indicate that in other respects he meets the requirements and preconditions for membership in the group of athletes. The same discrepancy, as well as a possible explanation for it, is propounded by the following insight into Sean's living conditions. “Two sets of parents and two sets of influences: the Lexus and Rolex bunch he's born into, and the Radio-Free Flint faction into which he fittingly belongs [...]” (Jones 58) These cogitations again stress Sean's close ties to his fellow band members, but at the same time highlight an aspect which makes him exceptional within this group, namely the wealth of his family. As the son of rich parents, Sean has been socializing with people who have an equally super ordinate status as his own family for many years. Those people are Hitchings and others who assert their innately high social position also within the school community, which cannot be achieved without the display of the hegemonic version of maleness. Since it has been argued by scholars who engage themselves in the field of social research on men and gender that the formation of a person's masculinity is a process of conscious negotiation and interaction in various institutions, as has been outlined in the third chapter of this thesis, it can be assumed that the social intercourse with bearers of the dominant form of manhood has wielded influence on the development of Sean's own gender configuration. His affiliation with the members of Radio-Free Flint, however, stands in stark opposition to this process and gives rise to inconsistencies in his enactment of masculinity, for his performances, which will be shown to be largely in conformity with the sportsmen's standards in the next section, are virtually incompatible with the lower-ranking group with who he associates himself, as their position in the social hierarchy goes hand in hand with the exhibition of a subordinate version of maleness. Hence, it can be argued that Sean's behavior deviates from the generally accepted ideals for men in so far as he keeps company with people who have a significantly lower status than the group of the community's exemplars of desirable manhood, into which he was more or less born, and that this deviance is the manifestation of his non-conformist attitude and interests.

6.2.2.2.2. Conformances

In the previous section, it has already been pointed out that apart from his social intercourse with Bret and Alex, Sean's pattern of conduct is preponderantly in compliance with the community's dominant behavioral codex. In the following, this conjecture shall be corroborated by various extracts from the text which provide descriptions of the character's performances.

As it has been contended above, Sean's deviance is the consequence of a mentality and predilections which are not in accordance with the hegemonic male standards. In contrast to what has been ascertained in the investigation of Bret's gender configuration, however, these attitudes and interests are not reflected in his appearance. This notion is implied by Bret's refusal “to go Gap-ing with Sean” (Jones 17), as well as Kylee's pun in the subsequent quotation. “Nice outfit,” she says after giving Sean's frat-boy wardrobe the once-over, then rolls her eyes. “So, are you a sailor with Old Navy, or what?” (Jones 25) These two excerpts from the novel connote Sean's preference for a rather conventional look, since both Gap and Old Navy are popular American brands of clothing. Moreover, Bret's association of this attire with frat-boys additionally underlines his friend's mainstream way of dressing.

Yet, Sean not only avoids expressing his diverging views and partialities in his appearance, as it is done by the other members of Radio-Free Flint, but also remedies the only deviant behavior which these mindsets actually produce, that is his affiliation with exactly those people. This act of adjustment to the precepts of the dominant group, which is induced by Kylee's betrayal of both Sean and Bret, is described in the ensuing passage. “I've forgiven but not forgotten, and neither has Sean, who is now the one going out of his way to avoid me at school. He's even hanging around Hitchings, probably more to taunt Alex and me than from true friendship.” (Jones 157) These lines make clear that by distancing himself from his former friends, Sean becomes eligible for membership in the circle of the school's most popular students, which in turn indicates that by this dissociation he acquires the status of a representative of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, it can be assumed that his identification with the group of athletes is not just of a temporary nature, but rather a long-standing one, for even after

his fight with Hitchings in Bret's defense, Sean does not retake his place behind the drums of Radio-Free Flint.

The association with the community's exemplars of desirable manhood already strongly suggests that Sean displays the features which have been identified to be typical of this group. Nevertheless, this presumption shall be corroborated in the ensuing investigation, which will point out performances that are indicative of the character's adherence to the jocks' rules of conduct. The first extract from the novel that will be presented in this context demonstrates that Sean exhibits a high level of self-confidence regarding his endeavor to win Kylee back after her reconciliation with Bret. “She wants to come back to me, she told me, but she doesn't want to hurt you again. She told me she feels sorry for you, and so do I,” Sean says as he releases me from his clutches. [...] “[...] Be honest with yourself, Bret, you know it'll happen sooner or later.” (Jones 160) Moreover, Sean's possession of this valued trait is repeatedly highlighted by both Bret and Kylee, who at several stages of the story describe his demeanor as “shy but confident” (Jones 74). A further quality which is rated as desirable by the school community, namely intrepidity, is connoted by Sean's performance in the next passage. “Sean stands up, or tries to anyway. He slips for a second and then rights himself, putting his fists out in front of him. “Right now, Bret, let's you and me settle this.” “I'm not going to fight you,” I say, the exhaustion obvious in my face. “Why not?” Sean shouts.” (Jones 95) This verbal as well as physical challenge implicates the absence of any intention to avoid or flinch from a fray with the story's protagonist, which allows for the conjecture that Sean's behavior in this situation conveys the unmistakable impression that he is not afraid to defend himself and his causes. Furthermore, the following quotation demonstrates that the last quality which has been determined to be denoting of the enactment of hegemonic masculinity, that is audacity, finds equally expression in the character's conduct. “Be a tough guy!” Sean shouts after me. “My dad's a lawyer, and we'll take everything!” (Jones 161) This threat of severe consequences for Bret's car vandalism underlines Sean's plan of ruthlessly taking revenge on not just the protagonist himself, but his whole family. A likewise audacious act is described in the next passage, which reveals how insolently Sean brings Kylee's renewed perfidiousness to the cuckolded boyfriend's knowledge. “Bret, isn't that your – ” Alex starts, but they cut him

off with a shared roar of laughter. “*Shirt*.” The word spits out of my mouth like a broken tooth when I realize that Sean's wearing not just my shoes, but also my new Speed Racer T-shirt, last seen in Kylee's bedroom.” (Jones 170) By wearing items which Bret left behind after his last sexual intercourse with Kylee, Sean not only shows in a rather tactless way that he has again replaced his former friend on the unfaithful girl's side, but also exposes the victim of this betrayal to ridicule in front of other members of the school community. The examples of Sean's performances which have been presented above can therefore be seen as clear indications for the correlation of this character's pattern of conduct with the dominant rules of behavior in as far as the display of self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity is concerned.

Moreover, Sean's demeanor is also in accordance with the popular group's precepts in regard to the way he copes with sensitivity, as he achieves to strike a balance between the suppression of emotions on the one hand, and their blatantly obvious expression on the other hand. This notion is implied by the subsequent extract from the novel. “What's with Sean tonight?” Kylee asks as she finally dances back over next to me. “He said he broke up with his girlfriend,” I say, choosing to ignore his occasional alcoholic overindulgences [...]” (Jones 57) It can be inferred from this passage and its context, which is a party in Will Kennedy's house, that Sean's conduct neither entirely conceals the pain which is caused by the end of his relationship, nor exaggeratedly stresses his vulnerability, for he still goes out and socializes with various people. Furthermore, these lines point out that in order to find this middle ground he embarks on a strategy of numbing his emotions with intoxicants. The ensuing excerpt, which highlights Sean's emotiveness by quoting his articulation of the grief which results from the end of his relationship with Kylee, is taken from a situation in which he is also in a state of inebriation. “You have no idea the damage you caused me,” I tell Sean as calmly as possible. He gives a slow motion shrug. “You know that I do, because she broke my heart too.” (Jones 160) The fact that in both cases of an emotional crisis Sean indulges in alcohol suggests that his display of appropriately sensitive, but not hypersensitive, behavior is contingent on the stupefaction of his feelings. However, the two examples of the character's behavior in emotionally difficult situations which have been alleged above imply that this strategy is a rather successful one, for they describe actions which

are not hyperbolically expressive of his sensitivity and therefore in conformity with the dominant rules of conduct.

The analysis which has been presented in this section has demonstrated that Sean's only deviance from the popular group's behavioral codex consists of the affiliation with his fellow band members of Radio-Free Flint, with whom he shares non-compliant attitudes and interests. However, it has also been shown that in contrast to Bret and Alex, he does not reflect these views and predilections in his appearance. Moreover, after Kylee's betrayal of both Bret and himself, Sean remedies his deviant behavior by breaking with his former friends and kindred spirits, which makes him an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity and as a consequence also eligible for membership in the circle of the school's admired students. Finally, it has been propounded that Sean's pattern of conduct is in accordance with the prevalent standards for men in that he not only performs actions which are expressive of the qualities that have been identified to be typical of desirable forms of maleness, but also avoids displaying his sensitivity in an exaggeratedly obvious way.

6.3. Social Exclusion

The sociological findings which have been outlined in the fourth chapter of this thesis have shown that a person's status as an outsider usually results from their violation of the society's generally accepted rules of behavior. Since the above analysis has pointed out that, in contrast to Sean's demeanor, the protagonist's pattern of conduct deviates from this prevalent codex in various respects, it must be assumed that as a consequence he also suffers from social exclusion. By demonstrating that his performances are met with both appreciation and rejection, however, the ensuing investigation will present a more differentiated picture of Bret's position on the school's social ladder. Afterwards, his process of generating a deviant identity will be illuminated, as well as the strategies that he pursues in order to come to terms with his non-conformist qualities.

6.3.1. Inside vs. Outside

The examination of gender configurations in the previous section has revealed that although Bret actually displays all characteristics which have been identified to be typical of hegemonic masculinity, his compliance with the jocks' rules is rather inconsistent. Similarly varied as his conduct are the reactions of his fellow students. In the following, it shall be shown that some of the protagonist's acts arouse excitement, while others elicit continuous deprecation and even sanctioning measures. Furthermore, it will be propounded that these different evaluations cause Bret to perceive himself as both connected and excluded.

One performance which is definitely appraised positively by at least some of the students at Southwestern is Bret's and his fellow band members' act of giving a concert in the school's parking lot without the principal's permission. The audience's favorable opinion on the protagonist's conduct in this situation can be inferred from the response which is described in the subsequent quotation. “We have gathered quite a crowd, and they've not been standing still. They've been moving to the music, with Kylee and some of her girlfriends from Central up front and leading the way.” (Jones 52) A verbalization of this positive reaction is presented in the next passage from the narrative, together with some important information on the significance of this assessment. “That was great. We should have had you guys play inside,” Becca Levy says to us as she and a bunch of her not-so-geeky popular-crowd girlfriends applaud wildly.” (Jones 52) These lines explicitly highlight not just Becca's and her clique's endorsement of Bret's demeanor, but also the super ordinate position which these girls occupy in the school's social hierarchy. This is of relevance for the understanding of how the main character's action is evaluated by the community, as it shows that even people with a superior status advocate it. Moreover, Bret's display of intrepidity by not flinching from principal Morgan's threats before the concert is prematurely and forcefully ended also impresses students who are affiliated with the group of athletes, as can be seen from the ensuing extract. “That was cool with Morgonzo,” Will Kennedy says; he's this strange half-jock and half-jazz-band creature. It's clear many of my fellow Spartans liked our clash with Morgan.” (Jones 52) Such an approval of Bret's behavior can be explained by the fact that both the audacious act of giving an unauthorized concert and the fearless

confrontation with authorities are rated as performances which exhibit desirable features of masculinity and are therefore in compliance with the dominant rules of conduct. The positive effect of this conformist demeanor becomes even more obvious in the following quotation. “Not only did our contraband concert get us uninvited to school, which is more vacation than punishment, it also got us invited to Will Kennedy's house for a party, where some people who once scorned us now celebrate our success.” (Jones 55) This phrase leaves no doubt as to the temporary rise in popularity that Bret sees after his performances in the school's parking lot, for it reveals that his comportment in this situation has not only provided access to groups that occupy the top of the community's social ladder, but also changed the way that he is perceived by other people for the better. A further act which is unequivocally met with approval by many of his condisciples is Bret's attack on the school's prevalent social system in the last speech of his election campaign for presidency of the Student Council. This claim can easily be underpinned by the outcome of the election, which is unofficially declared by principal Morgan with these words: “We counted the votes after school and you won. You got more votes than Becca Levy.” (Jones 189) Again, Bret's temporary rise in popularity, which can likewise be inferred from his electoral victory, goes hand in hand with the display of desirable male qualities, for although it is clear that the community's representatives of hegemonic masculinity most vehemently deplore the protagonist's performance, it cannot be denied that the act of defending and standing up for oneself is expressive of self-confidence as well as intrepidity, and therefore in accordance with the dominating code of conduct. The reactions to the unauthorized concert and the last speech of his election campaign which have been presented above demonstrate that the story's main character is not considered to be an unquestioned outcast by all students at all times. Conversely, Bret does not feel excluded from the school community in its entirety, which is suggested by his thoughts in the subsequent passage. “Despite everything that's occurred, and all the hard lessons I've learned inside and outside of Southwestern, I don't want to leave my pals, Mr. Douglas, or Becca.” (Jones 204) Furthermore, it is not just individual people with whom he feels connected, but also groups. This claim is implied by the next extract from the novel, which emphasizes that Bret sees himself as a member of the school's circle of actors and other people who engage themselves in theater. “It'll be strange not to be the star of the show, but it feels

good to be out of bed, back with friends, being part of something.” (Jones 215) It can be stated, therefore, that the story's protagonist neither is, nor perceives himself to be excluded from the school community as a whole, for he is repeatedly met with approval of his performances by various people from different social units on the one hand, and feels connected to at least one group and an additional small number of individual people on the other hand.

Despite these rather positive insights into Bret's social life at Southwestern High School, the passages which have been presented in the analysis of his gender configuration have already indicated that his affiliation and identification with the community under investigation can only be partial and limited. In the following, this conjecture shall be corroborated by highlighting that Bret's deviant performances arouse the dominant group's constant disapprobation and induce them to repeatedly adopt punitive measures, which in turn strengthens the protagonist's perception of himself as an outsider. As a first step, it is therefore necessary to show that the negative reactions to Bret's behavior which have already been pointed out in the previous section of this chapter are of a general nature rather than situational. This notion of a generic rejection is suggested by the following extract from the novel. “It wasn't just Hitchings, it was the whole hostile environment. It was getting pushed in the hallway and having books knocked out of my hands. It was getting called names. It was all these things. It was everything.” (Jones 33) These lines reveal that the protagonist has to face attitudes and actions which arise from the sportsmen's disapproval of his behavior on a regular basis within the school community. The ensuing phrases from the text not only further underpin this claim, but also outline a more concrete example of this permanent humiliation. “You ain't shit, faggot.” The abuse transferred from the mat to a daily dose of insult directed at both Alex, whom Hitchings calls Alexandra, and at me.” (Jones 28) A rather different, but equally abasing manifestation of the derogatory stance which Bret's fellow students have on his demeanor is described in the next quotation:

> I turn around an push my Kylee-matching violet-tinted ponytail aside. “Look at this.” Morgan doesn't move, but my mum stares in shock at the back of my neck, which is covered with small bruises. Hitchings has given me the school's only black-and-blue neck. [...] “Bob Hitchings, every day during King's English class,” I say, looking down at the floor, hating that I'm admitting my

> helplessness. “Whenever King's back is turned, he jabs of slaps me with a pencil, sometimes a pen, sometimes his hand.” (Jones 79-80)

These excerpts leave no doubt as to the jocks' repeated infliction of severe psychological and bodily punishment, which Bret has to endure as a consequence of his failure to adhere to the community's rules of conduct. The result of these persistent repudiating and mortifying attacks at both a verbal and a physical level is that the protagonist has developed a sense of extraneousness, which can be inferred from the subsequent passage. “I think about all the hurts and humiliations I've been trying to paint over [...] Finally, I end the evening in front of the Grand Trunk tracks, looking at the words “Bret Lives” and wondering why anyone should even care.” (Jones 163) These reflections make clear that the incessant hostility with which Bret has to deal every day causes him to feel lonely and unconnected with his social surrounding. A no less insightful reference to this notion of not belonging is made by the main character's thoughts in the next extract. “I always knew that I wasn't a typical high school misfit, it was just that I hadn't hit my fit yet.” (Jones 46) Although these cogitations implicate that Bret is aware of the fact that he does not necessarily have to be a generic outcast, they in equal measure imply that he nevertheless feels like one. Hence, it must be assumed that the perpetual corroboration of the protagonist's exclusion from actually only one group, namely the circle of popular students, which is proved by their daily performances of actions that express their strong disapproval of his pattern of conduct, gives rise to the self-perception of being an outsider in general.

The above analysis has demonstrated a rather differentiated and also ambiguous picture of Bret's position on the social ladder of his school. On the one hand, he is definitely excluded from the group of athletes, which becomes obvious by their repeated verbal and physical acts of degradation. On the other hand, however, his performances are occasionally also met with appreciation by fellow students who occupy rather high ranks in the community's hierarchy, which means that he experiences considerable, yet only temporary, increases in popularity. The same ambivalence has been shown to be present in Bret's self-perception, for although he feels emotionally connected with at least one group and various people from different social strata of the community, he considers himself to be an outsider. Moreover, the deliberations which have been

presented in this section have pointed out that whether the protagonist is accepted or rejected depends on his gender performance.

6.3.2. The Process of Generating a Deviant Identity

Now that it has been demonstrated that the novel's protagonist thinks of himself as an outcast of the school community, it shall be illuminated how this deviant identity has come into existence. In the previous section, it has already been suggested that this process is closely connected to the deprecatory way Bret is treated by the group of popular students. Yet, the following analysis on the basis of Howard Becker's theory, which has been presented in the fourth chapter of this thesis, will show that this is only one factor which contributes to the development of the main character's non-conformist ipseity. In order to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of why Bret perceives himself as an outsider, it is therefore necessary to examine to what extent he experiences all three phases of Becker's model, that is interaction with people who display anomalous conduct, stigmatization, and membership in a subculture.

Interaction with members of groups whose comportment is regarded as unconventional by the wider society is an essential first step towards the formation of a deviant identity, since it provides an incentive to adapt one's own demeanor to the prevalent behavioral codex of these social units. In Bret's case, this stimulus is definitely given by his best friend Alex, which becomes obvious in the ensuing extract from the narrative. “In my father's eyes, I was a more or less normal kid until Alex and I hooked up in ninth grade, meeting in a creative writing class. In Alex, I found somebody who laughed at the same jokes, liked the same music, and felt the same disdain for the jockarchy.” (Jones 21) These lines further underpin a claim which has already been made above, namely that Bret and Alex share the same attitude and interests. More importantly, however, they also reveal that the friendship which results from these common grounds has precipitated a change in the main character's pattern of conduct. Otherwise, Bret's father would not have veered his opinion on the conformity of his son's comportment with expectations that are imposed by society. In what respect the protagonist's performances

have changed and by which factors this behavior modification is motivated in addition to the social intercourse with Alex can be seen from the subsequent quotation:

> While my new buds and future band mates Alex and Sean were both exploring various and sundry female forms, I was again on the outside looking in. The more isolated I felt from the great mating rituals taking place around me, the more I followed Alex's lead and grew more outrageous in dress and behavior. What I was doing wasn't working, so I thought I would try something else, something wild. If I were the center of attention, then someone would have to notice me. (Jones 13)

These reflections show that Bret's failure to collect sexual experiences and the consequent feeling of being excluded from typical and important adolescent activities has induced him to adjust his demeanor to the pattern of conduct that is displayed by his best friend, who is apparently more successful in this regard. The most obvious result of this adjustment is the exceptional appearance which has been identified to be one of the main reasons for the negative evaluation of Bret's gender performance in the analysis of his masculinity. Another basis for this derogatory stance on the main character's comportment, namely his involvement in theater, can be assumed to have also been encouraged by his extensive interaction with Alex, who shares the interest in this art discipline with his friend, for within their small group the indulgence in this predilection is not considered to be inappropriate. These deliberations demonstrate that the protagonist's social intercourse with someone who is a kindred spirit in terms of attitude and interests on the one hand, and considered to be non-compliant with the generally accepted code of conduct on the other hand, has prevailed on him to display undesirable demeanor himself. It can be argued, therefore, that the early stages of Bret's friendship with Alex are a prototypical example of the first phase in the process of generating a deviant identity as it is described in Becker's model.

The second phase in this theory is initiated by the attachment of some kind of labeling to the person who is regarded as a violator of the hegemonic rules of behavior. Such a stigmatization often has consequences for the affected person's social participation and self-conception, as it forces them into the subordinate role that has been designed for transgressors of the society's precepts. This, in turn, may lead to the display of additional unratified comportment. The ensuing expositions will demonstrate that the

same processes can be identified in Bret's development. As it has already been outlined above, the protagonist is repeatedly labeled as 'faggot', 'pussy', and 'freak' by the jocks, which means that he is stigmatized for homosexuality, effeminacy, and general non-conformity. The extent to which this damaged reputation disqualifies him from taking part in the community's social life can be seen from the subsequent remark, which is uttered by one of the athletes at the party in Will Kennedy's house. “She can stay Hendricks, but you're welcome to leave anytime,” Bison says.” (Jones 59) This rather sarcastic request to leave makes clear that Bret's presence at social events is unwanted. Moreover, the following lines which Hitchings reads out in Mr. King's English class connote the prevalence of an equally hostile attitude in school. “*Alex's maggot, Bret's a faggot. Call one freak, other little Bretty. I wish they'd both freaking leave already.*” (Jones 29) Such a constant exposure to humiliation and rejection has the effect that the protagonist finally considers himself as non-compliant with the community's standards and expectations. This claim can be inferred from his own words in the next excerpt from the novel. “I just wonder what it'd be like to be one of the normal kids at school,” I say.” (Jones 108) Since this phrase leaves no doubt as to Bret's conviction that he is excluded from the circle of students who are classified as 'normal', it is justified to assume that he regards himself as deviant. Both the impairment on social participation and his self-perception of being unable to meet the community's requirements for membership in conformable groups prompt the protagonist to primarily socialize with Alex, who likewise occupies a position at the bottom of the school's hierarchy. This means that he is more or less forced to continuously contravene the dominant group's rule not to be associated with notorious violators of the hegemonic code of conduct. Hence, it can be asserted that Bret also goes through the second phase of Becker's theory on how a deviant identity is generated.

The third phase which Becker has identified in this process is the affiliation with a subculture or fringe group whose members all feature the same deviance. In Bret's case, such a connection to other non-compliant people is evident in his close relationship with Alex, who, as has been outlined above, has also provided the incentive for his friend's display of divergent conduct. How deep the bond between the two boys is becomes obvious in the subsequent extract from the novel. “We are not soul mates or fraternal

twins sent to different homes, but rather Siamese twins separated at birth, once joined at the head. We must have shared one brain for a few years, since we think alike on just about everything except the merits of cover versions." (Jones 51) Since these cogitations unequivocally prove the existence of strong social cohesion with a person who exhibits the same anomalous behavior, Bret is according to Becker's theory only one step away from solidifying a deviant identity. This last step is the acceptance of a rationalization which justifies his generally unratified demeanor. The ensuing short dialog between the protagonist and his best friend implies that the latter represents and circulates such a vindicatory ideology. "Alex, what do you think it's like to be normal?" "It's like a sweater: it fits, it's comfortable, and it's boring," he says, matter-of-factly." (Jones 108) Yet, the next quotation suggests that Bret does not fully adopt this rationalization which is characterized by a rejection of conventional standards. "Alex [...] isn't ashamed of who he is, like I am sometimes [...]" (Jones 108) This rather critical self-evaluation implicates that the protagonist does not entirely share Alex's exculpatory philosophy, as it reveals that he is unable to wholly justify his deviant conduct to himself. It must therefore be assumed that Bret has not completed the third phase of Becker's model.

The above deliberations on the process of generating a deviant identity have demonstrated that the main character's development most closely corresponds to the theory that has been propounded by Howard Becker, which explains why he perceives himself as an outsider of the school community. It has also been pointed out, however, that the last phase of this model is actually not completed, since Bret does not fully accept his friend's rationalizing ideology. This means that the formation of his deviant identity is definitely in its final stage, but nevertheless still in progress.

6.3.3. Coming to Terms

In the chapter on the problem of social exclusion, it has been shown that Georg Hansen has identified three alternatives for people whose outsider status results from the public opinion that their performances violate the hegemonic rules of behavior. These three options are segregation, assimilation, and partial assimilation. In the following analysis,

it shall be demonstrated which way the protagonist chooses in order to come to terms with his deviances and his low rank in the community's hierarchy.

The first possible solution to social exclusion, namely segregation, implies that affected persons abandon the society or community in which their conduct is classified as inappropriate and instead associate themselves with marginal groups or subcultures. The above reflections on the process of generating a deviant identity definitely connote Bret's inclination to choose this alternative, and Mr. Douglas' words in the ensuing extract from the novel implicate that he even makes an attempt at cutting all social ties with the school community. “Bret, you have to stay connected to something. To the theater, your music, something.” (Jones 172) Yet, the renewed affiliation with the theater group and several other people at the end of the story suggests that he is actually unwilling to turn his back on Southwestern High School. This claim is further corroborated by Bret's secret but constant yearning for appreciation from all his peers, which finds expression in the subsequent passage. “I say I don't care what anybody thinks of me. But deep down I know that's not true. If I really didn't care, then it wouldn't matter when they made fun of me.” (Jones 23) These cogitations reveal that despite his refusal to admit it, Bret longs to be met with approval from his fellow students and consequently also to be accepted as a member of the community. Therefore, it must be assumed that segregation is not the way he has chosen to take.

The second option, that is assimilation, involves that the person concerned adjusts to the dominant code of conduct and accepts the prevalent ideology, which in turn bestows eligibility for membership in the respective society or community. The following quotation implies that Bret is well aware of the fact that without such a process of adaptation he will never be able to precipitate a change of other people's reactions to his demeanor. “I must be crazy. It's insane to keep doing the same things and expect different results.” (Jones 34) The same insight plus the thereby arising intention to actually modify his pattern of conduct can be inferred from the protagonist's cogitations in the next extract. “[My dad]'s not going to change and neither is the world, so I have to.” (Jones 105) However, his unaltered low status in the community's social hierarchy at the end of the narrative reveals that Bret has never managed to fully adjust his

comportment to the generally accepted rules of behavior. Furthermore, the ensuing excerpt from a conversation with Kylee demonstrates that he rejects a conventional lifestyle and therefore also the dominant ideology. “If you run into me in ten years, and my hair is one color and cut short, and I'm jammed into a minivan with a bunch of screaming kids in the backseat, promise me one thing, okay?” “Anything, cutie,” she says softly. “That you will kill me,” I say sans emotion.” (Jones 90) Although it may even be deduced form these lines that Bret has already accepted a rationalization that justifies deviant comportment, the deliberations which have been propounded in the preceding section have shown that such an interpretation would be fallacious. Yet, this passage strongly suggests that the protagonist has not adopted the dominant ideology either. Hence, it can be argued that assimilation is not an option for him.

The logical conclusion which can be drawn from the analysis that has been presented so far is that Bret embarks on a strategy of partial assimilation in order to come to terms with his low status and his deviances. According to Hansen's theory, this would mean that he adjusts his pattern of conduct to the prevalent code of behavior only to a certain point which makes communication with other members of the community possible, but does not involve self-abandonment. In how far the protagonist considers this solution to be desirable can be seen from his reflections on Will Kennedy's performances in the subsequent quotation. “He's one of these guys that everybody likes, but he's not a drone normal. He manages to avoid the smackdown by not sticking out too much, yet he can still be himself. I admire that. I'm trying to get better in that regard too.” (Jones 157) These lines connote Bret's conviction that partial assimilation is the best alternative in his state of being torn between yearning for his fellow students' approval on the one hand, and the strong affiliation with a marginal group on the other hand. Furthermore, they also reveal that he has already started to adapt his demeanor to the hegemonic rules of conduct. First successes of this process become apparent in Alex's comment on his friend's comportment in the next extract from the narrative. “Baseball pals, proms, you're turning into a regular high school hero,” Alex shoots back.” (Jones 151) Moreover, the protagonist's endeavor to adjust his performances at least to a certain extent to the dominant behavioral codex of the community also seems to have a conventionalizing influence on his ideology. This claim can be inferred from the

ensuing excerpt. “I like different, but I think I've learned you can be a little different, like Becca, without feeling odd.” (Jones 203) Finally, the main character's transformation even finds expression in his appearance, which is pointed out in the following passage. “I wonder if Kylee will lose her lunch when she sees my new look. To do some of the medical work on me, the nurses had to modify my mane. I try to picture the glee in Dad's eyes as the techs shaved my head. Still, I don't think I'll let it grow back. I'll really look like a senior [...]” (Jones 204) Bret tries to change not only himself, however, but also his social environment. These efforts to make a difference in the high school community manifest in the pillorying of the jocks' hegemony in the last speech of his election campaign for presidency of the Student Council, as well as in his act of verbally and physically standing up to Hitchings at the school prom, which eventually results in the athlete's expulsion from school. It can be stated, therefore, that Bret's way of coming to terms with his subordinate status and his deviances involves partial assimilation on the one hand, and rather successful attempts at creating a change in the community on the other hand.

The analysis of masculinity and social exclusion in Patrick Jones' *Nailed* has demonstrated that in the school community which is constructed in this novel, a boy's hierarchical position is closely connected to his gender performance. In order to arrive at this conclusion, it has first been shown that the dominant form of manhood among the students at Southwestern High School corresponds best with the 'new man' concept of the 1990s or its more pronounced variant of the beginning new millennium. This claim can be inferred from the fact that the behavioral codex of the school's sportsmen, who have been identified to be the representatives of desirable maleness, not only dictates conduct which is expressive of a strong opposition to femininity, unequivocal heterosexuality, and the valued qualities of self-confidence, intrepidity, and audacity, but also allows for the display of sensitivity, although only under specific circumstances. These traits of the hegemonic version of masculinity have afterwards been used as a reference value for the determination of the extent to which the individual gender configurations of Bret and Sean conform to or diverge from the community's ideals for men. In this investigation, it has been pointed out that the negative evaluation of the protagonist's pattern of conduct is predominantly based on his

inconsistency, for although he features preferable characteristics, his demeanor repeatedly contravenes the dominant rules of behavior. Sean's actions, however, have been evinced to be for the most part in compliance with the athletes' precepts. Furthermore, it has been propounded that by abandoning his only deviance, namely the affiliation with his fellow band members of Radio-Free Flint, Sean becomes eligible for membership in the circle of popular students. The ensuing examination of the protagonist's status has outlined a rather contradictory picture of his position in the school's hierarchy, since it has been shown that his performances are on the one hand responsible for his exclusion from the hegemonic group, but on the other hand elicit approval from admired fellow students and consequently lead to a temporary ascent up the community's social ladder. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that Bret has almost completed the process of generating a deviant identity as it is described in Howard Becker's theory, for the only step he still has to take is to accept an ideology that can justify his non-conformist behavior. Yet, it can be argued that the protagonist has no intention to actually finish this development, since in the last section of this chapter it has been expounded that after rather successful attempts at precipitating a change in the school community, he eventually pursues a strategy of partial assimilation in order to come to terms with his low status and his deviances.

7. Conclusion

The investigations of masculinity and social exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed* have illuminated not only various aspects of male gender configurations as well as of societal positioning processes in the communities of students that are described in these narratives, but also the intimate correlation between these two issues. As a first step, the novels have been examined in terms of the schools' hegemonic forms of maleness. By means of evincing their popularity and the validity of their rules of conduct, the athletes have been identified as representatives of the dominant and desirable version of manliness in both cases. However, the analyses of these students' gender configurations have highlighted differences between the honored variants of manhood in the two communities. Whereas the jocks in *Geography Club* display a form of masculinity that resembles the 'hard body' conception of the 1980s, the gender performances of the sportsmen in *Nailed* correlate best with the 'new man' concept that is associated with the 1990s, or its more pronounced version which emerged after the turn of the millennium. In the ensuing examinations of individual configurations of maleness, the athletes' codes of conduct have been used as the standards to which actions of the protagonists and two further characters have been compared in order to ascertain in how far these young men conform to or diverge from the communities' masculine ideals. These investigations have revealed that although both characters from each novel possess the same non-compliant qualities, that is homosexuality and a rather marked sensitivity in *Geography Club* and a deviant attitude as well as unconventional interests in *Nailed*, these traits are not in equal measure perceptible in their comportment. This means that the protagonists perform actions which suggest major divergences from the communities' standards for men and as a consequence thereof are evaluated as severe contraventions of the prevalent rules of behavior, while their friends successfully avoid giving expression to their non-conformist characteristics and thereby manage to adhere to the precepts of the dominating groups. Yet, it has also been illustrated that the deviant features that the sportsmen and other members of the communities infer from the protagonists' performances are not necessarily those which Russel and Bret actually possess. This discrepancy between perception and reality has been shown to work to the advantage of

the former, but to the disadvantage of the latter. In the subsequent analyses of the main characters' positions in their schools' hierarchies, it has been demonstrated that the boys' social participation in groups of popular students is determined by the extent to which their patterns of conduct are considered to be in accordance with the hegemonic behavioral codices. The elucidations which have been presented in this context have propounded that Russel becomes eligible for membership in the circle of admired students as he temporarily adjusts his public demeanor to the jocks' precepts, but immediately turns into an outcast when his construction of hegemonic masculinity is destroyed by the allegation that he is sexually interested in men. In Bret's case, it has been pointed out that the fact that the school's athletes interpret his peculiar look and his unconventional activities as indications for homosexuality and effeminacy leads not only to his exclusion from this group, but also to severe physical and psychological punishment. However, it has also been evinced that some of his actions elicit strong approval from rather popular fellow students, which enables him to intermittently rise in the school's hierarchy. The reflections on social positioning processes have afterwards been pursued at the level of the protagonists' internal development. These investigations have revealed that both main characters experience all three phases that are described in Howard Becker's theory on how a deviant identity is generated. Yet, it has also been shown that the last stage of this model is unfinished in each of the two novels, for neither Russel nor Bret accepts a rationalizing ideology which can justify their non-compliant behavior. Finally, it has been demonstrated that in order to come to terms with their social positions and deviant qualities, both protagonists embark on a strategy of partial assimilation.

In summary, it can be stated, therefore, that the analyses of masculinity and social exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed* have provided detailed insights into various male gender configurations as well as into complex processes of status formation. Moreover, it has been propounded that the performances of those students whose enactments of manhood have been investigated determine the positions that these characters occupy on the respective community's social ladder. Hence, it has been shown that questions about masculinity and social status are closely interrelated and cannot be considered separately in the contexts of the school settings

that are created in these novels. Although it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to make well-founded claims about the validity of this conclusion outside the literary world, the fact that the aforementioned findings have been produced by means of applying sociological concepts to examples of a genre that has repeatedly been acknowledged for its realistic representation of actual adolescent living conditions suggests that the analyses which have been presented above have yielded valuable insights not only into the school communities in the novels, but also into social life at educational institutions in the United States in general.

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9. Index

The Odd Man Out: Masculinity and Social Exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed*

Abstract

Questions about masculinity and social exclusion have become increasingly important in western societies within recent years. In this thesis, literary representations of adolescent male gender configurations and social positioning processes in high school settings are investigated in two contemporary American novels for juvenile readers. The theoretical basis of these analyses form results of literary studies on young adult literature in the United States on the one hand, and social scientific findings on men and gender as well as on processes of societal status formation on the other hand. The application of these theories to the school communities that are created in the narratives provides detailed insights into two versions of institutionalized hegemonic masculinity and four different individual configurations of manhood, as well as into the protagonists' complex social positioning processes at both a communal and a personal, internal level. Since it is also pointed out that a young man's gender performance determines his status in the respective school's social hierarchy, these analyses prove that questions about masculinity and social exclusion are closely interrelated in the communities under investigation. The sociological approach to the novels furthermore permits the conjecture that the findings presented in this thesis are relevant for not only literary, but also cultural studies.

The Odd Man Out: Masculinity and Social Exclusion in Brent Hartinger's *Geography Club* and Patrick Jones' *Nailed*

Abstract

Fragen zu Maskulinität und Außenseitertum haben in den letzten Jahren in westlichen Gesellschaften zunehmend an Bedeutung gewonnen. In der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit werden literarische Repräsentationen von adoleszenten männlichen Geschlechterkonfigurationen und sozialen Positionierungsprozessen im schulischen Umfeld in zwei zeitgenössischen amerikanischen Jugendromanen untersucht. Die theoretische Basis dieser Analysen bilden Resultate literaturwissenschaftlicher Studien im Bereich der Jugendliteratur in den Vereinigten Staaten einerseits, und sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchungsergebnisse zur Männerforschung, sowie zu Prozessen der sozialen Statusbildung andererseits. Die Anwendung dieser Theorien auf die Schulgemeinschaften, welche in den Erzählungen kreiert werden, liefert detaillierte Einblicke in zwei Versionen institutionalisierter hegemonialer Maskulinität und vier verschiedene individuelle Männlichkeitskonfigurationen, ebenso wie in die komplexen sozialen Positionierungsprozesse der Protagonisten auf einer gesellschaftlichen, sowie einer persönlichen, inneren Ebene. Da auch aufgezeigt wird, dass die Gender-Darstellung junger Männer deren Status in der sozialen Hierarchie der jeweiligen Schule bestimmen, beweisen diese Untersuchungen, dass Fragen zu Maskulinität und Außenseitertum in den untersuchten Gemeinschaften in enger Beziehung zueinander stehen. Darüber hinaus lässt die soziologische Herangehensweise an die Romane die Vermutung zu, dass die Untersuchungsergebnisse, die in dieser Arbeit präsentiert werden, nicht nur literaturwissenschaftliche, sondern auch kuturwissenschaftliche Relevanz haben.

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