

The Contemporary Dystopian Text as a Narrative on the Adolescent Journey to  
Adulthood:

Overcoming Authoritarian Power and the Struggle for Collective Identity, Identity, and  
Emotional Competency in the Face of Suffering

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## **Abstract**

As of late, dystopian novels for Young Adults have become narratives for the adolescent's journey towards adulthood. This thesis explores this genre of fiction as a narration of the power struggle between authoritarian institutions and the adolescent. It examines the way in which limiting power structures use discourse, spectacle, propaganda, and surveillance to further regulate individuals. In addition, this thesis examines the development of identity and emotional competency in repressive structures, as well as how freedom and autonomy are viewed within the dystopic novel. Aside from recognising how adolescents are able to transition into adulthood in oppressive and collusive environments, this thesis argues that it is precisely these hardships and the quality of suffering which makes the adolescent individual more capable of growth.

## Introduction:

*“There are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children’s book.”*

Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*

Literature has often been a method of transportation to another time or world that separates one from their current society. Many authors take liberties to concoct fictitious futures or explore the past in such a way that the reader is offered both wondrous and terrifying narratives. Among current literature trends, the futuristic dystopic novel has emerged as increasingly popular. More specifically, this genre is becoming a regular fixture for the Young Adult (YA). Certainly there is something exciting, if not intriguing, about imagining the future, but more importantly, these novels represent and comment on the current state of society. The future can only be speculated on from the present, and, as a result, the futuristic dystopic novel is filled with current fears, hopes, and expectations. On the whole, these novels expose a great deal about present sociological and psychological movements. However, this thesis is most concerned with what these novels can reveal about the adolescent journey to adulthood, and more specifically, the negotiation between the adolescent individual and the limiting power structures of their dystopic world.

### Conceptualising Dystopia

Dystopia stems from the term ‘utopia’; a concept whose origins have archaic roots that can be sourced from most societies and religions, generally as the notion of a paradise, typically achieved after death. There is a certain ambiguity with respect to definitions of utopia. For example, Lyman Tower Sargent separates More’s term into its two roots: explaining utopia as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space” (9). Whereas eutopia is a “society... considerably better than the society in which that reader lived” (9). However, when I refer to utopia throughout this thesis, I conflate this with Sargent’s ‘eutopia’ also.

Eutopia itself is problematic. There is a common misconception that eutopia embodies perfection or a perfect state/place, yet no reference to perfection is made by Sargent. Importantly, he notes that this is a deliberate omission for two reasons: “First, there are in fact very few eutopias that present societies that the author believes to be perfect. Perfection is the exception not the norm. Second, opponents of utopianism use the label *perfect* as a political weapon to justify their opposition” (9). While I critique the concept of eutopia, I do not discredit or label it as a failure because of its lack of perfection, for imperfection is not a fundamental condition of eutopia. Rather, it is eutopia’s inability to be universal that I find fault with. While eutopia is a construction of an idealistic society that represents a communal mode of living, it does not accurately or fairly represent individuals from different cultures, environments and beliefs, and certainly different utopian conceptions are dependent on the

ideology shared within a particular group. As Ruth Levitas points out in *The Concept of Utopia* (1990), a universal eutopia would find itself conflicted between different societies and individuals (210). It is unlikely that one shares an identical vision of an idealistic society with their neighbour. More specifically, one man's paradise may be another's anti-utopia. Consequently, eutopia may be best considered as a general societal or cultural tendency, rather than an enforced ideology. While the romanticism of a society that recognises not only our needs, desires, but also ensures our safety and provides us with the opportunity to always pursue happiness is generally appealing, the reality of it is problematic.

Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974) notes that in order to create a fair society some form of authority must occur, whether through an elected individual/governing body, or through delegated roles given to the community (Chapter 2). This authority, established to ensure lawfulness, must uphold the laws that allow one to have the required necessities and some liberties. However, in the preservation of these laws comes the possibility of an authority applying their power too severely, resulting in a power that functions through authoritarianism. Furthermore, if fairness and equality are so readily achieved, individuals no longer feel a requirement to strive or compete, and therefore, it halts progression; admittedly this is more problematic from a Westernised perspective. Moreover, to employ utter fairness, individualism is quashed because such personal expressions can lead to the formation of cliques and categories, which in turn lead to class and status divides, and therefore, threaten equality. The suppression of individualism, however, produces its own problems in the form of sub-cultures and corruption; both of which have the potential to be more harmful than the competitiveness of the capitalist society. I mention these conceivable outcomes because they feature heavily in the primary texts I examine, but they also lead me to my next point: how dystopia is created.

Sargent defines dystopia as a “considerably worse” (9) state than the reader's present society. This state arises out of the very problems that eutopia could not overcome and, in the cases I examine, dystopia does not lie in opposition to eutopia; instead, I would suggest it is a concept made from eutopia itself. Certainly, it could be considered the ‘shadow’ side of eutopia, in Jungian terms (Jung, 287). As of late, dystopic fiction's rise in popularity is being taken more seriously than just as mere fiction. Rather, it has become an effective method for highlighting prospective problems, not just in society, but during adolescence as we navigate further into our postmodern world. In *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults* (2013) Balaka Basu states the reason dystopian fiction is effective at targeting adolescent individuals is because:

In emphasising the trials of adolescents, YA dystopias recapitulate the conventions of the classic Bildungsroman, using political strife, environmental disaster, or other forms of turmoil as the catalyst for achieving adulthood. The novels detail how the conditions of the dystopian society force protagonists to fall from innocence and achieve maturity as they realise the dystopian realities in which they live (7)

By drawing on the *Bildungsroman* tradition, Basu implies the dystopian novels can be used as a coming-of-age story to demonstrate the protagonist's moral or psychological growth in times of great change or destruction.

Nonetheless, it is not enough to state that dystopia's popularity lies in its reflection of fears, transitions, possibilities, and because it serves as a narrative on adolescent growth. More exactly, dystopia has started to gain recognition for its commentary about the very networks of society. It reveals problematic constructions of power, potential consequences and ethics that are brought to light with the introduction of new technologies and new knowledge. It is a way to explore the boundaries of an ever-changing world and find the fine line between progression and self-destruction. It is also about understanding how individuals will develop and integrate in unfamiliar territory. Dystopia is inextricably linked to the notion of a future that has a crisis with some social aspect, be it economic, political or environmental.

### **Thesis statement**

With this in mind, the crux of this thesis argues the following: many contemporary dystopic novels for adolescents demonstrate societies to be in a 'considerably worse' state than the readers present society due to an authoritarian authority, such as a government or bureaucratic organisation, which utilises a limiting power both oppressive and collusive in function, thus creating an authoritarian state. Such fiction highlights that this particular manifestation of power suppresses the development of identity, collective identity, and emotional competence in the adolescent individual. This suppression occurs through the production of discourse and hegemony, and, on a micro level, behaviour management. It is effective simply because the breakdown of individualism and identity, or the means to co-opt an individual for an authoritarian purpose allows authoritarian power to better control the masses. I argue, however, that the adolescent individual is not helpless against this form of power. Rather it is through such suppression, which is often the source of grief, suffering and loss within the texts, that the adolescent is forced to negotiate their place within their society. This negotiation allows the adolescent to develop a healthy emotional competence, and to mature as they enter adulthood. It is only through trial and error, rebellion, sufferance, and the testing of one's moral fibre that the individual is qualified to mature; for the journey to maturity comes only when the protagonists are both aware of and able to negotiate their weaknesses and strengths. This argument, if correct, demonstrates that, while power and its many manifestations are unpredictable and will always be prevalent in societies in some sense, they are ineffective as a method to control the central protagonists who are able to use the repressive power that surrounds them and their suffering as a means of developing empathy. In doing so, they emerge from their suffering, not unscathed, but stronger, more resilient, more productive, and most of all, more mature.

In order to formulate this argument I use three series of contemporary books that are increasingly popular at present. The selected texts are as follows: *The Hunger Games* Trilogy (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins; *The Divergent Series* (2011-2013) by Veronica Roth; and the *Starters Series* (2012-2013) by Lissa Price. While the dystopian novel is not required to be set in the future, for the purposes of this thesis, all three series are future-orientated. Each series commonly addresses current fears in society and each dystopia exhibits limiting power that attempts to control both collective and individual behaviour and development. All three series also feature a central female protagonist transitioning from adolescence to adulthood.

## Theoretical Orientation

In order to formulate such an argument my theoretical orientation focuses on the work of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucauldian theory provides an extensive examination into the different manifestations of power through the use of discipline, punishment, spectacle and discourse; but more significantly, it argues that power does not have to operate directly to be effective. Rather, power has the capability of operating indirectly. In *The Discourse on Language* (1972) and *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault argues that power cannot be *possessed*; one cannot own power, for power is formed by relations such as those that exist between objects, people, communities and organizations. Likewise, these power relations do not always lead to negative implications. Therefore, power is not always harmful or corrupt; it also has the means to be productive.

‘Scientia potentia est’ or ‘knowledge is power’ is a common idiom associated with Foucauldian theory. It implies that power and knowledge correlate and that one forms the other, and vice versa. By this means, Foucault explains that power and knowledge are linked through the concept of discourse where discourse is understood as the:

“... Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.” Put concisely, a discourse can be considered to be: 1. a formalized or institutionalized way of thinking that can be manifested through language; 2. a social boundary defining what can be said about a specific topic, or 3... ‘the limits of acceptable speech’ (Foucault [1972] in Goulding 20).

The use of discourse implies a judgment constructed around a word that is often visible in a binary. Common examples of these are male/female, white/black or rich/poor. The power behind these discourses lies in the implications that can be made without directly highlighting, or saying them. Discourse allows categorization to generate knowledge about a particular idea or state, and therefore, to generate power.

Foucault’s conceptualisation of discourse is derived from the works of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) including *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971) in which Gramsci adopted the Marxist philosophy to develop his theory of cultural hegemony. Todd Gitlin in *Prime Time Ideology* (1979) summarises Gramsci’s definition by stating that

Hegemony is the suffusing of the society by ideology that sustains the powerful groups’ claims to their power by rendering their preeminence natural, justifiable, and beneficent... hegemony is a condition of the social system as a whole, rather than a cunning project of the ruling group (Gitlin 6).

Similar to discourse, hegemony is considered to be a form of indirect power that functions to manage the masses:

The decisive point is that hegemony is a collaboration. It is an unequal collaboration, in which the large-scale processes of concentrated production set limits to, and manage, the cultural expressions of dominated (and dominating) groups. Yet it is a collaboration nevertheless.

Absolute power coerces; hegemony persuades, coaxes, rewards, chastises. Absolute power forbids alternatives; hegemony organizes consent and allocates a certain limited social space to tailored alternatives (Gitlin 7).

However, while Gramsci suggests one can overthrow hegemonic power, Foucault's understanding of discourse emphasises that power is not owned, but rather it is possible to change power relations through knowledge. In addition, discourse functions through the practices and beliefs, so therefore, power and discourse are inseparable.

Furthermore, Foucault highlights that the production of power through discourse is also exercised through its ability to exclude or suggest inferiority (161). Such systems of language are only accepted by individuals when they appear to hold collective 'truth'. For example, a widely-held bias may believe the term *policewoman*, because of the reference to gender in a job both physically demanding and authoritative, implies a figure of less substance than that of a *policeman* because of the masculine reference that is often connected to authority and physical strength. Therefore, words carry power and often create discourses that suggest language can signify potent and less potent authority.

Schools, prisons and other such institutions all rely on specific knowledge domains constructed partly in discourses to impart their own sense of authority. However, discourse is a necessary and unavoidable part of human nature. It enables societies to create histories and accounts of themselves that are accepted, and therefore, claim some 'truth'. Similarly, humans catalogue information based on these 'truths' and use this to process and record information that allows them to narrate their lives more effectively.

Consequently, discourse produces 'truth'. Foucault argues that 'truth' is the product of social constructions and upon its acceptance it is given power. As a result, "discourses may construct certain ways of thinking or seeing as right and others as wrong, vest authority in the hands of 'experts', or force certain groups to take on specific positions of subordination if they are to participate at all in social interaction" (Foucault [1972] in Tew 69). Thus, the power of discourse is legitimised by the dominant component of the binary, by which I mean the two related concepts counter each other in meaning allowing the dominant one to hold more authority. On a whole, Foucauldian theory argues that the formation of these 'truths' represent what is 'natural'. However, a method of resistance is possible when the power behind discourse is acknowledged and exposed, and therefore, the terms 'truth' and 'natural' are recognised as social constructions.

There are, however, some problematic aspects within Foucault's work. Firstly, while he claims that power is not always negative and limiting, he does specify the conditions of positive and negative power. Secondly, he does not suggest whether society can escape the power of discourse, nor how this application of power can be bettered. This raises questions, particularly with respect to freedom and personal agency. Foucault never mentions whether these are themselves constructions of discourses such as free/constrained, single/plural, and whole/fragmented. Finally, children's literary critic Roberta Trites argues in *Disturbing the Universe* (2000) that the power Foucault both endorses and rejects actually fails to account for potentially positive power to occur, and while Foucault does deal with empowerment in his theories, she argues his approach suggests that empowerment implies one is able to act solely to prevent oppression or repression, rather than the focus on individual empowerment.



She argues that power is equally responsible for giving us agency as well as being a force that is capable of repression (17).

### Summary of Primary Texts

In order to prove my thesis statement and examine the theoretical works of Foucault within contemporary dystopic texts, I use the following three novel series, summarised here to provide some context.

#### *The Hunger Games*

Panem of *The Hunger Games*, like most dystopias, reflects the societal fears current to its publication. First published in 2008, the series reflects a time when the American economy was unstable, America was at war with Afghanistan, and the attacks of 9/11 had left their scar, highlighting a vulnerability that created unease among the American population. *The Hunger Games* further emphasised that perhaps America was not destined to hold its position as a global superpower indefinitely and that the very foundations that defined America, such as its industry, its capitalism, and its materialism, could equally be its Achilles heel.

Panem, “the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 21), is set in an unspecified time in the future where people were left to fight over the little land that remained in a war referred to as the ‘Dark Days’. Thirteen Districts rose up against the Capitol, but it was undefeated. The Capitol, in retaliation, created the ‘Treaty of Treason’ which formed The Hunger Games, thereby declaring that each year two young members of the twelve Districts left were selected to compete to the death, until there was one winner.

#### *The Divergent Series*

Set in a futuristic Chicago, *The Divergent Series* takes place after a major war, known as the ‘Purity Wars’, has occurred. America has been transformed with most major cities being destroyed and the remaining ones used as locations for experiments. The Purity Wars were conflicts between the genetically ‘damaged’ individuals and the genetically ‘pure’ individuals who had aligned themselves with the government. The novel begins in a dystopic and seemingly inescapable Chicago where the city has been divided into five Factions; each representing five different ideologies. However, the city, unbeknown to its inhabitants, is a monitored experiment and observed by scientists who intend to create a genetically perfect population under the watchful eye of the American Government.

## ***Starters and Enders***

Not unlike the previous two texts, *Starters* and *Enders* are set in a futuristic Los Angeles after the ‘Spore Wars’. The biochemical warfare has resulted in America being exiled from the rest of the world through the fear of contamination. The Spores, deadly to touch, killed almost all of the population aged between 20 and 60 years old, due to vaccination shortages. With temporary sterilization from the vaccine and elderly people living longer due to technological advancements, the two groups, known as Starters and Enders, have been left to rebuild their country, despite their mutual dislike for one another. The story takes place around the discovery that Enders are using their new technological developments to ‘rent’ out the bodies of Starters. The story is centred on Prime Destinations, the company enabling these rentals to occur.

### **Key Concepts**

The purpose of the previous summaries is to draw attention to the general similarities between the texts and provide some context as to how the following key concepts work for all three series.

#### **Power**

Power is an overarching concept in this thesis; more specifically authoritarian power. However, the theory of power remains a debated topic and providing a single definition proves nearly impossible. Throughout history, philosophers’ attempts to define it have helped evolve power towards a more contemporary understanding. Karl Marx (1818-1883) believes power is used by the bourgeois to dominate the lower-class: “Marx viewed a nation state as a collective power of which political parties rule on behalf of society by making rules and regulations in favour of the ruling class” (Krawford 5). This is something that elitist theory would further state as: “The elite is defined as a network of business, government, military and media leaders who exchange favours, have common educational and social backgrounds. These people consciously conspire to maintain control over the masses” (Krawford 6). Such opinions of power resulted in the implication that power was to be viewed negatively, for it was a tool used to dominate, reinforce hierarchy, and manipulate the poor in order for the bourgeois to maintain its wealth. However, Marxist theory did offer the empowerment of the working class. Thus in recognising that workers’ labour has value, it is suggested that the system is equally dependent on this power.

Additionally, Max Weber (1864-1920) states: “power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (qtd. in Moss 177). Both Marx and Weber imply that power can be pressed into negative/disempowering forms as much as positive ones. Furthermore, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1998) gives an even more perplexing answer than either Weber or Marx when it defines power as the “ability to do something” (628).

While power can still be pushed into disempowering forms as much as positives ones, the contemporary understanding of power fully accepts both positive and negative implications of power. Of these definitions, I would argue that it is Jerry Tew who best encompasses the complexities of power most effectively:

I would propose that power be understood as a social relation that either opens up or closes off opportunities for individuals or social groups. These may include opportunities to define and negotiate identities, to make or break connections with others, to express desires and feelings, to satisfy needs or aspirations, to participate and contribute, to influence and make choices, or to engage in some form of transformatory action (166).

Tew does not limit power to domination. Rather, he suggests power is a relation capable of both sustaining and repressing and individual or society. In essence, power is a force that constructs authority through relationships and connections. To break this down into a simplistic chain of events, power gains authority through perception. An individual/society may view someone/something as powerful and share this information with one another, and so on. This gives the impression that someone/something is more powerful than they truly are, but as a result of this perception, the said someone/something gains power; both changing the way others view and act around this someone/something. The same process occurs with the self. Hypothetically, if one were to act with authority, then others perceive that individual as more authoritative than they are, and therefore, a shift in power ensues, allowing the individual to have more influence either through their decisions or through their actions that hold more weight. However, while this creation of power appears to be built through false perceptions, this, just as Foucauldian theory proves, becomes ‘truth’. Entities with authority have the right to exert power if others validate its authority and thus validate the new order of superiority and inferiority. This performance of power can equally become coercive if it is validated by individuals/societies that benefit from this authority at the expense of others.

### **Productive and Limiting Power**

Beyond an initial understanding and simplistic breakdown of power, many sub-categories have stemmed from contemporary definitions. Of these sub-categories, I use two dominant branches of power for the purpose of this thesis: *power over* and *power to*. I use *power over* as a negative manifestation of power to highlight the limiting modes of power, such as manipulation, domination, discourse, and authoritarianism. Whereas, I use *power to* as a positive manifestation of power that is productive and used as a means of empowerment, cooperation, and the right to combine both personal and social values.

The aforementioned separation of ‘limiting’ and ‘productive’ power firstly requires a more specific identification process. Tew highlights productive power as a relation that encompasses two methods: ‘protective power’, which is: “Deploying power in order to safeguard vulnerable people and their possibilities for advancement” (166), and alternatively, ‘cooperative power’, which is: “Collective action, sharing mutual support and challenge – through valuing commonality *and* difference” (166). Similarly, Tew highlights two methods

that demonstrate an expression of limiting power: ‘oppressive power’: “Exploiting differences to enhance [one’s] own position and resources at the expense of others” (166), and ‘collusive power’, which is: “banding together to exclude or suppress ‘otherness’ whether internal or external” (166). Unsurprisingly, these sub-categories do not encompass everything the academic world understands about power. However, for the purpose of this thesis ‘power over’ and ‘power to’, in the context I have outlined, are the only manifestations of power that I am referring to when I identify power.

## **Identity**

Like power, identity is an important concept in this thesis. As a vital component of humanity, the discourse of identification leads to the development of our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual selves; it is something more internal than the society we live in, our environments, and who our family is, although these external factors will certainly shape us additionally. While identity is a discourse that starts from birth, a vital stage in identity development occurs during adolescence as an individual experiences changes biologically, psychologically and socially, as Joe Lewis outlines in *The Physiological and Psychological Development of the Adolescent* (1991). However, the process of identity formation is typically divided into two schools of thought: between critics such as Steph Lawer (2008) who argue development of identity occurs through one’s social interactions and external influences, such as culture, law, environment, kinship, and societal roles and between those, such as Ian Craib (1998), who argue it is the ‘natural’/biological factors, and internal influences such as inherent genetics, sexuality, race, and mental health that leads to one’s identity development. I examine both of these conflicting discourses in this thesis.

## **Moral Development: Emotional Competence**

Moral development correlates with my examination of identity development. As it stands, morality is a far too complex and debated topic to address in its entirety in this thesis. Therefore, I do not align this thesis with a particular moral theory. Rather, I address a singular strand of moral development: emotional competency. Emotional competence or ‘emotional intelligence’ “is the ability to predict other people’s actions and feel sympathy for their feelings” (Trites 84). This is an important component in moral development, simply because:

If we are functioning in an emotionally adaptive and balanced fashion, we invariably also live in accord with our moral *disposition* – not necessarily, however, with our moral code or rules... the latter are quite frequently relativistic and change with development and context, but the former is embedded in such concepts as sympathy, self-control, fairness, and a sense of obligation (Saarni 15).

It would seem that emotional competency is regarded as an assessment of the individual’s ability to act and respond ‘appropriately’, whatever that may be with respect to the

individual's moral disposition. However, according to Saarni, emotional competency is not absolute, but rather an 'appropriate' reaction/act within the context in which it occurs. Emotional competence, therefore, plays an important role during adolescent development. Part of this development occurs when the individual is able to source, regulate, and apply appropriate emotions within interpersonal relationships, but it should equally align itself with one's moral disposition.

There are a number of factors that indicate such development has occurred. A mature and self-actualised individual demonstrates their emotional competency through the following abilities: regulation, controlling rapid changes in emotion, self-soothing, attending emotions without overwhelming oneself, understanding the consequence of genuine expressions of emotions, reframing negative emotions/events into positive emotions, separating one's identity and through recognising that the self stays intact despite emotional fluctuations, separating fact from feeling, maintaining interpersonal relationships in the midst of strong emotions, managing to feel sympathetic and empathic, and using cognitive skills to understand the nature and source of emotion (Rosenblum and Lewis 284).

As well as using Rosenblum and Lewis's factors to evaluate emotional competency within each protagonist, I additionally examine whether growth has occurred in the individual's emotional intelligence, consequential consideration, negotiation between the personal and social self, recognising choices and actions have consequences that have the potential to affect others, and developing an ability to transcend oneself through disembedding or differentiating. In using the two latter terms, I mean having the ability to:

Disembled from the lock of the present moment, to gain perspective on one's situation and its historical context, and to take responsibility for one's choices and actions. This broadly developmental understanding suggests a structural cognitive evolution towards disembedding from social context and engaging in a critical moral dialogue with one's personal and social reality (Mustakova-Possardt 33).

Similarly, differentiation, in this context, is the ability to understand or gain multiple perspectives outside of one's own social, personal and historical context. It must be noted, however, that self-realisation about one's own emotional competency is typically a retrospective process, recognised through the trial and error of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' actions, and only ever truly grasped when the full consequences have transpired.

Emotional competency is a significant aspect of the maturation process. However, it is equally vital in order for a society to function effectively. Emotional competency "is a value for all humanity, because it *profits* us, because it is a contribution, a necessary contribution, to our thriving, flourishing, happiness or well-being" (Bond 209). As social beings, we build relationships, communities, schools and workplaces that require us to contribute in an 'appropriate' and valuable way. Therefore, because we are subjected to a social structure and our actions and choices do not only affect ourselves but others, emotional competence is a necessary development that provides a solution to disconnection. It enables the formation of a healthier community to emerge. More specifically, as the texts demonstrate, emotional

competency aids in the formation of productive, protective and cooperative power, thereby attacking the very foundation of limiting power that dystopia thrives on.

### **Autonomy and Freedom**

As well as the development of emotional competency being an important part of the dystopic novel for the adolescent, freedom and autonomy are equally important concepts. Autonomy is a state in which an individual is able to self-govern without the influence of external factors. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to have autonomy without existing in an environment that allows some freedoms. The ability to self-govern is a similarly a skill only acquired upon maturation. For example, a young child knows only what it is taught, both directly and indirectly; it cannot rationalise or object to what it has learned until it reaches a level of maturity that enables it to question ‘truth’. Thus, it is only when the individual is capable of “acknowledging and modifying one’s own needs and desires, while maintaining connections to others, beginning to own socially approved behaviours, and recognising and resisting unnecessary or negative influences” (Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins 188), and similarly gaining authority outside of the parent/child relationship, that one can truly self-govern and claim to be autonomous. Additionally, self-governance can be equally inhibited by internal factors such as the feeling of duty or a burdened conscience. Therefore, autonomy is similarly hindered by internal as well as external factors.

### **Adolescence**

The final concept that I address in this thesis is adolescence, for it is only this particular state, between childhood and maturity, which I examine. Typically, YA fiction does not exist without its own critiques. These are highlighted by Roberta Trites who argues: adolescent fiction demonstrates authority as paradoxical, and although it celebrates adolescents and youth, it seems to “delegitimize adolescents, insisting that ‘adolescentness,’ especially immaturity, is unacceptable, even though the surface intention of most YA novels is ostensibly to legitimize adolescence” (83). What Trites suggests is that YA novels target the adolescent individual and while it usually highlights the importance of adolescence, it equally encourages the adolescent to mature and grow, suggesting that the individual is only fully productive and authentic once adulthood is achieved. While Trites raises a valid point, the three selected series suggests that the journey from adolescence to adulthood is more important than the destination and rather it is the value of suffering and existing post trauma that is more defining than reaching adulthood<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the texts do not suggest that adulthood is more desirable than the innocence of childhood<sup>2</sup>. Rather, it is the protagonists’ circumstances and environment that has forced them out of childhood and towards adulthood. Thus, within the selected texts, it is suggested that adolescence is merely a transitional period that is never intended to be permanent nor stagnant.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on Trites’s distinction between *Bildungsroman* and *Entwicklungsroman* which she uses to emphasise different adolescent experiences.

## In Summary

Thus far, I have introduced the key concepts that I use in order to argue that limiting manifestations of power, generally in an authoritarian state, can be utilized to control development within adolescent individuals, enforce collective identities, and attack individualism. Additionally, I have introduced Foucauldian theory in order to formulate a more contemporary understanding of power distribution and power through discourse/hegemony; all of which is valid in order to understand how power functions within a society and over the adolescent individual. I have also examined the different applications of power in terms of what is limiting and alternatively, productive in function.

I intend to approach this argument in four parts: In Part One, I take a Foucauldian approach through the examination of how limiting power functions through the use of damaging discourse, propaganda and spectacle in order to form collective identities. The fundamental point of this first part is to examine the *internalisation* of power and how the central protagonists are able to negotiate their own power within these repressive structures. To repeat: power itself does not reside within a person; it is a process, produced and reinforced through discourse, propaganda and spectacle, and thus internalised through discourse. In Part One, I also attempt to draw connections to how discourse, dispersed through spectacle and propaganda, is able to influence and use collective identities in order to create superior and inferior authorities. As Foucault notes: "Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerned distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (202). The effectiveness of this form of power occurs through its invisibility and our inability to avoid its processes. This form of power works effectively against an adolescent individual simply because adolescence is a period where the individual seeks collectives that exist outside of the family environment. I conclude Part One by examining the methods of resistance to authoritarian power that are demonstrated within the texts. I argue such resistance is typically carried out through the actions of healthy collectives that defy or bring to light the limiting nature of the state; by highlighting power structures that are otherwise invisible, the influence and effectiveness that enable them to produce power loses authority.

In Part Two, I examine surveillance as a manifestation of limiting power that acts as a form of behaviour and identity management. More specifically, I examine how the protagonists negotiate the challenges of behaviour management and how this affects the development of their identities, emotional competency, and their overall journey to reach maturation. In Part Three, I argue that such negotiations are beneficial towards the development of identity and emotional competency because when the protagonists are forced to act and make decisions out of the parent/child relationship they are required to discover their limitations in terms of what they deem 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behaviours. Through the trial and error of the protagonists' actions and choices they are able to mature and develop the appropriate behaviours that they feel represents their personal standard of ethics and the standard of ethics that is expected of others around them.

In the fourth and final part, I examine how the protagonists face suffering and loss. I argue that negotiating one's place through suffering is an essential experience on their journey to maturation. In order to establish this argument, I ask whether their suffering

ultimately helps them to negotiate some personal freedoms in order to become autonomous agents. If so, I examine whether the value of their suffering was a worthy price of their freedom. This chapter continues with my argument that authoritarian power is less effective when the protagonists achieve no form of personal freedom. Consequently, two results occur in each text when personal freedom is achieved: the state is no longer capable of producing limiting power as effectively over the individual, and subsequently, the protagonists learn how to defuse the consequences of limiting power, again neutralising its overall effect. Lastly, I end with the final conclusions that summarise how the protagonists' ability to negotiate their place within all the repressive power structures that I have examined results in maturation. My final conclusion is that this growth ultimately suggests that the protagonists have transitioned from adolescence to adulthood and that repressive and limiting power structures are no longer capable of functioning to the fullest effect over the protagonists.



## Part I:

# Authoritarian Power: The enforcement of Collective Identity through Discourse/Hegemony, Spectacle, Propaganda, and its Impact on Adolescent Development

### Establishing Collective Identity

Collective identities are an unavoidable and important aspect of life that enable us to create self-identity in relation to group characteristics. Without such collectives, Cristina Flesher-Fominaya (2010) suggests that aspects of our identities are not meaningful because we have failed to assimilate our social and collective interactions into our identities, and furthermore, collective identities are important in forming effective social movements. The formation and internalisation of collectives is a process that begins during early childhood, so much so, that by the time the child reaches 5-6 years old, “the child begins to understand the statuses she [sic] occupies, with their related roles” (Jenkins 59). This unquestioning acceptance of their status assumes that if the child has learned to identify and is encouraged to think of themselves as inferior in comparison to another collective, then the child will internalise their ‘inferiority’, and therefore, accept the related roles that are inclusive of their status.

Collective identity is perhaps never more important than during adolescence. Not only is it the time at which the individual must discover their place within society, but additionally, they are learning to leave the familiarity of the family environment and seek their own authority out of the parent/child relationship: “as the child moves... towards adolescence, the social world of the peer group, often segregated by gender, begins to replace the family as the primary context within which identification occurs and develops” (Jenkins 59). Therefore, for a number of adolescents, the feeling of being ‘forced’ into collectives becomes a familiar experience and it is during adolescence that one finds the structures of collectivism placed upon them the most irksome.

However, in *Disturbing the Universe* (2000), Roberta Trites states adolescent individuals learn to exist within these structures of collectivism, and what’s more, these structures will often shape how the teen defines themselves, and therefore, their position of power (45). Furthermore, she adds that recognising the discourses within such structures and understanding how they operate, provides the adolescent with some degree of power simply because they are capable of rejecting them.

### Collusive Power in Collective Identities

In *The Hunger Games*, *The Divergent Series*, and *Enders and Starters* the adolescent is forced into specific collectives that are a product of limiting power that is collusive by nature. Collusive power, which is the “banding together to exclude or suppress ‘otherness’ whether internal or external” (Tew 166), is effective because it justifies the treatment and

belittlement of an ‘inferior’ collective. Additionally, it justifies the values of the ‘superior’ collective, thus making their position all the more powerful. On the surface, collusive power impacts the suggested ‘inferior’ collectives by ensuring that they feel undervalued and segregated. Furthermore, a greater implication of this exclusion is the stigma of social unacceptability surrounding the ‘inferior’ that is not only accepted by the superior and inferior collectives, but is equally internalised, and therefore made into a ‘truth’ within that particular society. In each text, these ‘truths’ are enforced through discourse, hegemony, propaganda and spectacle.

I am not suggesting, however, that collective identities are always used as methods of limiting power, nor are all of their formations unnatural or enforced. Rather, they are a vital part of how humans socialise and interact, and we seek comfort in similarity with others; often using these similarities to our advantage in order to work co-operatively. However, I argue that collusive power is activated when an authority selects a particular negative trait or aspect of a collective to emphasise. It is only when these negative aspects are deliberately enforced during the process of collective identification and are internalised, that it acts as something less advantageous for all and as something far more sinister.

### **Collective Identity and the Formation of Collusive Power in *The Hunger Games***

Collusive power, functioning through the falsification of a collective’s intents, is most evident in *The Hunger Games* through the use of the Districts. As well as being falsified to both the citizens of the Capitol and to other Districts, they are equally exploited for the industries that they provide; an exploitation that aids in the Capitol’s advancement and helps it to maintain its wealth. Each District’s industry is a key component of the Capitol’s deliberate fabrication of life in the Districts, and the labour intensive industries serve as a distraction both for the people in the Districts who are forced to work and for the citizens of the Capitol who view the citizens of the Districts as nothing more than the Capitol’s slaves. This representation is further emphasised during the tributes’ pre-game parade where each tribute is forced to dress in an outfit that showcases the industry of their District. However, it is the physical enclosure of each District that most blatantly highlights their segregation from the ‘superior’ Capitol. There are no means to travel from District to District; rather they are literal cages that keep citizens in and out.

Furthermore, this form of collusive power relies heavily on hegemony to function. The term *District* itself is a product of hegemony that encourages the Capitol to view those in the Districts as sub-human. To segregate individuals into *Districts* implies that the inferior collectives must be isolated and segregated. Not unlike an animal at the zoo, the people of Districts are ‘caged’, considered dangerous, but are still used for entertainment, and just as one is confronted to acknowledge their own status as the superior species when visiting the zoo, the Capitol are able to acknowledge this when they become spectators of the Games. Therefore, because of this self-assurance, the Capitol shares the opinion that the Games are a fair representation of the animalistic nature of those in the Districts. Furthermore, the Capitol also enforces categorisation by the ‘type’ of production within each District; enforcing stereotypes that differentiate not only between Capitol and Districts, but also between Districts. Alongside coercion, the Capitol utilises cultural hegemony as a method of

producing collusive power. A consequence of hegemony is that the treatment of those in the Districts is accepted, and the Games are accepted, at least publicly, by those in the Capitol; both ensuring that the Districts and the citizens of the Capitol are equally controllable and are able to embody the collective identities that have been assigned to them. Additionally, the effectiveness of this power is partly due to hegemony's indirect nature.

It is, however, the Games that function as the most powerful mechanism to collusively segregate the collectives. Not only do they force the Districts to become opponents of one another by forcing their children to fight to the death, but they also serve to segregate the individuals in a single District. This is most evident through the Tesseract system that allows a child, who qualifies for the Games, to add their name into the reaping lottery an additional number of times, greatly increasing their odds of selection, in order to receive grain and oil annually. This system functions to highlight that even in the Districts there is a class order which in District 12 exists between the wealthier merchants and the poor from the 'Seam'. The collusive power behind this system stems from the hate and resentment that is directed towards the wealthier merchants whose children are at less risk than the children from the Seam. This form of self-regulation through hierarchy sparks tensions within the Districts themselves; intentionally eliminating the possibility of a District working together to overthrow the Capitol, and equally preventing the formation of a healthy and cooperative power to develop and encourage productive collectives.

Katniss highlights this power as she discusses the Games with Gale: "I've listened to him rant about how the Tesseræ are just another tool to cause misery in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can generally count on supper; and thereby ensure we will never trust one another" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 16). Moreover, Katniss identifies and accepts the status she occupies as a 'girl from the Seam'. Her acceptance of this label reinforces the collusive power that the Capitol relies on. Meaning, a collective reproduces the discourses that surround it, thereby, giving 'truth' and power to the discourse. This is because, in its most basic and neutral definition, collective identity is the provisional unification of individuals. Collective identity can be forged through a shared past, present or future and through collectively "shared experiences, expectations, and orientations that here creates a common, socially integrative identity" (Straub 71). However, collective identity ceases to exist if it is not claimed or declared through the group's beliefs or actions. For example, while the Capitol portrays the Districts as 'barbaric', the Games are used to display this behaviour and further enforce this behaviour to be true so it becomes 'true'. If the tributes did not behave barbarically, then it would expose the Capitol's claim as a 'myth'. A great deal of the Capitol's collusive power exists because of their ability to manipulate the Tributes' actions in the Arena, thus ensuring the Capitol's expectations surrounding the behaviour of those in the Districts are met. The Games are, therefore, paramount to the production of false truths and necessary to highlight the differences between the 'civilised' and 'uncivilised'.

The Games are also used as a means to dehumanise the Districts, thus further implementing the discourse of barbarianism that already surrounds them. Andrew Shaffer describes dehumanization as "denying someone the status of their personhood" (80). Furthermore, he explains dehumanization is a "technique used by oppressors to lure a populace into enjoying the suffering of others" (80) often involving a measure of the

vicarious. While Collins does not detail what ‘truths’ the Capitol are told in regards to the Districts, she does offer hints that helps readers to interpret how the Capitol perceives the Districts. The first real interaction between people from the Districts and those from the Capitol occurs when Katniss meets her prep team and Effie Trinket, the head co-coordinator of the District Twelve tributes. Effie voices her surprise at Katniss and Peeta for eating in a civilised manner: “At least you two have decent manners... the pair last year ate everything with their hands like a couple of savages” (*The Hunger Games* 54). Effie’s use of the word *savages* is important in highlighting her view of the Districts; a view that is further emphasised when Katniss is preparing for her first televised appearance. Her prep team comment: “Excellent! You almost look like a human being now” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 51). The importance of this minor comment is in its ability to highlight the lack of ill-intent behind their words, thus emphasising the complete normality of viewing the Districts as primitive.

Dehumanisation also transpires once the Games begin. While there remains the same sense of barbarism that surrounds the Districts, there is also an emphasis placed on the animalistic tendencies of the Tributes. The theory of animalism, which theorises humanity’s drive for the physical rather than the spiritual (Blatti 1.1), is purposely exploited in the first Games when the Muttations are created to attack the remaining Tributes. Katniss recognises that the Muttations have been created to represent each deceased Tribute. She notes: “The green eyes glowering at me are unlike any dog or wolf, any canine I’ve ever seen. They are unmistakably human” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 405). Katniss is aware that this deliberate attempt to unhinge her is intended to remind her that “even in death, we [the Capitol] own you... You’ll never be anything more than animals” (Shaffer 82). In emphasising the Tributes’ lack of humanity, the spectators in the Capitol feel justified in their treatment of the ‘inferior’ beings. The Tributes are equally forced to internalise, and therefore, occupy this status because just as the name ‘The Hunger Games’ suggests, they will be driven by their need to survive, mainly due to their physical desires such as hunger, thirst, and shelter. Like an animal, who will take any means to appease their physical desires, the Tributes become ruled and owned by these needs, thereby behaving and acting out in the way the Capitol desires and further emphasising the ‘truth’ about the barbaric Districts.

The power behind dehumanization is extremely limiting and collusive by nature. Beyond its ability to exploit and dominate a collective, it enforces a discourse that does not fairly or accurately represent a group or its individuals and, more importantly, it constructs a fear of ‘otherness’. The ‘other’ is the inferior to the superior: the civilized against the uncivilized and cultured against the barbarous. This is the power of discourse: it creates an image of fear around the ‘other’ thereby justifying the means to exploit them for personal gain (be it industry for the Capitol or entertainment for the Capitol’s citizens). It also legitimises the Capitol’s right to host the Games, while at the same time manipulating the audience to join in on the ‘festivities’. It equally justifies the Capitol’s right to control and contain the ‘other’ in order to protect their position and the ‘superior’ status they occupy, particularly given their historical justification: *The Hunger Games* acts as a disciplinary device for past ‘betrayal’ and as a deterrent show of strength at the same time.

In order to oppose limiting and collusive power, productive and cooperative power must be exercised. In *The Hunger Games* this reversal of power occurs only when Katniss is

aware of how power is being exercised over her, and when she recognises that she must reject the status she has occupied since childhood because it has been based on myth. This rejection marks her transition from adolescence to adulthood as she claims some form of personal responsibility towards exposing the Capitol's myths to the citizens of both Districts and Capitol. Katniss's first deliberate attempt to expose the Capitol transpires during the Quarter Quell as she understands the value of camaraderie during the televised training. She seeks to draw attention to the Victors, who the Capitol have treated like celebrities, and who are about to be sentenced to death. Katniss remarks:

It's something of a revelation that those in the Capitol feel anything at all about us. They certainly don't have a problem watching children being murdered every year. But maybe they know too much about the victors, especially the ones who've been celebrities for ages, to forget that we're human beings (Collins, *Catching Fire* 246).

Until the Quarter Quell, all Victors have been viewed as mere exceptions from the barbaric Districts, particularly the 'star-crossed lovers' that Katniss and Peeta have been promoted as. However, in Snow's desperation to defeat Katniss, he exposes the Games as no longer a source of entertainment, but as a tool capable of killing off the Capitol's favourite people.

During their televised interview, Peeta recognises that the more human they appear to the Capitol the more they are able to expose the myth and discourses that exist around the Districts. His desire is to have the Capitol questioning the authority of Snow, so therefore, his solution is to invent a false pregnancy for Katniss in the hope that such an injustice could not continue unnoticed or unchallenged. While Peeta's lie is effective and does generate the reaction he had hoped for, the Games still go ahead. However, the illusion that the Capitol had once exercised so meticulously is fractured, altering the power dynamic considerably between Snow and Katniss.

### **Collective Identity and the Formation of Collusive Power in *Divergent***

In *The Divergent Series* manifestations of collusive power functioning through enforced collectives occur through two outlets: the Factions, and the Genetically Pure (GP) and Genetically Damaged (GD) division. Similar to *The Hunger Games*, this collusive power utilises discourse and hegemony in order to function. Each Faction produces its own set of discourses surrounding the others, thereby resulting in the exclusion and segregation between the five Factions which consist of: Abnegation, the Faction that idealises selflessness and blames society's problems on a selfless nature; Erudite, who value the pursuit of knowledge and blame ignorance; Amity who value kindness and harmony and believe aggression and conflict are the flaws of humankind; Candor, who value honesty above all else and reject falsehood; and finally Dauntless, who value courage and bravery and find cowardice the least desirable trait in humanity.

Tris, the central protagonist, explains the reason behind the founding of the Factions:

Decades ago our ancestors realized that it is not political ideology, religious belief, race, or nationalism that is to blame for a warring world. Rather, they determined that it was the fault

of human personality – of humankind’s inclination toward evil, in whatever form that is (Roth, *Divergent* 35).

Therefore, the Factions were a means of forming collectives based on the individual’s perception of evil. However, a consequence of the construction of these Factions resulted in five opposing ideologies with a collusive segregation that occurred between them. Rather than the city working cooperatively, the friction between the Factions formed discourses about one another that segregate them, not just in values, but also in physical appearance and space. The Factions require new members to leave their home and adopt the Faction as its new family. They must sleep, eat, and work in the same space as their Faction; a separation that is further emphasised by the colour clothes they must wear. The colours are equally designed to further enforce discourse about one another such as the Erudites who don blue; a colour that symbolizes sterility, coolness and masculinity; the red and yellow worn by Amity that symbolises the primal red blood and the yellow of sincerity and happiness; the Abnegation who wear grey because it is impartial, conservative and practical; the Dauntless wear black to symbolize fear, death and strength; and the Candor wear both black and white to symbolize the ideology that there is only truth or falsehood.

Consequently, such a clear and unyielding divide of collectives inevitably results in the intensification of collusive power. This is simply because the Factions exclude anyone who lies outside their ideology and each individual is required to fit into a collective, which forces a collective identity upon them that is most often a misrepresentation of their character. It is unlikely that the desire of every Erudite is to study everything all the time; nor would every Amity member feel peaceful towards everyone. While they seek refuge in the Amity compound, Tris points out this problem to Tobias when he states: “Each have an equal role in government; they each feel equally responsible. And it makes them care; it makes them kind. I think that’s beautiful” (Roth, *Insurgent* 20). She replies: “I think it’s unsustainable... sure, it works for the Amity. But what happens when not everyone wants to strum banjos and grow crops? What happens when someone does something terrible and talking about it can’t solve the problem” (Roth, *Insurgent* 20). Tris’s point is valid: the fear of exclusion encourages the individual to embrace the stereotype of their Faction. Thus, through their behaviour, actions and the internalisation of their Faction’s ideology, the Factions’ discourses create ‘truths’. Like the threat of starvation or the Games in *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* uses the fear of ‘otherness’ to keep the Factions in order.

‘Otherness’, in both *Divergent* and *Insurgent*, comes in the form of the Factionless. The discourse around the word itself is powerful and excluding: *Faction*, generally speaking, means a group or section. Therefore, Factionless implies a lack of belonging and identity. The power behind this word generates enough force to ensure Factions are regarded as the ‘superior’ collectives and to further enforce the notion that the Factionless are the inferior collective. The result of this mode of thinking reminds each member of society that, in order to be worthy of personhood, they should be capable of living within and embracing a Faction. This creates competing natural ‘truths’ about human nature and values, thus excluding those who don’t fit into a ‘natural’ ideology.

However, just like *The Hunger Games*, exposing discourse as myth challenges the production of limiting power. This revelation first occurs when the *Divergent* individuals are

hunted. Divergent individuals, like Tris, function outside of the ‘truths’ that the Factions embody, thus, threatening the power that prevents individuals from rebelling. Divergence as Tris’s mother points out is problematic because:

Every faction conditions its members to think and act a certain way. And most people do it. For most people, it’s not hard to learn, to find a pattern of thought that works and stay that way... But our minds work in a million different directions. We can’t be confined to one way of thinking, and that terrifies our leaders. It means we can’t be controlled (Roth, *Divergent* 442).

Divergence is, therefore, a threat to the Factions because they expose the myth that argues individuals are designed to think one particular way. Consequently, to eliminate this threat the Factions place a negative discourse around the word *Divergent* to incite fear and ensure that Divergent individuals are reported. Using collusive power to exclude the Divergent always reiterates the fear of ‘otherness’ while also reinforcing the Factions’ own superiority.

Just as Katniss rejects the status she had occupied from childhood, Tris must reject her status as being defined by a single Faction once she discovers her Divergence. In order for her to mature and transition from adolescence to adulthood, she must seek an identity outside of the Abnegation and Dauntless Factions she has occupied as a young adult. Only in *Allegiant*, the final book, does Tris realise that the Factions, the Bureau, and the government no longer have any power over her. This is because she has discovered the myths on which they were built and is finally able to see through the discourses which operate around her.

I stated previously that collusive power functioning through enforced collectives also operates through the GP and GD division. In *Allegiant*, Tris discovers that the city is under the constant supervision of The Bureau of Genetic Welfare; an agency of the American government formed in the hope of bettering humanity by altering genes to create a genetically pure race. Beyond the city confines, the Bureau is run by the GPs while the general discourse within the compound considers GDs to be more feral and more dangerous than the GPs. The leader of the agency, David, explains to Tris the reasoning behind GDs and GPs:

A few centuries ago, the government of this country became interested in enforcing certain desirable behaviours in its citizens. There had been studies that indicated that violent tendencies could be partially traced to a person’s gene – a gene called ‘the murder gene’ was the first of these, but there were quite a few more, genetic predispositions towards cowardice, dishonesty, low intelligence – all the qualities, in other words, that ultimately contribute to a broken society (Roth, *Allegiant* 121).

Thus, the Bureau’s purpose is to take out ‘damaged’ genes and segregate people into Factions that value the better parts of human nature, to eventually breed out GDs altogether. By forming these binaries against each other, the Bureau’s treatment of the GDs is considered justifiable by the government who runs the operation and, as a result, they offer their consent to take ‘necessary’ action.

The collusive power that functions against the GD collectives, excludes them from getting lucrative jobs and most are segregated and forced to live in the Fringe; the slums on the outskirts of the Bureau’s compound. Even the laws are separate between the GDs and

GPs thus, “the problem isn’t just the mentality, but the laws it creates. Genetically damaged people are subhuman, condemned to prison like mental patients if they commit terrible crimes because they aren’t responsible for their actions” (Frankel 115). This treatment is not unlike the treatment of the Districts in *The Hunger Games*: both rely on the dehumanisation of the ‘other’ in order to enforce the superiority of the Capitol and Bureau and both rely on segregation between superior and inferior collectives in order to protect the myths they produce in order to justify their behaviour. While the Factions are viewed as an ‘experiment’, the individuals are also considered nothing more than test subjects. David informs Tris her mother was “a fantastic discovery” (Roth, *Allegiant* 153), implying the lack of empathy the Bureau express towards their humanity. Rather, his love for Natalie Prior is more an expression of his appreciation towards her genetics than his love of her as a person.

As with the other forms of collusive power in this text, Tris is able to prevent its function over her when she breaks the illusion of ‘truth’ and exposes the myths that the Bureau produces. This most notably occurs when Nita, a GD who assists at the Bureau, shares the account of America’s history that she has been provided with: “The Bureau talks about this golden age of humanity before the genetic manipulation in which everyone was genetically pure and everything was peaceful... But Rafi showed me old photographs of *war*” (Roth, *Allegiant* 251). Nita’s discovery of the falsification of their history, forces Tris to begin to question the authenticity of the Bureau. It is this moment that she begins to seek the truth and expose it to the city she was once from.

### **Collective Identity and the Formation of Collusive Power in *Starters***

Just as in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, *Starters* and *Enders* also demonstrates the manifestation of collusive power to segregate individuals. This is evident through the divide of the old and the young, and the wealthy and the poor. Adultism, the exclusion, neglect and punishment of children, operates throughout *Starters* as a means to divide the population into two collectives that both oppose and exclude one another. The Enders enforce their superiority through the discourse they produce typically through the media. Callie, the central protagonist in this series, learns of this during a discussion she has with a sympathetic Ender:

I don’t believe all this negative talk about the young people. You know, the ones who don’t have good homes like you two. Everyone says all they do is fight, steal and vandalise. That’s just what we hear about. I don’t believe in putting them in institutions. It’s wrong. How will they ever become contributing members of society if we don’t integrate them? (Price, *Starters* 101).

Not unlike *The Hunger Games* and *The Divergent Series*, it is clear from this conversation that the discourse that constructs society intends to dehumanise Starters. This is evident during the first scene of *Starters* when Callie, who is homeless, escapes from the Enders who round up stray Starters in order to send them off to institutions. Therefore, as well as demonstrating the construction of discourse, this act is also a display of direct coercive control. Callie witnesses Enders capturing a Starter, and she notes: “It was like they’d snared



an animal... they had bagged their prize, and it filled their daily quota” (Price, *Starters* 26). The dehumanisation of Starters is further enforced through the laws and policies that Enders control. Callie notes that Starters have no authority in the running of their society: “They [Enders] weren’t all rich, but none of them were as poor as we were, because we weren’t all allowed to work or vote. That nasty little policy had been in place before the war, with the aging population, but it had become even more of an issue post-war” (Price, *Starters* 28). The purpose of this form of hegemony is to allow Enders the justification in their treatment of Starters and in portraying them as less than human, they support their ‘right’ to be the authority in their society. Furthermore, Starters are forced to adopt this animalistic image and embody the feral nature that supports the Enders representation of them when they are living on the streets and scavenging for food and shelter. Thus, the Starters lay claim to the collective identity that the Enders have produced. As I stated previously, collective identity must be performed in order to exist and this applies even if it is performed in a manipulated or coercive manner.

Additionally, dehumanisation not only manifests through the state, but it is equally enforced through Prime Destinations. However, rather than collusive collectives existing between the old and young, it is a divide of wealth and poverty. This divide is first alluded to when Callie notes the rich were given priority life-saving injections before the Spore Wars. She notes: “Celebrities are getting it. Politicians are getting it” (Price, *Starters* 126). Furthermore, this divide widens after the construction of Prime Destinations when the rich are able to literally buy and control Starters. This treatment is also a form of dehumanisation, yet, unlike the state who favours the animalistic portrayal of Starters, Prime produces the discourse that Starters are commodities and something to be objectified for the personal entertainment of the rich. This is dehumanising in the sense that it rejects Starters personal identities as being anything of worth, and, rather than functioning as an agent, personhood is something that can be bought by the rich who not only rent their bodies, but embody the Starters lifestyle.

This form of dehumanisation is reminiscent of prostitution in the sense that Starters’ bodies are being used to make money, often in ways that the owner would not consent to, suggesting that a number of the actions are coerced and involuntary. There is also a lack of emotional engagement between both the renter and the supplier. Hiring out their bodies suggests the desperation of poor Starters because, like the Tesseract in *The Hunger Games*, societal factors have not provided them with the means or sufficient funds to seek out other options. Rather than this exploitation being sexual, however, it is gender neutral, a nonsexual means of controlling young individuals and taken with the promise of financial or personal gain.

In order for this form of collusive collectivism to become productive Callie must expose the collusive power that functions behind her society’s discourse. Just like Tris and Katniss, Callie functions outside its legitimating control. Therefore, in order to expose these myths she speaks to certain Enders in the hope that they are able to recognise the Starters they rent are not simply commodities. Therefore, through her compassion, kindness and her willingness to work with other Enders, they are forced to acknowledge that Starters are not the vagrants they believe them to be.

Thus far, I have examined how hegemony/discourse is generated to create ‘otherness’ in order to incite fear and ensure that collusive collectives exist to enforce the oppression of the ‘other’. I have also examined how such discourses can enforce a negative collective identity over a group of people; most of which are manipulated into embodying the enforced identity, either with or without their knowledge. This is typically carried out by coercing the inferior collectives into supporting the discourses that surround them just as the Capitol do to the Tributes, the Factions do to the Factionless, and the Enders do to the Starters. Additionally, I have considered the use of dehumanization as deeply rooted in discourse to justify the treatment of the ‘other’ and to understand how the superior and inferior dynamics between the collectives gains public acceptability.

However, before I examine the impact that limiting power has on collective identity, I wish to examine two other methods used to control collective identities through hegemony and discourse. Beyond the distribution of general prejudice, more underhand methods of spreading discourse occur through the use of propaganda and spectacle, both of which are viewed as covert and latent within the texts.

### **Controlling Collective Identities through Propaganda and Spectacle**

#### **Propaganda**

Reality, the state in which we consider to be most genuine, is made from what we know; whether it be from first-hand experiences or secondary ones. Therefore, an effective manifestation of limiting power within the texts manipulates information or settings to censor or influence the state of ‘reality’ often through the use of propaganda. In Latin, propaganda means ‘to propagate’ or ‘to sow’ (Jowett & O’Donnell 2), thus propaganda is a tool to introduce and spread an idea; more specifically, “propaganda is a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett & O’Donnell 1). In addition, Walter Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* (1922), while notably antiquated, provides a brief analysis of understanding the mechanisms of propaganda through the media. Lippmann argues that media outlets are capable of providing fictions: “By fictions I do not mean lies. I mean a representation of the environment which is in a lesser or greater degree made by man [sic] himself” (19). Lippmann, however, is quick to note that these representations are an unavoidable part of life because as humans, we naturally categorise and condense information in order to process it, and it is this process that allows us to create social norms, expectations, boundaries, and shared collective identities.

Furthermore, in *Propaganda and the Modern World* (1996) Michael Hughey argues propaganda and ‘representations’ are disrupted through ‘information managers’, by which he means those who control advertisements, editorialists, public relations experts, radio and news (569). He argues:

Virtually all information with which we are presented is pre-packaged by one or another of these ‘information managers’ in accordance with their own interests and agendas or those of the institutions that hired them. Under these circumstances, our Information Age is perhaps more accurately characterized as an Age of Propaganda (569).

Consequently, a majority of these ‘representations’ and ‘information managers’ are controlled by the ruling authority within the texts and they are integrated so much into society that these representations are referred to as ‘public opinions’ (Lippmann 239). It is these public opinions that are taken as ‘truths’. Although ‘truth’ itself tends to be a problematic and debateable term, for the purpose of this thesis and in regards to the texts, I argue that truth *can* exist and is perhaps better authenticated by the protagonists’ first-hand experiences. John Berger puts it best when he states: “seeing comes before words” (7). He is addressing the developmental primacy of the visual and the immediacy of the visual domain. For example, at the beginning of *Divergent* Tris’s truth is that the world beyond the city is non-existent and dangerous, yet she has never experienced life or seen the world beyond the city’s enclosures. Only once she escapes is she capable of forming a new truth from what she has witnessed and experienced. Therefore, the operation of authoritarian power within these texts takes advantage of how the protagonists form their realities by manipulating their environments and the information they receive. This form of limiting power is exercised to ensure the protagonists hold a particular concept of reality that justifies the state’s power and also highlights the state as the ‘protector’ from a dangerous world beyond, while equally rendering inferior collectives powerless.

Subsequently, the authority that controls propaganda is protected by those who benefit from its discourse. For example, the Capitol embraces President Snow’s propaganda, just as the GPs embrace the Bureau’s, and the Enders embrace Prime Destination’s. Hence, its acceptance aids in its reproduction within society through the thoughts and actions of the superior collective. These tendencies widen the gap between relative status and wealth. Furthermore, propaganda’s ability to safeguard the superior collective’s actions is an effective tool employed by an authoritarian power to maintain loyalty to the state. The success of such propaganda lies in its ability to represent ‘truth’. Therefore, censorship or the manipulation of information towards even those in superior collectives is vital, for it is equally important that superior collectives believe that what they endorse is based on ‘truth’ in order for them to act with true conviction. For example, the Capitol believes that the Games are a fair means of providing justice; the Bureau hides a history of war in order to use scientists like Natalie Prior to sacrifice themselves for the ‘cause’ with the ‘truth’ that they are aiding in the betterment of society, and the Enders believe that Starters bodies are only products, therefore, what they do is not considered murder.

Nonetheless, it is clear that each protagonist experiences maturation when they are able to recognise that their reality is merely a representation. It is their ability to separate and acknowledge the propaganda that functions around them that is an important aspect in their transition to adulthood. Recognising reality as a representation is equally important in order for them to expose the limiting power that functions within their society. Katniss demonstrates her awareness of the propaganda that functions in Panem during her first time in the arena while discussing her District with Rue. During this discussion she considers: “I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking out our conversation, because even though the information seems harmless, they don’t want people in different districts to know about one another” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 246). To show footage that contradicts the Capitol’s information would expose the Capitol’s use of propaganda, and therefore, cause a fracture in

the Capitol's loyalty to Snow. Thus, Katniss is aware that the footage will no doubt be edited by the Gamemakers to manipulate her actions or conversations so that they instead convey her loyalty to the state and dispel any information that would expose the Capitol's 'truths' as mere fictions.

The Capitol's manipulation of the Games footage continues when Katniss's actions further antagonise Snow and the Gamemakers; namely through her threat to eat the poisonous berries. The Capitol is forced to construct a highlights reel that is capable of distracting and diffusing tensions that Katniss has caused. Upon watching this, she notes: "Whoever puts together the highlights has to choose what sort of story to tell. This year, for the first time, they tell a love story" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 440). The Capitol exploits Peeta's feelings for Katniss in order to craft a story of 'the simple District girl in love with the baker' in the hope that it serves to make Katniss appear innocent and unintelligent; in essence: a non-threatening character.

As with discourse and hegemony, propaganda promotes the feeling of fear surrounding inferior collectives while simultaneously boosting the superior collectives' own authority to create a false sense of security within the state. This false sense of security, to both inferior and superior collectives alike, works effectively because in each of the texts, people are willing to trade truth for a representation that guarantees their safety, even if their safety means existing in a state that is dystopic by nature. What's more, the desire for safety has a dual purpose; it gives people, out of loyalty to the state, a cause to fight and protect the authority of the Capitol in the return for eventual 'peace' and safety; thus, reinforcing the state's power. It is clear that propaganda functions as an important part of an authoritarian state. Not only is it an effective means to disperse discourse, hegemony, fear, and courage, but it creates a safeguard where the state is guaranteed participants that are willing to fight in order to maintain a stable environment.

## **Spectacle**

A final method of limiting power that enables the dispersal of discourse and facilitates in controlling collectives functions through spectacle. Theorized by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he argues that spectacle is a deliberate display of public punishment that functions to discipline its audience and not just produce pain, but ensure humiliation:

In so far as it must bring the crime before everyone's eyes, in all its severity, the punishment must take responsibility for this atrocity: it must bring light by confessions, statements, inscriptions that make it public; it must reproduce it in ceremonies that apply it to the body of the guilty person in the form of humiliation and pain (Foucault 56).

Therefore, spectacle creates punishment for the offending individual both externally, in the form of torture, and internally, in the form of humiliation. At the same time, it reinforces the expected behaviour to the general public and demonstrates the consequences of an individual's failure to adhere to this.

Furthermore, the employment of spectacle was to remind the public of the sovereign's supreme power. The ceremony of torture would be a dramatic triumph that emphasised power

as the sole right of the divinely chosen King or Queen; for “the public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power” (Foucault 49). A similar manifestation of power operates in most societies presently. We witness this in a lesser degree in the workplace where a boss may reinstate their power by openly warning or dismissing an individual in front of their colleagues, or in a classroom when a teacher punishes a student in front of their peers to affirm their authority to the class. The most important aspect of spectacle is its public demonstrations that cause embarrassment and fear in order to ensure the power of an authority stays within the public consciousness.

Following the use of spectacle in the Classical and Medieval eras, the method of punishment transformed, particularly within the western world in the latter part of the twentieth century. Punishment was replaced with rehabilitation; a process that was more concerned with psychological evaluations that examined the individual before a form of punishment could be agreed upon. Generally, this method addressed punishment as a private matter. I, however, argue that while this approach to ‘rehabilitate’ is still a dominant and accepted solution to illegal or unacceptable behaviours and actions, spectacle has resurfaced through the extensive use of media outlets and this is clearly a fear reflected in the selected series.

Fellow French philosopher Guy Debord certainly expresses a correlation between spectacle and media during his works in *Society of the Spectacle* (1968). For Debord spectacle has transformed from something once considered a direct experience to something now experienced as a mediated representation. More accurately, Debord argues “spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (4). In essence, Debord implies that image is now a vital component of contemporary society, and therefore, it is solely through image that we relate to one another. This is further implied through Debord’s additional statement that spectacle is a commodity and exists for economic purposes. Spectacle, as a result, relies heavily on individuals buying into the entertainment that it provides.

Debord’s theory correlates with the concept of ‘mediatization’: the theory that media has the ability to shape discourses through communication. This evident particularly in a modern society that is reliant on media as a source of news:

In earlier societies, social institutions like family, school and church were the most important providers of information, tradition and moral orientation for the individual member of society. Today, these institutions have lost some of their former authority, and the media have to some extent taken over their role as providers of information and moral orientation, at the same time as the media have become society’s most important storyteller about society itself (qtd. in Livingstone 5).

Thus, media has the authority to distribute discourse and hegemony that already exists, dormant or not, in society and encourage audience participation. The media has similarly shaped how we receive and understand notions of justice, while having the ability to shape the way we feel about a particular case.

Individuals reading about crime in the news may not only feel personally outraged, but may feel joined to others in an imagined community similarly outraged by crime. Likewise... media reporting of extraordinary homicide cases subtly directs audiences to 'emotionally align' with the victims and survivors. Thus, public narratives about crime in the news media operate on a distinctly emotional level, weaving powerful messages about not only the nature and extent of crime, but also how audiences ought to feel about crime (Kohm 189).

Once again, the limiting nature of this manifestation of power is in the 'truths' it creates through imposing a commonality of thoughts and opinions.

Debord's observations with respect to spectacle prove accurate in regards to the texts, and rather, it is clear that the mediatization of discipline and spectacle is an inevitable part of public punishment within these dystopic worlds. Media is a way to mislead the public into believing that they, the ruling authority, are the true victims of the barbaric inferior collectives: the Capitol portrays itself as a victim of the Dark Days, the GPs in *Allegiant* imply they are victims of a world ruined by GDs, and Enders claim to be the victims of Starters delinquency. Consequently, the spectators subjected to the information from media outlets are 'emotionally aligned' to justify the punishment of the real victims.

In *The Hunger Games*, spectacle is an important ritual in the demonstration of the Capitol's power. Collins often hints at her deliberate use of utilising this form of power and never more so than through Plutarch Heavensbee, the Gamemaker in *Catching Fire*. Plutarch states that the Capitol has only known "Panem et Circenses" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 260). He explains to Katniss that "the writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 261). This classical reference, in which Plutarch describes the popular Latin phrase, critiques a ruler's ability to easily distract a society by their shallow desires. The reference also suggests that as long as such desires are met, then society cares less for the more pressing concerns that arise. In the Capitol, there is evidence of this attitude: as long as the Districts provide the Capitol with necessities, luxuries and entertainment, the Capitol remains distracted. Rather, the Capitol's citizens do not question where their material items and entertainment come from, nor do they have a concern in any political matters when their material needs are consistently met. This simultaneously provides the state with more power because the personal power of individuals in the Capitol is subconsciously surrendered to the state in the process.

In the beginning of *The Hunger Games* it is clear that the Games function as a mechanism of spectacle to entertain not only the Capitol, but to also control and discipline Panem. It reiterates the Districts' lack of power against the sovereign and it reinforces Snow's power to those in both the Capitol and Districts, although under the guise of it being the entire Capitol's power. Katniss and Gale have numerous conversations alluding to the use of spectacle in the Games. For example, after Katniss has volunteered as Tribute, Gale reminds her "there's almost always some wood... since that year half of them died of cold. Not much entertainment in that" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 47). This serves as a reminder to her that while the Games are a form of punishment, she will also be forced to entertain her audience. She notes: "everybody knows they could destroy us all within seconds of the opening gong" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 214), but that would defeat the purpose of the

‘show’ when “the real sport of the Hunger Games is watching the tributes kill one another. Every so often, they do kill a tribute to remind the players they can. But mostly, they manipulate us into confronting one another face to face” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 214). Spectacle, therefore, is an indirect mechanism of limiting power within Panem used to cause both fear *and* entertainment; both of which are methods of control in Collin’s texts.

However, the importance of spectacle as a method of limiting power is never more evident than during the pinnacle of the first Games. Before this point, Tributes have starved, frozen in the cool nights, killed their opponents, and what’s more, they have been poisoned, burnt, stung and forced into a final battle. The Gamemakers use this final conflict to reinforce the Capitol’s opinions on the animalistic nature of those in the Districts and use the spectacle of Cato’s death to carry this out. During the Muttations attack, two significant things happen once Cato falls from the cornucopia: firstly, the Muttations do not kill Cato, they *almost* do. They hurt him enough to keep him conscious and alive because a quick death would eliminate the entertainment factor: “No viewer could turn away from the show now. From the Gamemakers’ point of view, this is the final word in entertainment” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 412). After a night of torture, Cato has the sympathies of Peeta and Katniss which leads to the second significant moment in this attack: Katniss is forced to act and kill Cato. This act enforces the discourse that, as a Tribute from the Districts, she is a barbarian and a killer. Despite the fact that Katniss’s decision to kill Cato comes from a humane desire to end his suffering, knowing that she can be the one to do so, she also partakes in the spectacle and entertains the Capitol audience with her choice.

Post-Games we have little information about the everyday lives of those in the Capitol. There are, however, hints that the spectacle continues: “The arenas are historic sites, preserved after the Games. Popular destinations for Capitol residents to visit, to vacation. Go for a month, rewatch the Games, tour the catacombs, visit the sites where the deaths took place. You can even take part in the re-enactments” (*The Hunger Games* 175). The amusement-like parks of the arenas ensure the preservation of the spectacle, while also providing continuous distractions until the next Game. There does not seem to be a moment when their entertainment is not in some way related to the Games, including the Capitol’s ability to vote for their favourite wedding dress for Katniss’s upcoming wedding.

However, I suggest that there is a means by which spectacle can be challenged successfully. In the case of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is able to turn the spectacle against itself. This firstly requires Katniss to be aware of the spectacle, an awareness that only increases with her maturity. It also requires Katniss to be capable of manipulating its use as much as it manipulates her. In this regard, Katniss uses her actions to benefit her, but equally to entertain her audience as well as dramatizing her actions to elicit a particular response. Haymitch, her mentor, encourages Katniss to play to the cameras in order to ‘hook’ her audience and gain the sponsors that will aid in her survival. In doing this, Katniss also decreases her chances of being ‘killed-off’ by the Gamemakers. Katniss reluctantly follows Haymitch’s advice and engages in showmanship. In the arena, she notes: “So as I slide out of the foliage and into the dawn light, I pause a second, giving the cameras time to lock on me. Then I cock my head slightly to the side and give a knowing smile. There! Let them figure out what that means!” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 199). Katniss has begun to understand that in order to survive she has to give the Capitol what it wants, but more importantly

Katniss has learnt to see herself as she is seen. This ability requires self-awareness and self-knowledge and pinpoints a particular moment of development within Katniss that suggests growth has occurred and it also pinpoints a moment of training towards her ability to manipulate the spectacle and wrestle the control away from the Gamemakers.

Despite her ability to dramatize, I would suggest that the first time Katniss consciously uses spectacle against itself is to demonstrate her feelings concerning the Capitol and the Games during her farewell to Rue. She recognises that the cameras are required to show her death and uses the moment to decorate Rue in flowers to honour and acknowledge her death as a form of murder authorised by the Capitol. Her second purposeful act of using spectacle against itself is to use the poisonous berries to threaten the Gamemakers into believing that if they forbid the victory of two tributes then she and Peeta will forfeit their lives. Katniss recognises that having no Victor would disrupt the spectacle of the Games, and therefore, threaten the Capitol's employment of distraction. It is through this act that Snow identifies her as a threat; not only is she demonstrating her awareness of the Capitol's power and her ability to defeat it, but also she exposes it to others and encourages other individuals to defy and defeat the Capitol.

As mentioned previously, Peeta uses their final interview, knowing it has to be aired, to announce a false pregnancy in which Katniss describes the reaction of the audience: "As the bomb explodes, it sends accusations of injustice and barbarism and cruelty flying out in every direction. Even the most Capitol-loving, Games-hungry, bloodthirsty person out there can't ignore, at least for a moment, how horrific the whole thing is" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 309). Peeta turns the spectacle from a form of entertainment into a serious ethical breach. In doing this, he exposes the Capitol as barbaric rather than those who live in the Districts. This is also the first time we truly witness the Capitol realising that their objects of entertainment are humans too.

While Roth doesn't draw a great deal of attention to spectacle and her purpose is not to directly address issues with media like Collins, there are elements of spectacle that are worth acknowledging in *The Divergent Series*. Roth uses spectacle more as a tool for humiliation than punishment. For example, Candor use it as a tool to signify submission by forcing its members to confide their deepest secrets to their Faction. Tris experiences this first-hand when forced to take the truth serum in front of the Candor audience. Of the experience she notes: "all around me the Dauntless and the Candor wait for me to step forward and spill my entire life before them" (Roth, *Insurgent* 144). The purpose of this spectacle is to force individuals to submit to their Faction. It also serves to continually remind individuals of the power that their Faction has over their deepest secrets.

The second case of spectacle in *The Divergent Series* is evident in *Allegiant*. Upon her discovery of the Bureau, Tris quickly learns that her entire city has been under surveillance and that the Bureau has been watching her with particular interest. Finding herself treated like a celebrity, Tris feels anger at the knowledge that her life has been viewed as a form of entertainment. While this form of spectacle is far less coercive and deliberate than the spectacle in *The Hunger Games*, this is still a form of limiting power. Although not imposing, the Bureau uses surveillance to exploit and celebrate their power over the powerless. Additionally, the Bureau's failure to provide or utilise protective power highlights the limiting manifestation of the Bureau's power.



Thus far, I have argued propaganda and spectacle are tools used to reinforce discourse, and in particular, to reinforce the state's attempt to enforce a coercive, collective identity within the texts. Additionally, I have demonstrated authoritarian power utilises propaganda to exaggerate the states might, instate loyalty, and to rewrite history. Spectacle, likewise, is used humiliate, dehumanise and reinstate the sovereign's power. Like most forms of limiting power discussed so far, these concepts form hierarchies between superior and inferior collectives. Consequently, the ideologies they produce all claim that the improvement of a society is through the attack, control, or domination of the 'other'. A majority of these ideologies are dispersed throughout media outlets, which operate under the guise of entertainment. However, it is when entertainment operates at the expense of others, to incite fear, either on a personal level or through the fear of the 'other', or to cause humiliation that it is given the power to be harmful, and thus, limiting. I have equally argued that the acceptance of limiting discourse occurs because, for many, it justifies their position in society and gives the illusion of self-governance. It allows a superior individual hold an important role either through participation or as a spectator. But most importantly, the seemingly non-threatening operation of this power leaves it mostly unchallenged.

Finally, I have argued that propaganda and spectacle only work when the 'truths' they produce are actively seen; meaning 'truths' have to be validated in order for them to give the authentic illusion of 'truth'. As stated previously, 'seeing comes before words' and only the things we have seen and experienced forms our 'truths'. Therefore, the protagonists are able to successfully challenge these concepts when they experience life outside of these truths, and only then do they have the power to expose 'truths' to be false or misleading.

### **Limiting Power Structures and the Adolescent Role in Establishing Productive Power**

Thus far, I have addressed how discourse, propaganda, and spectacle are capable of impacting the adolescent individual because a child is aware of the status they carry from a young age and collective identity is vital during the transition into adulthood when "adolescents experience a search for membership" (Newman and Newman 255). In addition, I argue that such limiting forms of power are essential for growth and the 'search for membership'. Roberta Trites argues that within an adolescent context, discourses that cause conflicts are vital in order for the individual to find their place within their collectives. However, it is the adolescent's ability to negotiate the way in which discourses are used that determines some form of growth has occurred:

All YA [sic] novels depict some postmodern tension between individuals and institutions. And the tension is often depicted as residing within discursive constructs. Once protagonists of the YA novel have learned to discursively negotiate their place in the domination-repression chain of power, they are usually depicted as having grown (Trites 52).

Therefore, in order for the protagonists to experience maturation they must prove their ability to negotiate within the limiting structures that surround them. As well as using propaganda and spectacle against themselves, as I stated previously, I believe there are two means by

which the protagonists demonstrate that they have negotiated their place within repressive power structures. These occur through naturally banding together in the face of hardships to form natural and healthy collectives, and refusing to internalise enforced ideologies.

The natural formation of collaborative collectives is a social process that cannot always be controlled, particularly in the face of hardship. There are a number of cases within the texts where the protagonists' ability to form, or be a part of, a healthy collective is demonstrated. In *The Hunger Games* the exploitation of the Districts leads to extremely limited resources and leaves the Districts without the means of being self-sufficient. As Katniss points out District 12 is the place "where you can starve to death in safety" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 6-7). Therefore, the only means of survival is to work together to provide one another with the necessary resources they require.

It is in the midst of 'power over' that there is 'power to'. Exploiting the Districts works, to a degree, against the Capitol because it means a productive, potentially subversive, power is at work. Beyond Tew's original definitions that I addressed in my introduction in which he describes productive power as protective and co-operative, a healthy collective similarly expresses productive behaviours such as: teaching, revealing, communicating, sharing, reciprocation, harmonising, alliance, and competitive constraint. Therefore, in order for Katniss to demonstrate her ability to negotiate within limiting power structures, she must demonstrate these productive qualities.

Katniss does demonstrate a number, if not all, of these qualities at some point in the texts. The Games, while the ultimate form of limiting power, force Katniss to reveal herself to the public. She learns to love, share, form alliances, and she shows competitive constraint when refuses to kill other Tributes unless absolutely necessary. However, it is Katniss's life in the District that truly demonstrates her ability to negotiate the constraints of District life. Within her community, Katniss is a central figure of support through her ability to provide food to merchants. In return, she can rely on others to provide her with the necessities that she is unable to get herself. Therefore, it is fair to suggest that Katniss has negotiated herself into a healthy, productive and cooperative collective in whom she engages in sharing, revealing, and communicating in an alliance that reciprocates these qualities.

Like Katniss, Tris demonstrates her ability to negotiate her position within the repressive power of the Factions and the Bureau. Despite the Factions' flaws, they prove to be supportive in the midst of war when Amity, Candor and the Factionless all provide refuge. It is in these moments that Tris learns to negotiate her role within healthy collectives. She is part of a system that forced to harmonise in order to survive. However, it is during her time in the Candor compound that she reveals more about herself than necessary, sharing her deepest secrets and fears to an audience. In this revelation she gains their trust and equally places her faith in the Faction to keep her secret. Thus, instead of allowing spectacle to dominate her, she uses it to negotiate a cooperative and productive power amongst her fellow refugees.

In *Starters* and *Enders* Callie is responsible for the formation of a healthy collective after Prime's destruction. Faced with life on the run, or the choice to fight back, Callie chooses the latter and forms, along with Hyden, a safe haven for the Metals. She has negotiated a place within the repressive power structures that surround her to teach the Metals how to fight, to share their stories, reveal their fears and form an alliance that works to safeguard vulnerable Metals.

It is, therefore, evident that these texts all demonstrate the formation of healthy collectives within repressive power structures, for the natural formation of healthy collectives will always occur in the midst of hardship for one simple reason: human beings are selfish and it is our desire to preserve ourselves that drives us together. This drive is even stronger when a collective is marginalised and their social conditions are unsatisfactory because: “The ‘belonging’ of a ‘community’ is symbolically constructed by people in response to, even as a defence against their social categorizations by outsiders” (Jenkins 112); ‘community’ itself being a healthy collective. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is among a number of philosophers to highlight how human beings will always fall prey to ‘self-love’. He does, however, differ in his argument in that he views self-love as vital for humanity, and rather, in *A Discourse upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (1755) Rousseau argues that humanity is naturally good, but suggests it is society that is responsible for making man evil (33). This isn’t to suggest that he believes humanity to be flawless, rather, it is precisely the greatest of these faults, self-love, that gives us the means to understand one another. What Rousseau means by this is that we share a common interest or goal in caring for ourselves. Our self-interests are generally fundamental in nature: we all require nutrition, warmth, and shelter (Bertram 20); and some common goal that can unite us or separate us. Generally, because of our own needs, we help each other with the knowledge that it will benefit us on a personal level. As a result, Rousseau assures *Amour de soi*, or self-love, is a condition of humanity that is beneficial to each of us. Thus, with the inevitable formation of healthy collectives occurring within hardship, the protagonists must learn to negotiate and distinguish the productive from the limiting collectives, and it is this negotiation that is a mark of growth.

The second means by which the protagonists demonstrate that they have negotiated their place within repressive power structures is through their refusal to internalise enforced ideologies and instead negotiate between their own understanding and the information provided to them. Thus, the refusal to internalise an enforced collective identity renders limiting power as ineffective. I wish to draw two distinctions here: firstly, to *performance*, which is the act an individual presents in a public setting, and secondly, in contrast to performance is *internalisation*, which is to, either consciously or subconsciously, adopt the values, morals, beliefs and general attitudes of an idea or of others. The existence of a collective identity depends on whether or not it is validated and validation occurs through our actions, thoughts and beliefs; for it is not enough to simply assign identity: there must be active participation to authenticate this identity. Consequently, if collective identity is validated, it is further established by the way others treat that particular collective: “others don’t just perceive our identity, they actively constitute it. And they do so not only in terms of naming or categorising, but in terms of how they respond to or treat us” (Jenkins 74). This reciprocal act is evident in each text. However, while a majority of people *internalise* their social status and collective identity, the protagonists only *perform* this identity.

Determining whether to perform or internalise a collective identity requires negotiation on the protagonists’ part. Certainly, they must each undertake a performance in order to be accepted by the collective and appease oppressive authorities, for compliance is essential to their survival. Katniss performs the actions and expressions expected of her in the arena, yet she does not internalise the discourse that surrounds her collective. She does not

view herself as inferior and savage. Instead, she recognises that she is far more intelligent and more resourceful than most people in the Capitol. More accurately, she views the citizens of the Capitol as being modified and mutated enough that they are barely recognisable as humans. Tris likewise undertakes a performance while she stays with the Dauntless when she learns to train, fight, and use the intimidation tactics of her Faction. However, she does not adopt or internalise the belief that violence is the answer, nor does she adopt a desire for domination over the Abnegation like many of her other Faction members. Rather, she still holds important the values of Abnegation: that is to be kind, selfless and do what is right, not what is easy. Finally, Callie performs according to typical expectations of a Starter. She shows contempt for Enders and lives and fights on the streets, yet she does not internalise the belief that all Starters are delinquents. She believes that they are a victim of their circumstances. She also does not believe all Enders want Starters to be in institutes and segregated from society, particularly after she meets Helena.

Thus, their refusal to internalise a collective identity that has been enforced through discourse, propaganda and spectacle, is a form of negotiation, and, I would suggest, a process that occurs only once the protagonist has seen a fracture in the power that dominates them. It is then that the protagonists are capable of distinguishing between their reality and a more accurate reality beyond the discourse of their society.

As stated previously, Trites argues that maturation is a product of negotiation, and it is in the midst of limiting power structures that one is forced to negotiate in order to keep some part of their authentic/productive self. Moreover, Trites notes:

The adolescent cannot grow without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness. Consequently, power is even more fundamental to the genre than growth is. During adolescence, adolescents must learn their place in the power structure... They must learn to negotiate the many institutions that shape them (Trites 472).

I have argued that this negotiation occurs through the natural banding of healthy collectives in the face of hardship, and through the refusal to internalise enforced ideologies. Only once the protagonists have achieved this process of negotiation, is it fair to suggest that they have grown and matured despite the limiting structures of power that exist in their societies. Therefore, Katniss, Tris and Callie each display growth through their ability to negotiate productive power within limiting power structures.

## **Part II:**

### **Adolescent Challenges in Repressive Power Structures: Behaviour Management through Surveillance**

Following on from my previous chapter's focus on discourse, propaganda and spectacle, in this next part of my analysis, I focus less on how authoritarian power functions to limit and control collectives and more on the way it controls personal and individual identity, particularly during the adolescent period. I examine this form of identity management through surveillance, which is a method that allows the state to control individual behaviour and ensure self-discipline. In the texts surveillance is typically carried out through the superior surveying the inferior through either surveillance technology or through direct observations.

#### **Identity Management and Surveillance**

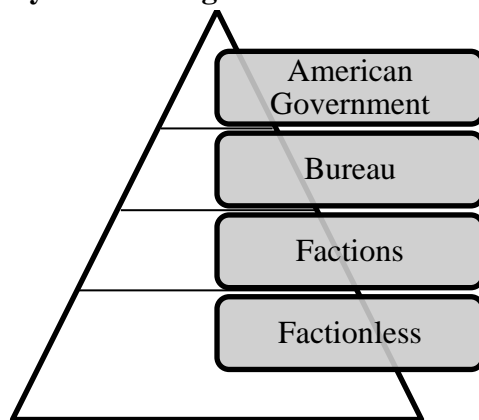
David Lyon defines surveillance as the “processes in which special note is taken of certain human behaviours that go well beyond idle curiosity” (Lyon 13). Surveillance, Lyon also concedes, is a way to ensure ‘identity management’ within a society and is usually dependent on technology with the addition of human analysis. Surveillance itself is not a harmful concept; rather the way in which it is used will determine whether it is helpful or harmful. Generally, if surveillance fails to provide safety or protection, and if it is used to manipulate or gather data that may be damaging to an individual or collective, Lyon considers it to be detrimental to society, and instead, argues surveillance can be viewed as potentially harmful.

Therefore, simply using surveillance as a tool for observation does not give it power, or more specifically, limiting power. Rather, only when an individual feels that being observed dictates or changes their behaviour can surveillance be considered an application capable of producing of limiting power. The manifestation of power through surveillance is something that similarly intrigues Foucault. He argues that surveillance operates through two dominant modes: the first is simply through direct monitoring such as observation through a camera or by an individual, and the second is through record-keeping such as the collection of data and personal files. In combining these modes, “surveillance thus becomes a decisive economic operator both as an internal part of the production machinery and as a specific mechanism in the disciplinary power” (Foucault 175). It is, therefore, a system regulator. The effectiveness of this power relies on hierarchies and normalisation so that surveillance acts as an indirect form of power. Consequently, if surveillance fails to operate imperceptibly individuals alter their behaviour accordingly.

Foucault's research on surveillance extends to various case histories that focus on how surveillance works within institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons. All of which, he argues, operate through ‘pyramidal organization’ (177). Pyramidal organization is a hierarchal means of observation where the many are watched by the few, and so on, until the chief sovereign, which resides at the top of the pyramid, is the main source of power who

watches all.<sup>3</sup> For example, a standard pyramidal graph for the surveillance in *Divergent* would resemble something to the effect of Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Pyramidal Organisation of Hierarchy in *Divergent*<sup>4</sup>**



As Figure 1 indicates, the Factionless are watched by the Factions, who are watched by the Bureau who, in turn, are watched by the American government. However, the purpose of Foucault's pyramidal organisation is to suggest that highest point of the structure is theoretical at best. Rather, power is endless and virus-like by nature. It is not truly capable of having a central figure or monarchical authority at the 'top', because there is no top. Therefore, surveillance is used within institutions to further imply a hierarchal and disciplinary power that does not naturally exist.

If surveillance is, therefore, a disciplinary power, the adolescent protagonists must be able to negotiate their place within this manifestation of power as well as in relation to the limiting power that functions over their collective identities. In order to negotiate some form of personal power within a surveillance society, the protagonists must be capable resisting surveillance as a method that stops them thinking, acting, or maturing as they normally would. Gary. T. Marx argues that this form of surveillance can be resisted. He states: "The individual is often something more than a passive and compliant reed buffeted about by the imposing winds of the more powerful, or dependent only on protest organizations for ideas about resistance" (qtd. in Lyon 167). Yet, Marx neglects to specify the means by which resistance can occur, nor does he suggest whether he believes avoiding surveillance altogether is feasible. While I will examine whether the adolescent protagonists are able to negotiate their place within the surveillance that surrounds them, I would suggest that a vital component of resistance lies in its visibility, which is something I will investigate further in this part. However, the main purpose of this section is to examine whether the adolescent protagonists are able to negotiate around this form of observation and learn to exist within shifts of power in order for them to mature.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's model of panopticonism for his theoretical basis. Citation: Bentham, Jeremy and Miran Božovič. *The Panopticon Writings*. London: Verso, 2011

<sup>4</sup> American Government and Bureau referenced in (Roth, *Allegiant* 120-121).

### Surveillance in *The Hunger Games*

In *The Hunger Games*, surveillance is an effective means of imparting fear and discipline within the Districts. Although the extent of its use is unknown, the Districts are aware that it exists. Kerry Mallon labels this form of surveillance as ‘psychological warfare’: an occurrence that implies the presence of surveillance is everywhere, yet its use is unknown and elusive. For example, Katniss is aware that her house is bugged and that her phone conversations are recorded. However, she has no proof of its use and how this information is used, and also how far the level of surveillance extends to. Consequently, because the Districts are aware of its presence, they feel unable to discuss their disloyalty to the state. Individuals, therefore, are forced to alter their behaviour in order to ensure their own and others safety. As a result, the state is able to supposedly control the rise of rebels and end any groups of resistance before they are fully formed.

This mode of surveillance is best understood through the panopticon; a theory Foucault adapted from Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham uses the model of the prison to propose the construction of a tall tower, which will reside in its centre. It should offer a 360° view of the cells, while also preventing anyone from being able to see into the tower itself. Bentham’s theory argues that if prisons were to be designed according to his model, the prisoners would adhere to the correct behaviours because of the possibility of being surveyed, unknowingly, at any point in time: “Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 201). Thus, the one-way nature of this observation is vital, for the observed have no means of knowing when the watcher is looking at them.

However, Foucault argues that the panopticon does not have to be confined to the prison. Rather, forms of disciplinary power can occur within a number of institutions. Similarly, it can be seen to function throughout *The Hunger Games*, most notably throughout the arenas which act like Bentham’s prison: “because the tributes in the Hunger Games are subjected to heightened surveillance and spectacles of punishment, the Games’ mentality of distrust, suspicion, and paranoia best illustrates the psychological effects of the panopticon” (Wezner 197-198). This is because the Tributes are aware that they are being observed, yet they are unaware of how and when this observation takes place. Katniss notes: “I’m glad for the solitude, even though it’s an illusion, because I’m probably on-screen right now... there are so many deaths to show the first day that a tribute trekking through the woods isn’t much to look at. But they’ll show me enough to let people know I’m alive” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 184). It is through her awareness of surveillance that Katniss is able to adjust her behaviour, knowing that it is essential to her survival. By working with the Capitol’s use of surveillance, Katniss is able to play up to the spectacle that viewers crave, thus ensuring her safety while she continues to entertain.

However, it is evident that the Capitol’s methods of surveillance are limiting by nature. Not only is it used to ensure self-discipline, but its operations as a mechanism of manipulation. This is apparent when Snow discovers Katniss’s false relationship with Peeta, after having caught her relationship with Gale on camera. Snow uses this information to threaten her with Gale’s life as a means to blackmail her into supporting both Snow and the Capitol on the victory tour in an act of loyalty to the state. Part of this agreement is that she

will continue her ‘romance’ with Peeta in order to prove that her threat with the berries was an act of love and not defiance.

Nevertheless, as Gary Marx points out, individuals are capable of resistance (qtd. in Lyon 167) and this is evident in *The Hunger Games* when Katniss and Peeta both use surveillance as a means to expose the limiting manifestations of power that the Capitol employs. The first deliberate show of resistance occurs during the Quarter Quell when Katniss and the other Victors use the compulsory interviews as a means to appeal to people in the Capitol. They do this by demonstrating a show of unity through the simple gesture of holding hands. Although seemingly minor, this action is a stand against Snow; a warning that they all stand against him. It also serves a reminder to the Capitol that they are human. At this moment, Katniss states: “We victors staged our own uprising, and maybe, just maybe, the Capitol won’t be able to contain this one” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 312). Certainly Katniss has learnt the art of negotiation in the sense that she acknowledges surveillance will always exist as long as she is a part of Snow’s games. However, she is not willing to let it control her audience’s perception of her, and therefore, uses it to encourage the Districts to continue their resistance against Snow.

### **Surveillance in *Starters***

Surveillance in the *Starters* series is much more personal and invasive than the simple method of observation that occurs in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, and straight away we are aware of its limiting power. Surveillance manifests physically within Callie through the chip implanted into her brain. From this device, she is able to be tracked, monitored, and can even communicate with anyone who has access to Prime’s technologies. Regarding this form of communication, she notes: “I hated the thing. It was like a phone the Old Man could call anytime, a phone I had to answer and could never disconnect. It was the Old Man’s direct line to me” (Price, *Enders* 2). This form of surveillance certainly identifies with Bentham’s panopticon. But rather than the watcher’s tower being an external feature of the surveying process, the surveillance takes place internally from the virtual tower/chip inside her brain.

It is clear that this internal panopticon is limiting by nature. Not only does it reveal private conversations between Callie and her allies, but is a way of literally controlling her body without her permission. There are numerous incidents within the texts that reflect the negative aspects of this surveillance. This is most notably witnessed through Brockman’s attack on Callie in the shopping complex. He warns Callie that the chip can be used against her: “I can turn it into a weapon” (Price, *Enders* 13). He continues with his threat by detonating another chipped Starter for her to witness. The purpose of Brockman’s action at this point is simply to remind Callie that she is constantly observed, and that he has the ability to fully control her body: “Did you see? That’s me, making you move. Like a puppet” (Price, *Enders* 105). His love of controlling Callie is escalated by the fact that Callie is the only Starter who is aware of, and therefore, able to resist his control. Of this ability, he states: “I just love controlling Metals... and it’s even better with you, Callie, because you’re aware of it. Such an intimate, sharing experience” (Price, *Enders* 246).

Therefore, having thus established the chip as an internal panopticon of limiting power, Callie must learn to negotiate her place within the power structures that surround her.



Certainly, we witness her constant attempts to resist its power over her. It is, however, when Callie is kidnapped and paraded in front of an audience under Brockman's control that we witness her true ability to resist this form of power. In an attempt to sell the chipping technology, Brockman announces to his audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, this girl is about to shoot her own father, in a final demonstration of how powerful this process is... If we can make her do this, the person who walks away with this package I offer tonight will be able to use her to assassinate anyone" (Price, *Enders* 258). In order to resist Brockman's control over her body, she must resist his power over her mind and reverse the control from her to Brockman. Once Callie is capable of achieving this, her ability to negotiate her place within this limiting power becomes much more evident.

This is most noticeable at the end of the series when Callie uses her chip to assist the government. Aware of the permanence of her chip and its inevitable place within her life, she attempts to use her unique situation to aid others. Her first step in doing so contributes to the arrest of Beatty, the abusive institute headmaster. By allowing officials to see and hear through her chip in order to record and witness her confessions of mistreatment towards the Starters in her care, she is able to prove Beatty's abusive behaviour. Her decision to utilise the surveillance that surrounds her to help other ensures that it manifests as productive rather than limiting power. Therefore, while Callie is not able to end the use of surveillance altogether, she is able to negotiate her place within its power structures, and what's more, she is able to reproduce a healthy, protective, cooperative and productive power within these structures.

It is inevitable that surveillance, in some form, will always be present within the protagonists' societies. Yet, it is clear that the adolescent protagonists are all capable of negotiating their position within the limiting power structures that surround surveillance once they are aware of its presence. To revisit Trites's previous argument, negotiation within repressive power structures is a vital part of the adolescent's life that indicates growth has occurred. Bearing this in mind, I have argued that Katniss, Tris and Callie, all resist surveillance, either through turning it against itself (counter-surveilling), or through ending its use. It is clear, in these three cases, that resistance is a method of negotiation where the adolescent protagonist refuses to allow the limiting power structures of surveillance to dictate their behaviour. Therefore, surveillance, just like collusive power, is an essential component in Katniss, Tris, and Callie's transitions to adulthood. Without these repressive structures the adolescent protagonist is not capable of experiencing shifts in power structures, namely between having power and being powerless, and these shifts will be an inevitable part of their lives. Thus, having experienced them during adolescence, all three protagonists are better equipped to deal with shifts in power structures in future.

### **Part III**

## **Adolescent Challenges in Repressive Power Structures: The Negotiation of Identity and Emotional Competence**

Thus far, I have examined an authoritarian approach to the management of collectives through an enforced identity and I have explored surveillance as a method that enables the management/self-management of individuals. I have also examined how each protagonist has learnt to negotiate their place within these repressive power structures. However, while I have critiqued the external manifestations of limiting power, I have yet to examine the internal manifestations of repressive power. There are two methods by which I investigate the adolescent's internal negotiation within repressive and limiting power structures. The first of these occurs when authoritarian power attacks personal identity, and the second occurs when the consequences of authoritarian power challenge emotional competency. Therefore, in Part Three I examine the effects of authoritarian power on identity development, specifically when identity is challenged by limiting structures of power that attack the protagonists' values or ethics. I also examine how suffering and negotiation is an essential factor in the protagonists' ability to become emotionally competent in adulthood.

### **Developing Identity and Emotional Competency in repressive power structures**

Developing identity during adolescence within repressive power structures proves difficult for all three protagonists. This is because in the texts authoritarian power attempts to repress individuality and the development of the adolescent identity. The reason for this is that individuality becomes a threat when it has the ability to expose the operations of limiting power, therefore, enabling a possible form of resistance to occur. As a result, the state often threatens the livelihood or the lives of those who try to express any distinctive or abnormal behaviour; thus, ensuring that individuals, such as those in the Districts, the Factions/Factionless, and Starters, are controllable

Although I gave a brief outline at the beginning of this thesis, I have yet to address in detail what personal identity is. Steph Lawler believes that identity is solely a social construction: "identity needs to be understood not as belonging 'within' the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations" (8). While I have no doubt that our identities are shaped by social relationships, I do not believe that this alone produces identity, particularly within the texts. To say that the protagonists are purely a product of their social interactions seems to be a limited view that suggests they identify solely with the way others view them and how they feel with respect to their relations with them.

For example, if one was born blind then I am certain it would give them a distinctively different identity than the one they have currently. Their lack of sight would shape them from the moment they were born, and although their social relationships would also shape the way that others see them and how they see themselves, part of their identity would be a result of their singular biological circumstances. I understand Lawler's point is that to experience being blind, one will experience it in relation to others, meaning that their

perception will determine the way an individual would deal and manage that blindness. However, the state of this biological condition would have an inevitable influence on these relations. For this reason, I don't dispute the fact that social relationships play a part in the protagonists' identities; rather, I discredit the idea that they are responsible for their entire identity. Other factors such as mental disorders, health issues, race, and sexuality are generally not wholly social constructions; nevertheless, they will most likely affect individuals' identities. Consequently, I critique Lawler's argument because she implies identity is a choice. I, however, argue that, in the case of these texts, identity is a negotiation because despite how hard the protagonists try, there are factors about themselves that they have no control over and cannot change. However, I do agree with Lawler's suggestion that there is a need to articulate one's identity against an other in order to define by similarity or difference.

Ian Craib's *Experiencing Identity* (1998), argues that developing identity is an experience where we give and take in a compromise of who we are and how we are viewed (1). Craib draws this from Richard Jenkins's argument that identity is a process and not a 'thing' (4). More specifically, identity is a process of internal negotiation. For example, an individual may be a son, a brother, and an accountant, yet if any of these merits are taken away from this individual they would have lost a part of their identity, but not their entire identity (Craib 4). Craib's essentialist position works within the texts as he indicates that while the social identity of the protagonists will change, particularly as they transition from childhood, to adolescence and finally to adulthood, a certain core identity, the core of who they are, will always be there while they exist; added to, developed and expanded upon as they age, learn and experience life (4). In sum, the protagonists are individual creations with the capability to change and alter with the social forces that they encounter and indeed this is an important part of their maturation process.

Additionally, Craib argues that our social identity may not be an accurate representation of our true self: "one of the ways in which we try to protect ourselves from the anxiety of living is by trying to identify ourselves with something, by trying to make our social identity into our identity" (170). Therefore, he suggests that individuals attempt to fit into stereotypes that they believe will best reflect or benefit their identity. While this is not an uncommon assumption, Craib adds: "neither the self nor identity are simple social products, rather in the end they are areas of individual and collective freedom which are constantly threatened by the structures and ideologies of the wider society" (176). That is to say, it is natural that an individual may experience a battle to both free themselves from, and keep these structures and ideologies which offer security and a sense of belonging. For example, Katniss will always be the girl from the Seam in District 12, Tris will always be part of Abnegation, and Callie will always be a 'Metal'. These labels are familiar and they ensure a place within a society, and whether the protagonists like them or not, they must negotiate these qualities within their identities.

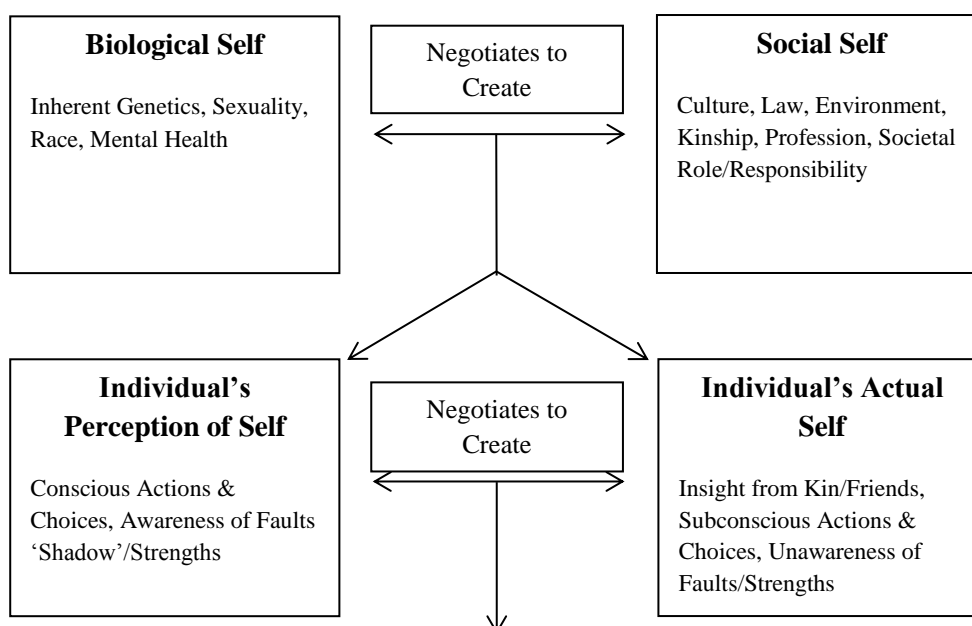
Before taking this further, I suggest that in addition to Craib's essentialist position where he considers identity to be a negotiation of our inherent genetics, social relations, and circumstances, there also occurs within the texts a negotiation between the perception of the protagonist's own identity and others perception of their identity. By this I mean that within them resides a subconscious identity and until they have achieved some form of personal

growth or reached a level of maturity, they are unable to recognise this within themselves; whereas others may see it without effort. Therefore, within the texts, growth occurs when this subterranean identity reveals itself to the protagonists, not necessarily completely but in some form, and they are able to negotiate this aspect of their identity into their lives.

All three protagonists demonstrate a subterranean identity. For example, Katniss believes she has become the Mockingjay only through a misrepresentation of her actions and the Capitol's propaganda. Yet, subconsciously her actions have exposed the oppressiveness of the Capitol, which would suggest that she is already the Mockingjay. While others already see the leader within her, she is mostly unaware as to how her actions impact those within the Districts. Similarly, in *Divergent*, Tris is convinced that she is not selfless enough to live up to her Faction of birth. Although, many recognise that Tris's actions prove the opposite, especially when she protects Al during training despite putting her own life in jeopardy, she denies this until her final sacrifice. Finally, in *Starters* Callie believes that she has lost the ability to control her body. While others believe she is capable of reversing the control of her chip, it is not until Callie's showdown with Brockman that she too is able to come to this realisation.

However, understanding or awareness of their subterranean identity only occurs retrospectively. The protagonists cannot fully explain, or recognise the consequences of their actions when they are unable to rise 'above' one's time and history. Therefore, this aspect of identity, in the present time, belongs wholly to the other and perhaps this is the uniqueness of our kind: part of us exists only outside of ourselves and this is where it should stay until an individual is capable of examining themselves retrospectively. Consequently, the 'self', that is the core of who we are, is beyond any final definition, for there will always be a gap between our perspective and others perspective of ourselves. The 'self', I indicate in the diagram below, is simply a point of potential for each of the protagonists and based on the representations made within the texts, and rather these terms are not a given for identity outside of these texts.

**Figure 2. The Negotiation of Identity during the Adolescent Period**



**SELF**  
**(Individuation/  
 Maturation)**

While I have indicated that during adolescence for the protagonists there is a negotiation between the natural/social and the self-perception/actual-self, there will always remain a gap between these qualities because the journey to the ‘self’ is a continuous one, even once Katniss, Tris and Callie have reached adulthood. Nevertheless, the recognition and acceptance of each aspect of their identities is the first step towards negotiation and maturation.

In order for the protagonists to develop a mature identity there are key stages that they must surpass in order to demonstrate development. James Marcia outlines the four stages of identity in *The Identity Statures* (2011) as stages of potential within the narratives:

- 1) **Identity diffusion-** At this stage the individual has not yet experienced an identity crisis and has not made a commitment to a set of beliefs.
- 2) **Identity foreclosure-** At this stage the individual has still not experienced an identity crisis, but a set commitment to goals and beliefs, largely as a result made by others, has begun to develop.
- 3) **Moratorium-** While the individual has not yet resolved their struggle over identity, they are in the process of actively choosing to arrive at an identity
- 4) **Identity achievement-** During this final stage, the individual has experienced a crisis they could self-resolve, and firmly committed to an occupation, ideology and social rules. (Marcia 31-53)

It must be noted that Marcia’s model is based on the choices and commitments made concerning personal and social traits, and in this case, I use it to identify the protagonists’ choices and commitments in order to identify whether the protagonists demonstrate personal growth. I not only assess whether they reach Marcia’s stage four ‘identity achievement’, but if they are also capable of negotiating their identity, while still maintaining it, around repressive social rules, and ideologies.

### **Emotional Competency: An Aspect of Moral Development**

An additional process that occurs during the adolescent period within these texts is the development of emotional competency. In its most basic definition, emotional competency is one’s ability to adapt and balance emotional skills. Emotional competency itself stems from the adolescent’s moral development. However, to avoid the over-simplification of using morality as a binary of good/bad and moral/immoral behaviour I only address emotional competency as an aspect in the development of a moral conscience. More specifically, I am less interested as to whether the protagonists make the ever ambiguous ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ choices, and rather I assess whether the protagonists are capable of understanding

consequence and its potential to impact others, and understand their responsibility to choose emotions/responses that are considered appropriate.

Emotional competence is often studied within moral theory. Therefore, in order to assess the protagonists' emotional competency I use the works of Jonathan Haidt, a current Professor of ethical leadership at New York University, to examine whether the protagonists' acquire a mature emotional intelligence in order to provide appropriate and empathetic responses. In *The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail* (2001) Haidt outlines five demands that he argues are vital to the moral individual. Rather than using these as a basis for moral assessment, I instead examine these demands as a fundamental part of the development of emotional competency for each protagonist. Haidt's demands are as follows:

- (i) **Harm/Care:** Experiencing concern for others' suffering and wellbeing.
- (ii) **Fairness/Reciprocity:** Experiencing concern about unfair treatment, cheating, justice and rights.
- (iii) **Authority/Respect:** Experiencing concern related to social order, obligation and the fulfilment of role-based duties.
- (iv) **In-group/Loyalty:** Experiencing concern related to loyalty, self-sacrifice and vigilance against betrayal.
- (v) **Purity/Sanctity:** Experiencing concern about physical and spiritual contagion, inclusive of wholesomeness and the control of desires (814-834).

Furthermore, I use Kohlberg's three stages of moral theory as an additional means of assessing the protagonists' emotional competency (Kohlberg (1984) in Coleman and Hendry 44-45). These stages are the: **Pre-conventional** stage: At this stage, a child typically around the age of preschool, should be capable of understanding that bad behaviour /disobedience results in punishment and good behaviour results in reward. The **Conventional** stage: Taking place in the middle of childhood, this is the stage in which a child should recognise interpersonal relationships and behaviour that is approved by others, as well as the social order in which they exist in, the duty they have, and the expectation that they will have respect towards authority. And finally, the **Post-Conventional** stage: This stage takes place during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In this last stage, an individual develops the ability to work within the social contract (Rousseau 1755). Additionally, they have formed a conscience, and have general rights as an adult that they didn't have as a child, and they are aware of what these are. The individual also understands that there is a universal ethical principle that holds them to a standard.

Therefore, when I use emotional competency in this thesis, I am referring to the protagonists' development that transpires during their advancement from the 'child' perspective to the 'adult' perspective, and it is through the works of Haidt and Kohlberg that I assess the level of development that has occurred. Hence, this thesis does not argue whether the protagonists' actions are moral or immoral; certainly many are immoral. Rather, my intention is to argue that, in spite of the limiting power that manifests throughout each of the protagonists' lives, they are capable of developing an emotional competence and negotiating this development within the repressive power structures that surround them. In this thesis, I argue the protagonists are capable of developing the means to control emotional responses,

achieve awareness, and source their reactions, and it is all of these developments that suggest the individual has developed a more mature emotional competence that is typically associated with the adult. Additionally, it is the protagonists' ability to recognise the negative impacts of inappropriate responses or behaviours, and understand why they are inappropriate that equally demonstrates their maturity and emotional competence.

### **Katniss: Identity Development and Negotiation**

In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss has long been a victim of the Capitol before she volunteers for the Games. Since her father's death, she has become a parent to Prim, and a protector and provider in order to survive and keep her family alive. Because this transition from child to parent was, for Katniss, a natural and necessary transition, she has yet to experience a true identity crisis. This is because her father's death did not directly challenge her still developing values and beliefs, and despite her grief, she recognised her role and purpose in her society. As Marica would argue, this is the stage of 'identity diffusion'.

It is not until her first interview in the Capitol that the issue of her identity arises. This is evident when Katniss and her team fail to find a way to market her image: "We try me playing cocky, but I just don't have the arrogance. Apparently, I'm too 'vulnerable' for ferocity. I'm not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious. By the end of the session, I am no one at all" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 143). Ultimately, it is Cinna's suggestion of: "Why don't you just be yourself?" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 147) that Katniss agrees to. However, her failure to fit into a Capitol-approved stereotype is a threat to the manifestation of limiting power that the Capitol produces. This is because her approach is something that sets Katniss apart from the manufactured and false world of the Capitol and highlights a genuine image that is almost endearing to the Capitol. Nevertheless, it is at this stage that Katniss achieves 'identity foreclosure', for she has yet to experience a true crisis of identity, but rather she has made an affirmation in her beliefs to remain herself.

Katniss's identity remains largely unchallenged throughout the first Games. She continues to hunt, to protect Peeta rather than Prim, and to have an overall sense of purpose to ensure her survival. It is not until the final moments of the first Games that she briefly considers the possibility of winning and the more negative implications it may bring: "No more fear of hunger. A new kind of freedom. But then... what? What would my life be like on a daily basis? Most of it has been consumed with the acquisition of food. Take that away and I'm not really sure who I am, what my identity is" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 378). This fear becomes a reality after her victory, and thus Katniss experiences her first true identity crisis. As Victor, Katniss's life in District 12 has little purpose. When *Catching Fire* begins this uncertainty of her identity is evident: "I mourn my life here. We barely scraped by, but I knew where I fitted in, I knew what my place was in the tightly interwoven fabric that was our life" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 8). Not only has the Capitol taken away her purpose, but also her sense of belonging within a District where her actions and duties were valued. This is a deliberate manifestation of collusive power by the Capitol to ensure that the Victors understand winning is not meant to be a reward, rather just a display of the Capitol's might. As a replacement of her old routine, Katniss states: "I hunt. He bakes. Haymitch drinks" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 18). This is an attempt to reconnect with her previous

identity as a member of District 12, but this point, Katniss struggles to negotiate her changing identity within the confines of life as a Victor.

Katniss's second identity crisis occurs when Snow personally seeks to control Katniss's public image. After Snow issues his threat regarding her relationship with Gale, she is forced to demonstrate her 'love' for Peeta. Snow recognises the 'romance' as a means to distract the Capitol enough until the next Games. This threat causes a conflict between Katniss's personal desires and her desire to survive and keep those she loves alive. She notes that: "One of the few freedoms we have in District 12 is the right to marry who we want or not marry at all. And now even that has been taken away from me" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 55-56). Thus, she arrives at the conclusion that she must comply with Snow's demands and act as the Victor he wishes her to be.

While Katniss faces many more crises throughout *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*, particularly when forced to become the symbol of the rebellion, the biggest impact on her identity comes after the death of her sister. Primrose remained at the core of Katniss's purpose in life. Not only did Prim represent who she was before the games, but she was the voice of reason when her mother lost her will to live, when Peeta was captured and returned as a broken man, and when Gale had become consumed by the desire to win the rebellion. Primrose provided Katniss with the hope that people could still be good and pure in their actions and thoughts, even in the harsh conditions in which they resided.

After her death, Katniss is seemingly beyond repair. In the aftermath, she becomes reclusive, a mute, and unable to recognise herself in relation to anything left in the world. As a result, she demonstrates an uncertainty regarding her identity:

Following Prim's death, Katniss expresses her confusion about her own identity by referring to herself as a 'fire mutt,' the word 'mutt' suggesting a mix of things that do not cohere into anything of value... As Katniss's 'fire mutt' metaphor suggests, she not only cannot maintain the various identities she has been assigned but has lost her sense of self" (Henthorne 134).

Marcia would suggest that this loss of identity is Katniss's 'moratorium'; the term itself meaning a halt or delay in the development process. However, her identity does not cease to exist completely. As I indicated through Craib's work earlier, identity is a negotiation and after the event of Prim's death Katniss has to renegotiate who she is. Previously, she was a sister, a daughter, a Victor, and the Mockingjay. Although she lost her sister and a part of her identity, Craib would argue her literal self, her body and her mind, still exists. Thus, she needs to negotiate who she is within her life post-games.

Although she never fully recovers her old self, and nor should she, Katniss sheds her adolescent self when she negotiates a new sense of purpose and, in the words of Marcia, 'identity achievement' is reached. Although growth is continuous, she displays 'identity achievement' because she has learnt to resolve and continue on living after a crisis. With this new purpose, Katniss recommits to her quest for justice. After she kills Coin, knowing that her leadership will continue a cycle of authoritarian power, she begins the struggle of recuperation, eventually learning that a method of keeping Prim with her is through the preservation of her memories that Peeta paints. She returns to District 12, the place that gave her a sense of belonging, where the District has become a place to manufacture medicine;



perhaps a metaphor for the place that will heal her. Katniss also rediscovers her love for Peeta and in doing so, she recognises that it is Peeta's values of peace that represent her identity as an adult.

What I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that (Collins, *Mockingjay* 453).

Katniss recognises that through her suffering her purpose is to find happiness once more. Furthermore, she qualifies her identity as her own when she states:

They can fatten me up. They can give me a full body polish, dress me up and make me beautiful again. They can design dream weapons that come to life in my hands, but they will never again brainwash me into the necessity of using them. I no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings (Collins, *Mockingjay* 440).

Stating ownership over her identity again suggests that she has 'achieved' a mature identity. Likewise, it suggests that she has resisted the repressive structures of power to achieve agency.

Throughout *The Hunger Games*, it is evident that identity is carefully controlled within the Districts. This is possible by keeping the Districts occupied with their survival and the Capitol with the Games. Therefore, identities develop around these distractions. It is only once Katniss is forced to deal with a life without the time-consuming need to provide food each day that she recognises her need to negotiate her identity within the limiting power that operates in order for her to actually achieve and take ownership of her identity. Despite the suffering that the Capitol is responsible for, it is because of the state's authoritarian power that Katniss is able to experience a state of powerlessness over her identity. However, this in turn, is the catalyst for her desire to negotiate her identity as her own, and therefore, it is an important and vital state for her to experience. As a result of both her state of powerlessness and her ability to, therefore, renegotiate power and self-authority, Katniss's growth is recognised.

### **Katniss: Emotional Competence and Negotiation**

Katniss's development of emotional competency is not unlike her development of identity and, throughout the series, there are a number of distinct moments that highlight her ability to negotiate appropriate emotional responses within repressive and limiting power structures. When Katniss is first introduced, she displays an emotional competency consistent with the conventional stage where she recognises relationships, appropriate behaviour, duty and authority. This is most clearly demonstrated through her fierce loyalty towards her District and her ability to uphold the social order in which she exists. However, while Katniss displays the emotional competency of an adolescent, she has yet to reach the post-conventional stage where she demonstrates both a conscience, and the ability to understand a

universal ethical principle that holds her to a particular standard. This suggests that, until she develops these qualities she has yet to transition to adulthood.

It is, however, her experiences with the Capitol and the Hunger Games that spurs this transition. One of the first scenes where Katniss expresses a concern for the rights of others and a responsibility to carry this out, besides volunteering for Prim, is in the moments following Rue's death. Not only has Katniss opened up to an interpersonal relationship with Rue, but she has developed a feeling of injustice that a Tribute such as Rue has been forced to participate in the Games at such a disadvantage. Therefore, it is after Rue's death that Katniss first demonstrates an emotional response to injustice which is suggested in Rue's name itself; the meaning of which implies feelings of great regret and sorrow. As a result of this emotional response, Katniss acts in a way that forces viewers to acknowledge the injustice of Rue's death and to recognise it as a form of murder. She notes: "I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 286). This ultimately leads to her decision to decorate Rue's body in flowers. While a seemingly simple gesture, she knows that the Capitol will have no choice but to air the footage and carry the message that Rue's life mattered, and that she was a real child in a very real and unjust game. From this act onwards, Katniss's desire to continue to seek justice throughout the series is ignited, and equally, she is forced to recognise that, as a public figure with the resources to reach many viewers, she has an obligation to uphold a universal ethical principle on behalf of those in the Districts.

Furthermore, Katniss is able to fully recognise her desire to seek justice during the Quarter Quell. She considers:

Yes, everyone in the districts will be watching me to see how I handle this death sentence, this final act of President Snow's dominance. They will be looking for some sign that their battles have not been in vain. If I can make it clear that I'm still defying the Capitol right up to the end, the Capitol will have killed me... but not my spirit. What better way to give hope to the rebels? (Collins, *Catching Fire* 293).

In this moment of realisation, Katniss displays an ability to recognise that the need for justice and her duty to the Districts is greater than her own life. Her desire to place the needs of others before her own suggests she has matured greatly and that her development of emotional competence is consistent with that of a mature adult. However, it is important to note that this ability is not always consistent with every adult within the texts.

Another distinct moment in which Katniss demonstrates her ability to place others before herself occurs when she chooses to find Peeta after the announcement that two Victors from the same District are able to share the victory. Before this, she had not only mistrusted Peeta's intentions, but she had failed to place herself at the mercy of others and take on the burden of allying with someone who could potentially threaten her survival. Therefore, Katniss's choice to find Peeta, knowing that he is hurt and possibly dying, is an important moment of growth for her. She notes: "I knew he was injured. And still I came after him. I'm just going to have to trust that whatever instinct sent me to find him was a good one" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 319). At this moment she is unable to ignore her sense of

responsibility towards her District as both a provider and protector, and as such, this overrules her selfish desire to continue through the Games alone.

Despite these moments of growth, it is fair to suggest that Katniss is forced into rather unethical situations that require her to take a detached and desensitised view in order to survive in the turmoil that surrounds her; thus emotional competency is often considered a point of weakness by Katniss. One of these moments occurs once again when she is faced with a dying Cato. Throughout the Games, Katniss has actively tried to avoid killing other Tributes. She never seeks them out and she never attacked unless provoked. She also must weigh up whether killing someone is acceptable in order to ensure her own survival and thus the survival of her family. While she finds herself targeted by Cato and concedes that “if Cato broke through the trees right now, I wouldn’t flee, I’d shoot. I find I’m actually anticipating the moment with pleasure” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 239), she does not kill Cato willingly. It is, instead, as he lay dying, that Katniss states: “Pity, not vengeance, sends my arrow flying into his skull” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 414). As incongruous as it may appear, this is an emotionally intelligent act on Katniss’s behalf and it shows a development of empathy that overcomes her intense hatred for Cato and her desire to see him suffer. For Katniss, Cato’s torture is a violation of his human rights, pride and self-worth. Therefore, the decent act to take is to end his suffering.

Furthermore, Katniss’s emotional competence is tested when she is engaged in the rebellion and war throughout *Mockingjay*. When consistently placed in a kill-or-be-killed situation, Katniss has little time to consider her conscience and the ethical principles that hold her to a standard. This is evident in the midst of a war zone when Katniss confesses that “without hesitation, I shoot her through the heart” (367). What’s more, she witnesses a child killed in front of her from an unknown shooter and notes: “Peacekeeper, rebel, citizen, who knows? Everything that moves is a target. People shoot reflexively, and I’m no exception” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 399). It is not until after the war that Katniss is able to regain any sensitivity or able to address her strong emotions adequately. Therefore, post-war she experiences guilt, regret, and bears the responsibility of death heavily. I would suggest that, considering the trauma she has been through, this a normal emotional response. Not only does she recognise the consequence and impact of her actions, both good and bad, but she accepts responsibility for them as well. Despite the fact that many of Katniss’s actions during war could be considered immoral, growth occurs when she is able to accept the shortfall that her actions will always be seeking a balance between what she needs to do and what in a perfect world she might do. This acceptance is what makes her both mature and human.

Moreover, Katniss’s emotional competency is highlighted through her choice of Peeta over Gale. Both Gale and Peeta represent the two opposing sides of Katniss: Gale is the masculine, practical side, but he also expresses a rage similar to Katniss’s and a desire for violence. Due to his fluctuating emotions, his inability to control his rage, and his failure to arouse any feelings of empathy towards others or his own experiences, it is fair to suggest that Gale has yet to develop a mature emotional competence. In comparison, Peeta represents the vulnerable, kind and peaceful choice, and most importantly, he demonstrates a mature emotional intelligence that represents Katniss’s own desire to mature. This is most evident through Peeta’s compassion, his complete awareness of how his actions and responses affect those around him, his capability of regulating his emotions, and his ability to “recognise that

the self can remain intact and continuous despite emotional fluctuation” (Rosenblum and Lewis 284). Therefore, Collins suggests Peeta and the mature Katniss represent the traits of accepting responsibility for actions and empathy for others that is the model of ‘healthy’ adult behaviour.

Peeta is by far one of the most conscientious and emotionally competent characters in the series. Through his conversations with Katniss it is evident that he is aware his actions will be a reflection of his values and will have the potential to impact others around him. In one discussion with Katniss, Peeta confesses: “I want to die as myself. Does that make sense? ... I don’t want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 171). His confession makes Katniss consider her own stance on this: “While I’ve been ruminating on the availability of trees, Peeta has been struggling with how to maintain his identity. His purity of self” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 171). In response, she questions whether he will consider killing Tributes during the Games. To which he replies: “No, when the time comes, I’m sure I’ll kill just like everybody else. I can’t go down without a fight. Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to... to show the Capitol they don’t own me. That I’m more than just a piece in their games” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 171-172). It is through his recognition of consequence and responsibility, and his desire to remain unchanged by the Capitol that suggests he has negotiated his place within his current circumstances. And as a result of Peeta’s confession, Katniss is forced to evaluate her own responses towards the Capitol’s games.

Peeta’s actions continue to be the scale by which Katniss judges her own level of appropriate responses. This is evident in the final moments when the Gamemakers revoke the rule of allowing two Victors. During this announcement, Katniss raises her weapon to Peeta, while he simultaneously drops his. Her reaction and the swiftness at which she was willing to turn on Peeta leaves Katniss feeling ashamed. Peeta’s response is important for “illustrating his purpose as the book’s moral centre: he’s the one constantly holding Katniss accountable to the higher moral purpose behind her actions, the right course” (Lem and Hassel 165). Not only does Peeta hold Katniss accountable for her actions, but he also holds himself accountable. This display of personal accountability is evident during his interview after his capture. Peeta explains:

“As bad as it makes you feel, you’re going to have to do some killing, because in the arena, you only get one wish. And it’s very costly.”

“It costs your life,” says Caesar.

“Oh, no. It costs a lot more than your life. To murder innocent people?” says Peeta. “It costs everything you are” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 27).

Peeta not only takes ownership of his actions and responses that are appropriate, but also the ones that are inappropriate. His ability to recognise inappropriate actions is a vital skill in adapting and balancing emotional competency.

Gale, however, appears to be a character used to deliberately contrast Peeta for while Peeta is motivated often by providing the best outcome for others, Gale is ruled by results that are removed from his emotions. It is apparent that he is happy to sacrifice himself and others in his quest to win the rebellion. However, it must be noted that Gale does play an

important role in Katniss's fight for justice when he reminds her of the responsibility she has, as a public figure and to fight for the Districts' rights. This is apparent when Katniss confesses to Gale that the Districts have begun to rebel against the Capitol. After her suggestion to run away, Gale argues: "What about the other families, Katniss? The ones who can't run away? Don't you see? It can't be about just saving *us* anymore. Not if the rebellion's begun! ... You could do so much... I changed my mind. I don't want anything they made in the Capitol" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 123). Yet, when Katniss approaches Peeta and shares the same information, Peeta knows immediately that Katniss will not leave. It is his faith in her ability to do what is right that holds her accountable and makes her feel obligated to the standards he upholds her to.

Furthermore, Gale's approach to the rebellion certainly suggests that his emotional competency is less developed than Katniss's. This is first brought to her attention in *Mockingjay* when Gale states: "If I could hit a button and kill every living soul working for the Capitol, I would do it. Without hesitation" (Collins 37). However, Katniss disagrees as she had come to personally know individuals from the Capitol. When Gale reminds Katniss that her prep team's job was to "prett[y] her up for slaughter" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 64), she responds: "They're not evil or cruel. They're not even smart. Hurting them, it's like hurting children. They don't see" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 64). Katniss demonstrates her ability to put aside her hate for the Capitol and empathise with the people under its regime. Most importantly, Katniss demonstrates her ability to transcend her own personal emotions through disembedding or differentiating. This means that she is capable of escaping her own feelings about the Capitol and adopting the perspective of others who live in the Capitol. Both disembedding and differentiating are vital concepts in order for Katniss to express a genuine feeling of empathy towards the citizens of the Capitol. It also highlights growth between the Katniss that was introduced at the beginning of the series, and the Katniss that acts post-games.

Katniss's competence at disembedding or differentiating is further highlighted during an argument between her and Gale. This occurs over strategies on how best to dismantle 'The Nut': the fortress of District 2 that has been built deep in a mountain. Gale points out: "Think of it as a wild dog den... you're not going to fight your way in. So you have two choices. Trap the dogs inside or flush them out" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 236). Gale intends to blow up the mountain, consequently, suffocating everyone inside, whereas, despite Katniss's desire for victory, she is unwilling to subject people to this form of death because of the similar circumstances that occurred with her own father. On a side note, it is also worth pointing out that Gale refers to the people in 'The Nut' as wild dogs. It is a similar method of dehumanization that the Capitol uses towards those in the Districts and it highlights that Gale fails to feel any sense of responsibility towards the people he is both fighting for and against. When Katniss voices her concern by pointing out that he would be sacrificing innocent people, he replies: "I would sacrifice a few, yes, to take out the rest of them" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 240); adding that he would sacrifice himself too if he had to. While this is the familiar end that justifies the means argument, it serves to highlight his lack of understanding of the term sacrifice. Katniss recognises that he has failed to understand sacrifice as a personal choice, for it cannot be made on behalf of someone else otherwise it is considered murder. She claims that if he can justify this action then with "that kind of thinking... you

could turn it into an argument for killing anyone at any time. You could justify sending kids into the Hunger Games to prevent the districts from getting out of line” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 259).

Thus, Gale’s character is effective in emphasising the growth that has occurred in Katniss, which is simultaneously illustrated through the rifts that appear more frequently in their relationship. By comparison Peeta represents her desire to transcend in to an adult with firm values and a desire to do good. This is not to suggest that all of their choices will be considered emotionally competent, but rather it suggests that part of the developmental process is to accept one’s flaws and recognise that personal struggles can be used to empathise and sympathise with others. This ability to be relational and to transcend one’s own perspective and problems highlights a post-conventional stage of development. Thus, through her ability to balance and adapt her emotions to different situations, and through her recognition of impact, consequence, and responsibility, Katniss has proven that she has negotiated her place within the repressive powers in which she exists. This is evident by her obvious concern for the suffering of others, her concern about justice and personal rights, and through her ability to empathise with others and provide appropriate emotional responses. Moreover, Katniss is forced to negotiate her love for both Gale and Peeta in her life, and it is her decision to choose Peeta that highlights her final ascension towards adulthood. All of these factors indicate Katniss becomes an emotionally competent individual and that growth has once again occurred.

### **Tris: Identity Development and Negotiation**

Just as the Capitol attempts to control Katniss’s identity, the Factions and GPs also attempt to control Tris’s. From the very beginning, Tris struggles to identify with her Abnegation Faction and has yet to commit to a single Faction’s values. Evidently, she is at the stage of ‘identity diffusion’ where no real identity crisis has occurred and there is no obligation that requires Tris to commit fully to a Faction until the choosing ceremony. Before Tris chooses to join Dauntless it is evident that her identity, thus far, has been developed by decisions largely made by others and the expectations that people have of her Faction. However, her first major identity crisis occurs when she joins Dauntless and struggles to keep the values of her old Faction while incorporating the new values of her chosen Faction. This crisis is ultimately a struggle between leaving behind her parents and family home and forging her own identity. This struggle is worsened when Tris realises that any ideologies she previously held are forbidden in her Dauntless Faction. However, it is Tobias who points out that they should be allowed to adopt values from multiple Factions: “I think we’ve made a mistake... We’ve all started to put down the virtues of the other Factions in the process of bolstering our own. I don’t want to do that. I want to be brave, and selfless, *and* smart, *and* kind, *and* honest” (Roth, *Divergent* 405).

Tris is not able to fully comprehend Tobias’s advice until the death of her parents and friend Will. At this point, Tris’s identity reaches a ‘moratorium’ as Natalie and Andrew’s deaths signify the loss of her old identity and a break in her connection to Abnegation. Not only is she forced to become a refugee, but any form of authority that she had, from her parents and her Dauntless instructors, is lost. Thus, Tris is forced into a new role of self-

authority. Additionally, she experiences self-loathing after she feels responsible for the death of both her parents and Will. This is evident when she states: “For the first time I feel like I understand Al. I am tired of being Tris. I have done bad things. I can’t take them back, and they are part of who I am. Most of the time, they seem like the only thing I am” (Roth, *Insurgent* 157). It is at this point that Tris rejects her identity and refuses to negotiate her identity within the circumstances that have occurred. She is suicidal; she fails to be honest with herself, and makes illogical and irrational decisions such as offering herself to Jeanine. The turning point transpires only when she is forced to admit her role in Will’s death during the spectacle of the Candor ceremony. This is the first time in which Tris publically and personally acknowledges her guilt and loss, and this moment signifies the end of her denial.

These losses, therefore, are a vital part in Tris’s identity development: “Responding to loss in adaptive ways can result in transformation or personal growth... the person matures, gains a deeper perspective on the tragedy embedded in human existence and becomes attuned to the suffering of others” (Balk 129). Certainly this is true for Tris who, after her moratorium, matures into a young woman who transcends her self-pity and recognises the purpose of her parent’s death was to sacrifice themselves for her and her freedom. In her acceptance, she also recognises that her own sacrifice has to be taken out of love or for a greater purpose, rather than as an escape from life. This change in Tris brings out her empathetic side; something that was previously ambiguous before. What’s more, this is the first real demonstration of a negotiation between her old life in Abnegation and her new life when she recognises she can be both selfless and brave. In this moment she also recognises her identity does not have to be confined to a single ideology, and rather, identity is negotiation of the experiences she has had within multiple Factions.

Thus, the final crisis that plays an important part in Tris ‘achieving identity’ occurs in the final moments of her life when she chooses to save Caleb and sacrifice herself. Not only has she experienced multiple identity crises, but she has arrived at an identity that she alone has decided upon without interference from the Bureau and Factions. She has forgiven herself for her past actions and is firmly committed to saving her city and protecting the identities of those who still live there. Therefore, Tris has a role and purpose that gives her confidence in her own capabilities. In this confidence, Tris dies knowing “It is worth it... One death to save thousands of people from a terrible fate” (Roth, *Allegiant* 408). As a result of Tris’s experiences she has learnt to negotiate her identity without the Factions, yet she still adheres to each of their values. This ability to transcend the limiting power of the Factions but still use what little good remains in them suggests growth has occurred within Tris.

### **Tris: Emotional Competence and Negotiation**

In the beginning of *The Divergent Series* it is evident that Tris lacks emotional competency. This is apparent through her inability to control her rage, her failure to attend to her emotions without becoming overwhelmed, and her incapacity to uphold her relationships without interference from her emotions. This inability to control her violent and self-destructive behaviour is evident throughout *Divergent* and *Insurgent* when Tris is haunted by the symbols of birds that frequent her fears and hallucinations. As well as foreshadowing the deaths of her mother, father and herself, ravens and crows are known to be ill omens: both are

black, both represent death and both scavenge flesh. “Psychologically, Jung thought the raven symbolized man’s shadow – his dark side and unacknowledged fears” (Frankel 47). Tris often has to fight these birds in her hallucinations, which are a metaphor for her fears concerning her own dark and angry side. Most importantly, they represent Tris’s resistance to acknowledge her emotions or the source of her anger and fear.

Therefore, in her battle to become emotionally competent, she must first acknowledge the darker side of her personality and the inappropriateness of her emotional responses. This occurs at the end of *Insurgent* when she is forced to fight herself in the final simulation she enters. During the simulation, a gun appears before both Tris and her virtual self. She knows that in order to complete the simulation she must shoot herself. I would suggest that this signifies her desire to put to death her old self and to confront the angry, violent and fearful Tris. During this confrontation, Tris recognises that the source of her anger stems from her inability to forgive herself for what she has done. Thus, a negotiation must be made between the side of her that likes to hurt, kill and destroy and the side of her that loves, fears, and cares for her friends and family. In order to beat the simulation Tris recognises this need and is, therefore, able to outwit her virtual self. For her, this is an important moment of growth and certainly we witness a far more mature Tris after this fight takes place.

Thus, her continuous negotiation to be a ‘good’ person is an important aspect of the development of Tris’s emotional competency and throughout the series we witness her battle with this on numerous occasions. In one such case, Peter confronts her about Will’s death: “I know what you did to Will, you know. Don’t pretend that you’re better than I am, because you and I, we’re exactly the same.” (Roth, *Insurgent* 349). To which she replies: “You’re wrong... We may both be bad, but there’s a huge difference between us – I’m not content with being this way” (349). This ability to not only recognise, but also to have the desire to rectify her behaviour, suggests that Tris is already in the process of negotiating between her ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ behaviours. Tobias is also used as a character to highlight the struggle between being a ‘good’ or ‘bad person’ and to demonstrate to Tris the importance of controlling her emotions. This is evident when he reminds Peter: “I like to hurt people too. I can make the cruellest choice. The difference is, sometimes I don’t, and you always do, and that makes you evil” (Roth, *Allegiant* 451). Interestingly, Tobias uses the word *choice*, suggesting emotional competence does not always develop naturally; rather, it is often the individual’s choice to express appropriate behaviours, to regulate and understand one’s source of emotions that suggests development has occurred.

Emotional competency, as a series of choices, is further emphasised through the following conversation between Tris and Zoe, an employee of the Bureau, when Zoe draws attention to the poisoned leadership in *Abnegation*. Tris responds: “Are you talking about Marcus? Because he’s Divergent. Genetic damage had nothing to do with it” (Roth, *Allegiant* 216). Zoe replies: “A man surrounded by genetic damage cannot help but mimic it with his own behaviour” (Roth, *Allegiant* 216). Tris, however, struggles to accept Zoe’s argument based on the fact that it fails to explain why there are good people who are ‘damaged’ such as Joanna, Christina and Cara. She replies: “Marcus was Divergent – genetically pure, just like me. But I don’t accept that he was a bad person because he was surrounded by genetically damaged people. So was I. So was Uriah. So was my mother. But none of us lashed out at our loved ones” (Roth, *Allegiant* 217). Thus, I would suggest, Marcus’s character is vital in



demonstrating what happens when an individual fails to develop emotional competency and fails to negotiate appropriate responses and actions. Similarly, through Marcus, Tris recognises the importance of being an empathic individual and understanding how emotional responses affect both the self and interpersonal relationships. As a result of Marcus's emotional incompetence, Tris uses him as a means to evaluate her own her actions and responses and, in him, she recognises the importance choice plays in emotional competence.

However, it is not until the end of *Allegiant* that Tris truly demonstrates a mature emotional competence. This occurs when it is decided her brother Caleb will be the sacrifice they need in order to save the city and Tris comes to the realisation that she is unable to send him to his death:

He is a part of me, always will be, and I am a part of him, too. I don't belong to Abnegation, or Dauntless, or even the Divergent. I don't belong to the Bureau or the experiment or the fringe. I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me – they, and the love and loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could (Roth, *Insurgent* 455).

Recognising her anger towards Caleb has achieved nothing, Tris is also aware that if she were to force Caleb to die for their city, it would fail to be a sacrifice. Instead, she notes that a sacrifice “should be done from love, not misplaced disgust for another person's genetics. That it should be done from necessity, not without exhausting all other options. That it should be done alone for people who need your strength because they don't have enough of their own” (Roth, *Allegiant* 474). Therefore, she recognises that she could not live with the consequences of sending Caleb to his death. Rather, she recognises that her loyalty and duty to her family and friends, and her need to have a clear conscience is more important than her own life, and thus, she takes Caleb's place. These revelations suggest an important moment of growth within Tris as they demonstrate that she has risen above her anger and hate and instead negotiated her desire for justice, human rights and love for her family and friends.

As a result of her growth, it is evident that Tris has achieved emotional competency. This is demonstrated when she refuses to accept that appropriate behaviour and responses are inherent through the GPs and GDs, and rather it is the negotiation between our biological and social selves, and our faults and strengths. It is Tris's ability to comprehend that emotional competency is an ongoing choice, and that she will not always make the right choices or provide the right responses. Rather, it is her awareness of her emotions and their source, and her ability to regulate and negotiate these emotions that demonstrates a developing emotional competency.

### **Callie: Identity Development and Negotiation**

As with the two previous protagonists, Enders and, more specifically, Prime Destinations attempt to control Callie's identity. From the moment Callie is first introduced in *Starters* it is clear she is already struggling with her ability to settle on an identity. Not only has she recently become homeless, but she has simultaneously lost her parents and is now in charge of her sick brother. However, her first true identity crisis does not occur until

Callie is 'employed' by Prime Destinations. This crisis is triggered by the physical transformation of her body when Prime uses procedures to remove scars and imperfections. The change in her appearance prompts an identity crisis because of the fear that her unrecognisable physical appearance has replaced her old identity. However, this fear escalates as Callie considers the possibility of Prime now owning her body.

This identity crisis is evident when she examines herself for the first time and notes, "was I still in there, somewhere, under all this?" (Price, *Starters* 29). Upon seeing her flawless face, Callie fears that, in erasing her imperfections, Prime has erased her past identity in an attempt to create uniformity and an appearance deemed 'acceptable'. This lack of control over her changing appearance is further emphasised when she realises that her 'new' body will be used to make original memories that she will not remember or have the right to know. I would suggest that the accumulation of these factors and fears forces Callie into Marcia's 'moratorium' stage. For at this stage, she has yet to resolve and commit to an identity.

The resolution of this 'moratorium' only arrives when Callie begins to understand identity itself. As Lawler and Craib indicate, identity is more than the body. A great deal of the power that Prime produces lies in the ideology that identity *is* the body, and therefore, they restrict identity to the body, thus making the individual feel inferior and subordinate when the body is controlled or attacked. However, it is Hyden who highlights her incorrect way of thinking when he tells Callie: "The me inside this shell is still me. What defines me? Skin? You know you can change that with the wave of a laser. Muscle? EMS can build that... That I am what I think, what I believe. What I feel" (Price, *Enders* 86). What Hyden implies is that identity is a person's mind, beliefs and feelings. To refer back to figure two, identity is a negotiation of who we are biologically, culturally, socially, and emotionally. Only once Callie is able to understand that identity is unable to be owned by Prime and that the experiences that have shaped her cannot be taken away just because she is physically transformed, is she able to grasp what identity encompasses and negotiate her new physical appearance within the additional factors of her current identity.

In addition, I would suggest the changing of Callie's body is a narrative for the negotiation that occurs during the transformation of the adolescent body to the adult body. Although obviously less extreme, the adolescent body transforms during the transition from childhood to adulthood and while there are unseen chemical/emotional changes, the physical transformation of the body is often the most obvious indication of growth. Therefore, often a struggle within identity development comes through learning to accept these changes as part of the transition to adulthood and recognise that while we physically change through age, this is not the core of our identity, but simply another negotiation that has to be made.

As with the transformation of her physical appearance, Callie comes to terms with the fact that some aspects of her identity are unavoidable or inevitable, and thus, she accepts that the chip Prime inserted will remain within her indefinitely. However, rather than it becoming a method of control, she recognises that she must negotiate it as a part of herself. It is certainly a weakness, but she understands that it is her level of consciousness around it and her ability to use it in a means that aligns with her values and beliefs that stops it dictating her. By the end of the series, Callie has experienced multiple identity crises. While it is evident that Prime serves to control and restrict *Starters'* identities, her ability to negotiate her

identity within Prime's repressive power structures suggests growth has occurred within Callie.

### **Callie: Moral Development and Negotiation**

The development of emotional competency within Callie is most evident through three particular incidents. The first of these is during Helena's rental of her body. The dilemma that occurs at this moment is Callie's discovery that Helena intends to use her body to murder the Senator. While Callie exists in and out of consciousness, in her moments of awareness she is offered a large sum of money by Helena to follow through with the murder. Although the money is enough to help save her brother from a life on the streets, she states, "I loved my brother, and I wanted him safe and warm and healthy. But murder wasn't even in my vocabulary" (Price, *Starters* 180). This offer tests Callie's deepest desire: to protect her brother. However, she cannot shake the feeling of responsibility to prevent this murder from taking place. She explains to Helena: "I'm not going to shoot anyone for you, and I'm not going to let you use my body to kill" (Price, *Starters* 149-150). It is at this stage I would suggest Callie is between Kohlberg's 'conventional' and 'post-conventional' stages (Coleman and Hendry 44-45). For she recognises that desires, although tempting to fulfil, will require inappropriate actions in order to come to fruition. In understanding this, she demonstrates her newly formed duty to hold herself to a universal ethical principle and to keep her conscience clean.

The second occurrence in which Callie demonstrates her developing emotional competence transpires when she discovers Prime's plans to make the rentals permanent, thus resulting in countless murders of Starters. In order to prevent this from happening, she recruits a team to help expose the truth behind Prime, reminding a renter: "Madison, listen to yourself. It's not like picking out a new dress or a car or a house. These are people. Living, breathing teens who have their whole lives ahead of them. But not if you steal it from them," (Price, *Starters* 208-209). As a chipped individual herself, Callie feels a sense of responsibility for the Starters employed by Prime. She understands that her unique position, in having access to the information she does, means that it is her duty to prevent this from happening, and to expose the truth.

Finally, Callie's most significant moment of development transpires when she realises she cannot live a normal life while the threat of control hangs over her. Her sense of obligation and duty to other chipped Starters forces her to concede: "I longed for a normal life with my father and brother, but with the chip in my head, I'd come to accept that my future was destined to be different" (Price, *Enders* 270). At this point, Callie experiences her greatest moment of growth when she recognises that she will always be required to negotiate between her personal desires and her responsibility as a chipped Starter. As a Metal, Callie feels empathic towards other Metals, and experiences a sense of duty, and a need to protect the rights of others in similar situations to hers. Through her negotiation to uphold these qualities, it is evident that Callie has developed emotional competency and thus matured from adolescence to adulthood.

### **In Summary**

Firstly, I wish to conclude with the statement that the development of emotional competency is certainly devoid of any absolutism. This is simply because ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ behaviour cannot be held to a universal standard. Rather emotional competency is about developing an ability to empathise, placing one’s self in another perspective, and expressing genuine emotion and understanding its source. Therefore, if these qualities are the measure of maturity, then I believe all three protagonists have achieved the transition from the childlike understanding of emotional competency to a more mature understanding that is often associated with adulthood. They each understand the implications of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and comprehend that emotional competency is often a development that aligns itself with their personal moral dispositions as well as requiring a sacrifice on their behalf. This sacrifice is an important aspect of the negotiation process that occurs between adolescence and adulthood.

Furthermore, identity achievement is not unlike emotional competence in the sense that negotiations must be made and that identity is neither absolute nor stagnant. Similarly, the journey to the self, such as the journey to being an emotionally competent individual, is never ending. One cannot possibly judge a continual process as being successfully completed. Therefore, the only manner of judgement we can make in order to assess identity achievement and emotional achievement as being successful is through the individual understanding and recognising the continuity of these concepts and their need to renegotiate their place often within these continuous changes.

On a side note, an authoritarian state does not always attack one’s identity or emotional competency; in some cases, it encourages appropriate and empathic behaviour. But in the case of these texts, authoritarian power discourages values such as empathy, loyalty, and the fight for justice. The Capitol, the Factions and Prime Destinations all use limiting power that is both oppressive and collusive by nature and each attempts to prevent any form of individualism that may expose the production of its power. As I examined previously, once Katniss demonstrates her own identity free from the Capitol’s persuasion, people respond to her, and therefore, look up to her. The way Katniss attempts to overcome the limiting power of the Capitol is to distinguish her ‘self’ from a design that is the Capitol’s. Tris similarly attempts to distinguish herself from her Factions and Callie from her chip.

Additionally, there is a correlation between each protagonist that must be acknowledged. That is, they each have a supportive individual or collective that holds them accountable for their actions. Katniss has her family, Gale and Peeta; Tris has her family, friends and Tobias; and Callie has her family, Michael and Hyden. These interpersonal relationships require the protagonists to regulate intense emotions, accept a sense of duty and responsibility and to know their place within these relationships. Yet, the villainous characters of these series such as Snow, Coin, Peter, Marcus, Jeanine and Brockman all lack empathy, a network of genuine support, and place within a healthy productive collective. Instead, it is with a rather child-like perspective that they believe their actions are accountable to no one but themselves. Therefore, I would suggest that without these healthy formations of kinship and collectivity, the individual is less encouraged to negotiate an ‘appropriate’ show of behaviour. They also lack the insight from friends and kin in order to develop their

identities and emotional competence. Not only are the protagonists connected through kinship, culture, roles and so forth, but people like Peeta, Tobias and Hyden have insight that Katniss, Tris and Callie lack. The people surrounding them see their strengths and flaws and are often more aware of their actions than they are themselves. It is through these relationships that Katniss, Tris and Callie are able to connect their own perceptions of themselves and their actual selves, which help them to reach some form of individuation and negotiation in order to become fully functional as an autonomous and productive adult.

Finally, the journey to adulthood is never easy and while in real life this transitional period from adolescent to adulthood may not be under such drastic circumstances, there is a certain reflection of the real teenage journey within these series. The difficult and changing power dynamics are also reminiscent of genuine adolescent struggles. Therefore, it is evident, through these texts that the journey to adulthood occurs through a process of negotiation. And rather, is it through the protagonists' concern or responsibility for others that allows them to develop empathy. Furthermore, being placed in a position of powerlessness is an important and necessary aspect of this negotiation. For, it is only when Katniss, Tris and Callie are forced to into both positions of power and powerlessness that they understand their strengths, weakness, boundaries, and how they react in certain situations, and it is this process that results in maturity and growth.

## Part IV:

### Negotiating Autonomy, Freedom and Suffering into Adulthood

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that authoritarian power operates through discourses, spectacle, propaganda, surveillance, and through limiting both the development of identity and emotional competency. In addition, I have argued that the adolescent individual is required to negotiate their place within these limiting power structures in order to mature and transition towards adulthood. However, I have yet to examine the main objective of these dystopian texts: that is, for the protagonists to negotiate some form of freedom, be it personal or societal, and to gain some form of self-authority within the repressive structures of power that exist within these novels. Therefore, in this fourth and final part, I examine the adolescent negotiation for freedom and autonomy. I also examine whether these concepts are truly attainable within a dystopic state.

#### Autonomy and Freedom

Autonomy is a term often associated with personal freedom and while it is a complicated concept, I believe a reasonable definition is “an agent is *autonomous* when her [sic] movements are in some clear sense self-determined or her own” (Korsgaard 83). Philosopher Marina Oshana extends this argument in *How Much Should We Value Autonomy?* (2003) to incorporate: “I understand personal autonomy as the condition of being self-directed, of having authority over one’s choices and actions whenever these are significant to the direction of one’s life” (100). In addition, she argues that autonomy should also allow an individual to live without the fear of how others judge and perceive them. In essence, I believe that autonomy can thus be deduced as having the right and the ability to have personal freedom, and to be responsible and in charge of one’s own life without the negative influence of external or internalised forces.

Therefore, the purpose of the authoritarian state within these texts is to prevent or restrict autonomy in order to maintain control over both collectives and the individual’s choices and actions in order to co-opt them for an authoritarian purpose. Thus, by extension it refuses to allow its citizens to assume full adulthood, but keeps them forever imprisoned in child-like or at best, adolescent, states. The reasoning behind this is because without the mature understanding of consequence, duty, or justice, the individual is accountable to no one, and rather, they cannot conceive a better society, or self, therefore, they are not a threat to existing repressive structures. Authoritarian power is only threatened when challenged or exposed by a collective or individual who feel that their rights have been breached or that it is their responsibility to end a destructive or limiting regime, and thus, these responses are typically associated with maturity.

While the adolescent is required to negotiate some form of freedom, it can be argued that absolute personal freedom or autonomy is impossible. Erich Fromm argues in *Escape From Freedom* (1994) that there are always mechanisms that will restrict individuals from any form of complete personal freedom. He warns that from the moment one is born they will

be shaped by the environment in which they exist, and by the people which surround them. Then, as the individual ages, they still require the basic necessities to ensure their survival, which often involves the sacrifice of personal freedoms in return for security. The individual also enters the workforce in order to ensure that they have the financial resources to both survive and provide for their leisurely needs. All of these factors mean that the individual becomes shaped by the economy, by the demands and duties of their jobs, and by the laws of the society in which they live. Fromm also argues that for an individual to be 'free' in the complete sense of the word, they would be required to have no morals, beliefs, or religious views that would in any way restrict their actions and make them accountable to these kind of laws. Therefore, I suggest that the protagonists must be able to negotiate their freedoms within the confines of their own personal values, morals, and beliefs.

Besides Fromm, many other theorists have attempted to explain what personal freedom entails. Thomas Hobbes believes the very existence of freedom is a form of power that causes disputes between liberty and the law as two conflicting powers. His view, therefore, would support an authoritarian state, as he would ask: 'do we not prefer to be less autonomous and give up our own liberties in return for a conflict-free environment that means we are safe?' (Foy 217). While this Hobbesian mode of thinking certainly raises a fair point, I believe Collins's counter argument holds more validity. After Katniss admits to the uprising in the Districts, she states that she will show her support for Snow so that the people in the Districts will be safe once more. Gale's response is: "safe to do what?... starve? Work like slaves? Send their kids to the reaping? You haven't hurt people – you've given them an opportunity. They just have to be brave enough to take it" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 121). Gale reminds Katniss that the Districts have no form of personal freedoms, nor understanding of how to negotiate such freedoms. As stated previously, they are kept in a child-like state of underdevelopment where they do not have the maturity to negotiate within the repressive structures of power that the Capitol employs. Gale, therefore, sees an opportunity in which Katniss can provide people with the ability to negotiate and fight for their freedom. His argument suggests that "it's not just life at any cost that we should desire for ourselves, but rather a good life. Just because no one would want to live in the hell of the arena doesn't make suffering under the boot of a dictatorship any more tolerable" (Foy 217). For many individuals, simply existing is not enough: rather, it is their belief that their right as an autonomous individual includes the decision to pursue the job they want, marry of their own accord and to a person of their choice, and live within the values that they believe most represent them. Therefore, an important aspect of negotiating freedom requires the protagonists to first acknowledge that they have the rights to such freedoms. This is a particularly westernised viewpoint, but for the sake of these texts, which are written in modern-day America, I believe we can safely assume that the authors' view of freedom comes from a westernised perspective. Furthermore, autonomy and freedom are a common theme within adolescent literature. Roberta Trites states the reason for this is that adolescent fiction implies maturity is only achievable when one overcomes the repressive nature of power and gains some form of freedom (472). Thus, freedom is considered the measure of maturity.

## The Value of Suffering

Just as autonomy and freedom are an important aspect in the maturation process for each protagonist, suffering is also a vital ritual during adolescence and an essential part of being human. It has been said that, “suffering is a specific state of severe distress induced by the loss of integrity, intactness, cohesiveness, or wholeness of the person, or by a threat that the person believes will result in the dissolution of his or her integrity” (Cassell 227). In essence, suffering is a painful experience and appears to be a thematic necessity in young adult fiction. The selected series are no exception, and Katniss, Tris and Callie certainly endure extensive suffering. However, I would argue that the most significant form of suffering throughout the texts is through the death of a loved one, and more specifically the death of the parent. This event is an important aspect in the maturing process and, at least certainly within these texts, the protagonists are forced into accepting the responsibility of adulthood. Since Katniss, Tris and Callie all lose both parents, in some sense, the necessity to self-master and maintain authority over their own lives is great. Therefore, the negotiation of a traumatic event such as death is vital in order for the protagonists to mature.

Roberta Trites often cites death as one of the most vital components in adolescent literature. She characterises it as immediate, untimely, violent, and often resulting in a loss of innocence. She notes how: “death in adolescent literature is a threat, an experience adolescents understand as a finality.” (118). Moreover, according to Roland Barthes, accepting the death of the parent, the ultimate authority figure, creates the ultimate grief in which the child/adolescent learns of their own mortality (Trites 472). When the adolescent accepts death as an unavoidable and permanent fixture of human life, they often form self-awareness about their own life, thus, leading to maturation. Therefore, the purpose of death in the YA novel is to show or encourage growth. Furthermore, Trites highlights that: “Both acceptance and awareness serve in the power/knowledge dynamic to render the adolescent both powerless in her fear of death and empowered by acknowledging its power” (119). Trites implies that fear is essential in order to recognise one’s own mortality and the acceptance of our mortality is a vital part of adulthood. Trites also suggests that this acceptance is equally vital in empowering the protagonists simply because “in the calm that follows the emotional storm, adolescent characters usually seem more empowered than they did when they still denied death’s power” (Trites 119). Thus, there is strength in understanding the finality of death. Ultimately, it is considered a healthy fear that will benefit the protagonists as they mature.

In *The Hunger Games* Katniss loses her father at eleven years old and ‘loses’ a mother in the process to depression. It is evident that the death of her father forces her to take on the role of both parent and provider. However, it is through the death of Katniss’s sister Primrose in which she experiences the most fear and strength. The pain of Prim’s death is highlighted through the physical pain that Katniss experiences. As she witnesses the death of her sister, she also gets caught in the bomb blast and describes the ‘agony’ as she catches on fire; a final metaphor that ‘the girl on fire’ has been eventually be reduced to ashes, but perhaps it is also a metaphor for Katniss the phoenix that rises from the ashes. Beyond her physical pain, Katniss struggles to accept Prim’s death because she sees no purpose in it. Rather, in her mind, Prim is another casualty of war and without her, Katniss is unable to



continue with her own purpose, which was to ensure a better world for Prim to grow up in. While, in the moment, suffering seems to cause no greater purpose other than to inflict pain, the purpose of one's suffering only occurs retrospectively once the intimal trauma has eased. Therefore, "suffering is a state which in some situations can be tolerated if there is a purpose, if there is a good that can be achieved through the experience" (Fetherstonhaugh 2). For this reason, part of the process of healing must be through finding a purpose from our suffering and making meaning from it.

However, there is meaning to be made from Prim's death. The bombing ends the war and brings to light the methods Coin was willing to go to in order to win. Coin's lack of empathy for her own people is one of the reasons Katniss recognises that her leadership will not provide Panem with the freedom it so desires. Thus, her knowledge of this leads her to kill Coin instead of Snow. This sparks the end of the Games and the reinstatement of a democratic government. Though Katniss is left psychologically damaged and states: "fire beats roses again" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 447), a statement made in irony for neither side 'wins', she still has provided a world for her children, and future generations, that is free from the Capitol and its dictatorship. Only after the war has ended and Katniss has begun to rebuild her life, can she understand that, like the rebirth of Panem, she too is reborn and that she has "the promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 453). Furthermore, Prim was the one person who proved to Katniss that humans have the capability of being good and pure, and that even in the face of hardship one could find joy and wisdom. It is the memory of Prim that allows Katniss to believe humanity has the ability to be good and that she can find joy even amongst her suffering. As a result of the acceptance of Prim's death, Katniss learns to negotiate her suffering and pain as a part of her identity. In her pain, her empathy for others increases, as well as her understanding of the impacts and consequences of hate and anger. Therefore, in her suffering, Katniss negotiates a way of existing that honours the memory of Prim and equally suggests through her losses, that growth has occurred.

Like Katniss, Tris suffers the loss of both her father and mother. Their death is particularly devastating for her as they represented the last link to both her old life and Faction. Accepting their deaths and gaining self-authority, in many ways, is Tris's most difficult transition to adulthood as she discovers "all growth is costly. It involves the leaving behind of an old way of being in the world. Often it involves, at least for a time, leaving behind the others who have been identified with that old way of being" (Kegan 215). In addition to the loss of her parents, Tris is forced to let Caleb go as he chooses his Faction over his family. However, Tris's greatest form of suffering transpires during her self-sacrificial act to save the city and shut down the Bureau. Yet, it is Tobias who finishes her story after her death and his description that highlights the impact her death has had.

During Tobias's grief, he turns to a memory serum with the hope that in forgetting Tris he will no longer suffer. However, as Christina reminds him: "the person you became with her is worth being" (Roth, *Allegiant* 507). This conversation with Christina demonstrates the purpose of suffering, as does Christina herself, who has lost her partner Will and nearly all of her friends, yet she is still hopeful for a better future. Therefore, just as Tris understood when she made her self-sacrifice, Tobias's final transition into adulthood is learning to accept that suffering is important when it has a purpose. In her death, Tobias recognises that the

purpose of her sacrifice was to save the people she loved, and therefore, he understands: “Tris, who, after suffering and betrayal, could still find enough love to lay down her life instead of her brother’s” (Roth, *Allegiant* 508). Retrospectively, Tobias uses Tris’s forgiveness of herself and Caleb to model his own forgiveness for his parents. He recognises the purpose of his suffering is this: “since I was young, I have always known this: Life damages us, every one. We can’t escape that damage. But now, I am also learning this: We can be mended. We mend each other” (Roth, *Allegiant* 526). Therefore, after his period of grief, he commits his life to changing the city for the better. As for the city that Tris saves, Tobias states that “it will be the only metropolitan area in the country governed by people who don’t believe in genetic damage. A kind of paradise” (Roth, *Allegiant* 504), and new laws have been instated that allow for more individual freedom. Tobias, just like Katniss, learns to negotiate his suffering in his life and part of this lies in continuing the legacy that Tris left and the love she had for protecting her city. Because Tobias is able to negotiate his way through his suffering to live a healthier life and become a better person, it is evident that growth had occurred. Similarly, Tris, before she ends her life, has recognised that her suffering has given her something worth fighting for, and before she ends the Bureau, it is clear that her negotiation of this grief in her life has sparked growth.

Callie similarly loses both parents during the Spore Wars and is forced to become the parental figure to her brother, Tyler. Naturally, the death of loved ones means that the child is forced to recognise their own vulnerability and never is this more evident than through Callie who is forced to fight for survival each day. However, her greatest form of suffering occurs during Brockman’s control when she is ordered to shoot the father she previously believed to be dead. Callie is fortunate that her suffering is not to the extent of Katniss or Tris’s, but her suffering still has great purpose. In her grief and fear, Callie recognises her own ability to refuse the internalisation of Brockman’s power. Therefore, after she frees her father, she turns her grief into empathy for other Metals. As a result of this empathy, she works with the agency to further prevent control over the chipped starters. Certainly, Callie negotiates the suffering in her life and uses it to fuel her desire to ease the suffering of others. This final choice suggests that growth has certainly occurred within Callie.

It is commonly claimed that enduring a state of suffering leads to rebirth or personal freedom. Ian Craib states: “The discovery of freedom is the discovery of multiple forms of suffering and perhaps the most meaningful personal sense in which we can talk about having an identity is that our identity is the result of the quality of our suffering” (177). Therefore, suffering essentially strips identities to their most basic self, and as a result, the restoration of one’s identity is more authentic, more autonomous and a product of primary experiences rather than secondary ones. In the face of suffering the Districts, Factions and Metals unite and discover that “collective victim beliefs can also have constructive functions for the in-group. This included increased solidarity and unity among in-group members, related to... [the] notion that internal cohesion is enhanced through an external enemy or threat” (Vollhardt 148). Without suffering, they could not rebuild, become better, learn from past mistakes, and break barriers. Similarly, the protagonists would be unable to know the experience of joy without sadness, and freedom without oppression: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-5). Therefore, the ultimate indication of growth

occurs when the protagonists recognise that their suffering humanizes them, shapes them, and gives them experience, meaning, and most of all, purpose. For this reason, negotiating the impact of grief, pain and suffering in life by taking both the lessons they learn and understanding the importance of empathy suggests that the protagonists have transcended adolescence and entered the realm of adulthood.

Furthermore, living through grief and suffering and coming out at the other end provides people with the hope that the future can be better. After all, this is predominantly what the dystopic novel for adolescents highlights: that a disaster can be overcome, that life goes on after tragedies or failures, and that there is always hope that things can change: “Hope is a kind of expression of confidence. It is a confidence, grounded always in fact, that one’s world is able to sustain possibilities for the future” (Green 38). Therefore, within these texts, authoritarian power is the cause of both suffering and pain, yet paradoxically, this consequence of limiting power is also its downfall, as it creates more resilient, authentic and mature individuals. As a result of this, authoritarian power has little or no absolute authority.

This is where autonomy and freedom enter. For, suffering, endurable with the hope for a better future or outcome, leads to autonomy. Katniss warns that her suffering and grief has taught her that never again will she be forced to use a weapon and allow herself to be controlled. Tris states that no Faction dictates to her: “I don’t belong to Abnegation, or Dauntless, or even the Divergent” (Roth, *Allegiant* 455). She refuses to be defined by anything other than her own values, and therefore, dies an autonomous adult. Callie also warns that no entity will ever control her body or actions again. She also concludes with the final parting words: “together, we walked forward to face a future where we would shape our own destinies” (Price, *Enders* 272). Thus, in their suffering, they negotiate the right to take ownership of their lives and achieve some form of personal freedom that previously did not exist. It is equally important to note that gaining self-authority or autonomy is not the same as gaining happiness. However, I believe it is possible to suggest that a state of freedom functions at the end of these stories for the individual, but more accurately, freedom from limiting and collusive power; not freedom from power completely.

Similarly, all three texts provide a warning about the nature of freedom and autonomy; this being a common feature of the dystopian novel. Plutarch warns Katniss: “we’re fickle, stupid beings with poor memories and a great gift for self-destruction” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 442). Tobias informs us that despite all the recovery where people were freed, the Fringe was broken, the lake refilled, and people were given normal jobs, “there are still GD rebels in the fringe who believe that another war is the only way to get the change we want. I fall more on the side that wants to work for change without violence” (Roth, *Allegiant* 519). Callie also notes that she hopes her trust is placed in the right people this time. It appears Collins, Roth and Price all provide warnings about the shortcomings of human nature and our capability for war and destruction. Their purpose for this, I would suggest, is to remind readers that freedom is not absolute and nor is autonomy. We are still responsible for our own actions and consequences and we must use our freedom responsibly and understand that constant negotiations must be made in order for people to exist harmoniously. Recognising these responsibilities and negotiations signifies the protagonist is worthy of adulthood.

## Final Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue that the adolescent individual is not helpless and incapable of resisting limiting manifestations of power, but rather, that the hardships that transpire from the use of such power often play an important role in the maturing process, and are equally an effective means of creating more resilient and productive individuals.

In Part One I examined the importance of collective identities during the adolescent period. I also examined how limiting power within the texts functions to enforce discourses over collectives and create an unhealthy dynamic between ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ groups. Similarly, these discourses encourage fear and the suppression of ‘otherness’, which I demonstrated through the treatment of the Districts, Factions, GDs and Starters. The examination of discourse also extended to the use of spectacle and propaganda and, more specifically, the mediatization of spectacle. Nonetheless, I observed the methods of resistance through the negotiation of healthy, productive collectives, and through using the methods of limiting power against itself to counteract and expose the power that operates. Likewise, the refusal to validate an enforced collective identity is an equally powerful means of resistance.

In Part Two I examined the use of surveillance as a method employed by an authoritarian power to ensure behaviour management and self-discipline. I utilised the works of Bentham and Foucault’s later additions to the panopticon to explain how power is not an object, nor does it reside in a single person, rather it is a process created by social relations. Consequently, I argued that power cannot be possessed, and therefore, an authoritarian state displays its authority through performance, perceptions and through actions that allow them or others to validate their power. As a result, this form of power relies on ‘false realities’ and it is only when the exposure of its ‘myths’ are revealed that resistance can be activated. As a result, the adolescent must negotiate between the ‘realities’ in which the state provides and the ‘truths’ they gather from first-hand experiences. Therefore, exposure, as well as using surveillance against itself, is an effective means of resistance.

Additionally, in Part Three I ventured towards a closer examination of the individual protagonists by exploring the development of identity and emotional competency. I used the works of Lawler and Craib to establish the concept of identity and concluded that identity is an ongoing negotiation. I also suggested that within the individual lies a subterranean identity that is only recognised retrospectively because of the inability to rise ‘above’ one’s time and history. Additionally, I examined emotional competency as the ability to source and regulate emotions, express empathy for others, and experience a desire for justice while upholding and a universal ethical standard. I argued that authoritarian power within these texts discourages the development of these concepts simply because individualism challenges authoritarian ‘myths’ and the individual is far more compliant if they retain a child-like state. With these concepts, I then examined the protagonists’ personal struggles to negotiate their own identity and emotional development within the repressive structures and unethical circumstances that surround them.

Finally, in Part Four, I claimed that the purpose of dystopic text, especially those for young adults according to the three series I examined, was to seek personal or societal

freedom and autonomy. I, therefore, investigated the concept of freedom and autonomy and suggested absolute freedom is impossible because one remains chained to their personal beliefs, values and physical needs. I also observed the value of suffering and explored the nature of death, particularly the death of a parent, and how this impacts the adolescent and their transition towards adulthood. Yet, the true purpose of this final part was to draw together the two concepts of freedom and suffering and demonstrate how through the protagonists' suffering they gained freedom. However, this part equally highlighted the cost and sacrifice of freedom and the unpredictable nature of humanity's desire for power. I observed that all three novels share a warning about the responsibility one has in exchange for personal or societal freedom.

However, the link between these four parts and the crux of this thesis, resides in the protagonist's ability to negotiate their place within these repressive structures, for this thesis has truly been about the adolescent journey to adulthood. But more importantly, I have argued that the adolescent experiences growth through the shifts between power and powerlessness. Thus, the greatest validation of maturation in the adolescent journey transpires when the adolescent is able to negotiate their place within the institutions of repressive power and simultaneously keep something of themselves that exists outside of the institutions 'realities'. Therefore, the importance of suffering and suppression resides in the fact that it often forces the adolescent to negotiate in critical circumstances. While power will always exist, the repressive nature of limiting power can be rendered ineffective through this negotiation. Furthermore, a correlation between each part demonstrates that while authoritarian power is the cause of suffering and pain, it paradoxically creates tougher, more resilient individuals; at least in the case of the three protagonists. This effectively makes authoritarian power its own worst enemy.

Therefore, the dystopic novel is a narrative that life goes on after tragedy. More importantly, these books are a reminder that one's suffering is not without merit, and that the adolescent has not truly earned the passageway to adulthood if they have not experienced empathy, love and sorrow in some form. One needs to experience sorrow to appreciate joy, and sadness to understand happiness. These books console the reader into understanding that the unknown changes of our ever-developing world, no matter what they bring, still cannot conquer the 'self', or the ongoing continuous nature of our identities. They shine a light on human resilience, even if the entire world has gone to hell in a hand basket. But most of all, they highlight hope as a tool that carries us through suffering and promises that the price we pay can be worth it in the end. Hope is something that no amount of limiting power can control, and yet, it is the most effective and strongest method of resistance and following it can lead us through suffering towards the rebirth of a more mature and autonomous self.

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