

TO KILL A MOCKINGJAY: AN IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM OF
THE HUNGER GAMES

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2008, Suzanne Collins released *The Hunger Games*, the first novel of a trilogy that would become popular to international reading and cinematic audiences. The novel presented a reluctant heroine, Katniss Everdeen, who is trapped in the oppressive nation of Panem. The purpose of this paper is to examine *The Hunger Games* trilogy through ideological analysis to identify themes of oppression, then compare to current U.S. social systems. The study uses close textual analysis of the trilogy to identify three themes of oppression: economic, political, and social. The three themes are then applied to institutional and individual forces of oppression. The characters and settings of the trilogy are then compared to current U.S. social systems including class inequality and education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literary novels have long served as forms of entertainment and education, as well as cautionary tales warning of future consequences for today's choices. Books falling under the dystopian genre of literature have used futuristic civilizations to dramatize current conditions and encourage change. *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins describes a society struggling with the consequences of a previous rebellion. The government entity requires working class citizens to pay a very expensive debt to the ruling class as restitution for the mistakes of past generations.

The success of the trilogy does not end with book sales or the box office records produced by the movie franchise under the same name. Culturally, the novel has become embedded into toys, clothing, and additional merchandise including makeup, art, and even wedding themes. Politically, the novel has encouraged copycat uprisings in similarly oppressed nations (Ehrlich, 2014; Glum, 2014). The themes and ideas of the novels have transcended off the page and into the world. This study rhetorically analyzes the themes in *The Hunger Games* trilogy using ideological criticism. Chapter I introduces the concepts and themes of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, places the selected artifacts within historical context, discusses the foundation of ideological criticism, and summarizes the thesis chapters.

Description of the Artifact

The Hunger Games takes the reader to a world where children from various backgrounds are pitted against each other on a national stage, in a competition to determine the champion. The competitors have varying degrees of different skills depending on their upbringing; some excel at quick thinking while others are stronger physically. Some of the children have never experienced a full belly while others have never enjoyed a full night's rest. The purpose of the games is to remind the lower class citizens of the power and control the ruling class possesses.

The first novel in the trilogy, *The Hunger Games* released in 2008, creates a futuristic world of oppression that leaves a 16-year-old girl fighting for her life while the entire country watches on television. The Capitol is the ruling agent, housing the evil President Snow and his direct employees, the Gamemakers who are charged with the responsibility of producing an entertaining annual competition called the Hunger Games. The games are a reminder to the citizens of Panem of a revolution fought generations ago in which the districts lost during an uprising against the oppressive nature of the government. The districts include 13 communities separated by large electric fences to discourage communication between the citizens of each region.

Each district must send two tributes or children between the ages of 12 and 18 to an arena. The tributes must then compete against each other until there is only one survivor or Victor. The competition between districts relies on the success of the individual selected to be tested in front of a national audience. The arena poses obstacles to the individuals and their success is largely dependent on the skills learned in their home districts.

The second novel is *Catching Fire*, released in 2009. After Katniss successfully escapes the arena, she temporarily relaxes, believing she is safe and has secured her family's future. The Victor is traditionally awarded with a nice house, food, and some luxuries such as stable electricity and heat. The District that produces the Victor is rewarded with a year of additional food supplies and a celebratory feast. The festivities extend to the other districts as the Victor is paraded around on a Victory Tour, where Katniss thanks the families for their sacrifice of children and reminds the public of the cost of rebellion.

At the conclusion of the Victory Tour, two new tributes are announced for the next competition. However, this year is special as it is time for a Quarter Quell to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the fall of the rebellion. The Quarter Quell happens every 25 years, and includes special instructions as to the components of the games as decided by the original Gamemakers. For this competition, there will not be a reaping of new tributes; instead, any surviving Victors will be subject to selection for participation. Katniss is the only female Victor from District 12, ensuring her return into the arena.

Catching Fire focuses on the second arena, a clock-like stadium that has a different terror for each hour including flesh eating monkeys, poisonous fog, and a rainstorm of blood. The competitors are all experienced at Arena combat but struggle through the new level of obstacles constructed by the Gamemakers. The second novel provides additional backstories into the other Victors from the different districts and gives more depth and detail into the relationships formed outside the arena after their initial Victories. This novel also gives greater detail about President Snow and his fear of another rebellion. The novel concludes with a dramatic rescue of Katniss from the Arena

by rebel forces. Katniss is unaware that the rebels had long planned to abduct her from the Arena. She is also surprised by the people of her inner circle, like Haymitch and Gale, who have been involved in the rebel planning without consulting her.

The third and final novel, *Mockingjay*, was released in 2010. The novel picks up with Katniss coming to consciousness on the rescue vehicle and trying to piece together information. At first she is disoriented and confused, but quickly becomes angry and hostile when she realizes that people she trusted were hiding secrets that endangered people for whom she cared, including her family. The rebel forces explain to Katniss that there has been a rebellion building for a while, as people continued to suffer under the Capitol regime. The rebels introduce a new leader, Alma Coin, as the future the country needs and explain the reasoning behind Katniss's abduction.

Katniss discovers that not everyone was saved from the arena and that some of her fellow tributes were taken back to the Capitol. The last novel shows the rebel forces building strength and support using Katniss as a symbol of hope. While Katniss agrees to be the rebel spokesmodel, she is also working to save the tributes left with the Capitol. Katniss frequently waivers between emotional withdrawal from her new life in District 13 to fits of anger and rage at the people she trusted. The novel concludes with the battle at the Capitol, where Katniss and the rebel forces try to overthrow President Snow to begin a new life without the Hunger Games.

Rationale

There are several justifications for conducting this ideological criticism. The first is the unique direction of this trilogy. The novels were published and released during a transition period of the dystopian literary genre. Compared to "earlier YA dystopian/post-

apocalyptic novels tend to be single-minded tales of survival, whether against oppression, aliens, or the environment. The post-9/11 novels in this genre are somehow different, focused more on personal and social change” (Pharr & Clark, 2010, p. 8). Although the use of watchwords and oppression are still present in the Collins’ trilogy, there is a shift of purpose. Previous novels focused on the change of others (usually government regimes or foreign intruders); the new genre of books looks as change within oneself as a catalyst to influence others.

Second, there is an opportunity to broadly study the ideological strategies of the texts. Best-selling dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels of the last decade include *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins, *Divergent* trilogy by Veronica Roth, *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver, *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner, as well as others. The popularity of these series is reminiscent of the late 1940s and early 1950s with books like *Animal Farm* and *1984* by George Orwell, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. Historically, dystopian novels have been viewed as criticisms of current government politics such as capitalism, communism, and corruption. This study is a rhetorical analysis using ideological criticism to identify similar oppressive themes inherent in the book reflected in U.S. society.

Third, the trilogy has spawned a new level of fandom that rivals the fan dedication to *The Harry Potter* series by J.K Rowling. *The Hunger Games* fans have created online communities that separate them into different districts where they compete in challenges (“We remember,” 2015). Fans have gone as far to compose letters as fallen tributes (“Letters,” 2012), as well as giving names to future children of the main characters (Sorren, 2014).

Fans have also been inspired to their own forms of rebellion. Readers of the novels have been inspired to replicate the iconic three finger salute in actual protests. There have been at least three different reported cases of the three finger salute in areas of Thailand, Hong Kong, and even America (Ehrlich, 2014; Glum, 2014). Concerns over the trilogy's rebellious material reached beyond foreign borders and into American media as each of the three novels were on the American Library Association list of banned books. The reasons cited included "unsuited to age group," "religious viewpoint," "anti-ethnic," "insensitivity," "offensive language," "occult/satanic," "violence," "sexually explicit" ("Frequently," 2013, para 8). Ironically, many classic literature works that are often introduced in high school English classes were also on the list including *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

A fourth justification is that even though the trilogy has faced criticism, it has also been embraced. Educators have disregarded the American Library Association's warning and have since found merit in the messages of the novels by incorporating the literary work into classroom assignments and activities. "Many educators see them [the trilogy novels] as a way to both excite avid readers and hook reluctant ones" (Schulten & Altavena, 2012, para. 3). In fact, the trilogy publisher, Scholastic, has provided an online forum of supplemental materials to aid and encourage educators to use the novels in the classroom ("Hunger Games," 2015). The principal characters of the novel share many similarities with the high school students beyond just age. High school students and characters also share struggles with relationships including parents and peers, as well as the societal expectations. The book themes lend to discussions between educators and students to explore the novel's ideas in relevance to today's society.

Lastly, beyond public education, the novels have inspired several fanfiction collective works. These collections of essays are from authors with various backgrounds including scholars, but also journalists, educators, other literary authors, and trilogy super fans. The contributors selected a theme or general topic to explore, and the works were compiled into the fanfiction books that serve as complimentary material to the original trilogy. Even now, at the time of this research study almost eight years after the first release of *The Hunger Games*, the characters are still in the spotlight. There are at least three additional fanfiction/complimentary books featuring the trilogy, scheduled to be released in the next year (Clasen & Hassel, 2015; Schmerheim, 2015; Whited, 2016).

Ideology in The Hunger Games

In academia, Collin's trilogies have been a platform to research topics ranging from music theory (Fitzgerald & Hayward, 2015), to media use and propaganda (Gagnon, 2015), and even female heroine power (Hansen, 2015; Maio, 2014). For example, the exploration into the music of *The Hunger Games*, particularly the folklore/mountain music Katniss sings throughout the trilogy, provides undeniable parallelism to the music of a similar (geographically speaking) culture, Appalachia in rural America. This society has historically been out-casted, stereotyped as a backwoods country atmosphere with poor living conditions and high poverty rates. The coal mining dependent economy and shack-like housing further reiterates the similarities between present day rural Kentucky and Katniss's own District 12. In Appalachia, music has a long-standing cultural significance as it was used to pass stories down through a population largely undereducated, and with little reading comprehension.

The cultural analysis of the trilogy includes the geographically similar communities of Appalachia and District 12. In addition, scholars have explored the commonality of YA literature that places a female hero as the center of the plot line. These scholars looked at the similarities of Katniss to other YA heroines like Bella from *Twilight* and Tris from *Divergent*. The female lead character is no longer the damsel in distress; in addition she is capable of rational thinking, problem solving, and physical action on a field commonly left for the male lead characters. These works also generalize the female character by analyzing her relationship to the male lead character/characters. In YA literature an example of this relationship is the love triangle between Bella of *Twilight* with Edward and Jacob as compared to the relationship of Katniss with Gale and Peeta from *The Hunger Games*. Defining a female character on the basis of her relationship with male counterparts negates other academic works that use this artifact for exploring feminism, equality, and power.

However, articles that focus on topics like feminism and equality among classes are more relevant to this research study in exploring ideological critiques. Ideological criticism critiques rhetorical artifacts based on represented dominant ideologies and the oppression of opposition (Elster, 1986a). These oppressive forces are largely invisible, and thus go without notice, often through manufactured consent, or hegemony (Althusser, 1971). Primary arguments in ideology have been the critique of economic and government systems such as capitalism and communism, or in *The Hunger Games*, the Capitol. Ideological theorists such as Marx, Engels, and Althusser often explore governments that abuse the labor force and production systems resulting in class struggles that cause jealousy and tension between the classes instead of discontent aimed

at the government (Drucker, 1974). The economic inequalities are further emphasized in the Games, as wealthiest districts are able to provide sponsorship of tributes which brings aid to the Arena in the form of food, water, or medicine.

Inequality among classes, in particular, is also represented in the Districts as evident by the expectations set for young people in preparation for the Games. For example, “Careers” are tributes who originate from Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4. These competitors usually form a team once in the arena to annihilate the competing districts before eventually turning on one another. This strategy has been very successful for the districts, as they have been awarded the most Victors and resulted in extra food supplies as well as a weeklong feast for the home team. Scholars have researched the power of hunger and deprivation in the districts compared to the overconsumption and extravagance in the Capitol (Pharr & Clark, 2010). The Capitol further rewarded Victors by raising the tributes status in society, securing notoriety and enjoying a lifestyle similar to a reality show celebrity.

The different socioeconomic classes of the Districts have been analyzed and compared to the rich lifestyles of the Capitol residents (Pharr & Clark, 2010). A gap in studies exists with consideration of the cultural variations from each district that results in different social expectations among the tributes. A different angle would be to analyze the competitors’ upbringing and their skill set prior to entering the arena. The competitors came from various backgrounds, which provided them a variety of advantages and disadvantages on the field based on their education, and the skills learned back in their home districts. For example, Careers have a different upbringing in their hometowns. They are trained in combat and survival skills while being encouraged to accept the honor

of being selected as tribute. The tributes from these districts are raised to believe that selection for participation in the Games is an honor, and volunteering for death is worthy of celebration. In contrast, participants like Katniss, have never been coached or trained in anything other than material production, which in District 12 is coal. Katniss also consoles her terrified sister, Prim, by reassuring her that she has the smallest chance for selection because of her age.

The absence of this academic research on dominant ideologies and oppressive forces leads to the research questions for this study:

RQ 1: How does the dominant ideology function in the preparation of District tributes?

RQ 2: In what ways does *The Hunger Games* trilogy serve as an ideological critique of the U.S. social systems?

After analyzing the preparations of the tributes in relation to the commodity production of their districts, the governing superstructure can then be further analyzed. This then leads to exploration of the institutions providing the material relevant to these preparations and the analytics of their purpose for equipping citizens with such skills. Finally the ideas of the Capitol are then compared to those of current U.S. social systems.

Summary

Although additional resources are on the horizon, the current sources are examined and used to frame the rest of this study. Chapter two provides additional information on the trilogy including a more detailed description of characters, places, and symbols. The chapter addresses ideological criticism including history of the theory, key theorists and terminology, as well as provides additional concepts and applications.

Chapter three then articulates the methodology of this research study including the author's preparation of data and material, an overview of close textual analysis procedures, and the data collection techniques.

Chapter four then explores the artifact by analyzing institutional conditions of control based on the district economy and then the individual conditions found in character descriptions, symbols, and places significant to the trilogy. The findings presented in Chapter four then lead to discussion, conclusion, and future applications in Chapter five.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter one provided a general overview of *The Hunger Games* trilogy and the framework for this study. The next chapter explores the dystopian genre history and its academic application, the role of the author when analyzing literary texts, and scholarly research of the trilogy including common themes used for analysis.

Dystopian Literature

Dystopian literature is considered a new genre when compared to its closely related counterpart, Utopian literature (Claeys, 2013). Utopian literature has been largely accredited to the title work *Utopia* by Thomas More in 1516. By comparison, the first dystopian novel is generally considered *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, first published in 1921. The dystopian genre is still in the formation phase among scholars, who continue to try to define and create formalized concepts for the literary movement.

One scholar, Claeys, has provided a general insight into the genre. She writes, “a definition of dystopia which also gives priority to content over form can be understood as portraying a society based upon fear - the opposite of friendship” (Claeys, 2013, p. 146). The novels that describe dystopian society often feature oppressive institutions that use power as a form of control over the masses. Claeys also points out gaps in the field, noting that “given the much smaller literature on dystopia compared to utopia (that is, chiefly, the literary dystopia), we encounter still greater problems to conceptualize this concept” (Claeys, 2013, p. 155). Given that the genre is technically less than 100 years

old, the available research into the applications, contexts, and formal concepts are in formation, therefore in articulation from scholars of the field.

Claeys continues exploring dystopian works, noting that utopia is both a literary genre and a phenomenon. One example she provides is religious institutions and the idea of Heaven. Heaven is both an ideal place often found in several literary works as the ultimate utopian society, but it is also a real utopia that serves as a source of hope for humanity. Claeys explains “we create utopias, fortuitously (or not), based upon a need to envision a more hopeful future; dystopias happen, unfortunately” (Claeys, 2013, p. 160). Heaven is a literary ideal and a world phenomenon, used by religious organizations to appeal to the mass public. Children are taught from an early age that if they follow God’s commands, they will be rewarded with entrance into the pearly gates, a beautiful place where nothing bad happens. These children are also taught that if they make bad choices or taught to be complacent in faith (or lacking any sort of action) they will then by default be sent to Hell, the opposite of Heaven (Claeys, 2013).

The opposite of utopia is dystopia. The research already conducted over the utopian genre is thus applicable to the dystopian genre. Claeys believed that all research and consideration applied to utopian works could easily be converted to apply to dystopian works as well. With this statement, Claeys did not articulate that scholars should also consider the perception of the character being discussed. In dystopian novels the rich, wealthy, and/or ruling classes, are in a utopia where their every need is met and life is happy. In the same novel though, the working class are the oppressed and powerless, living in dystopia where they are being used to benefit others. So not only can

the utopian research be applied to dystopian works; the works in and of themselves can be interchanged depending on the voice or character perception inside the work.

Scholars have also added to the field by expanding the definition of the genre by considering the root cause for the societal elements that dictate utopian or dystopian environments. This argument has been coined as utopian and dystopian pessimism. “Soren Baggesen introduced the provocative distinction...utopian pessimism occurs when dystopian elements in a text are depicted as occurring in, and caused by historical forces” (as cited by Zaki, 1990, p. 244). This is exemplified by *The Hunger Games*, where the dystopian element is caused by the historical force of the failed past rebellion. Baggesen continues “dystopian pessimism, on the other hand, assumes that dystopia is inevitable because its origins are ontological or otherwise metaphysical” (also cited in Zaki, 1990, p. 244). The idea is that pain and suffering will happen because there are forces such as plagues that are uncontrolled by man and things yet to be experienced such as aliens and asteroids.

The dystopian genre includes sensational novels with imaginative landscapes and complex character relationships. The genre itself has been undergoing a transition as of late. “Earlier YA dystopian/post-apocalyptic novels tend to be single-minded tales of survival, whether against oppression, aliens, or the environment. The post-9/11 novels in this genre are somehow different, focused more on personal and social change” (Pharr & Clark, 2010, p. 8). The traditions of dystopian literature, when added with the voice and background of the author, have created a series worthy of further academic research into the implications of modern society. The literary genre poses questions of oppression

among society while uncovering common themes shared among the many literary works found in dystopian literature.

Zaki (1990) focused his utopian research on one particular science fiction author, Octavia Butler, by analyzing the author's most successful novels and exploring the elements of dystopia compared to the elements of the book. One element that shadowed this study was the false tone of feminine bias that Zaki demonstrated throughout. The author (Zaki) describes that "men are intrinsically more violent than women," going on to express that women kill only out of survival or need, whereas men kill for a variety of reasons including pleasure and sport. The tone expressed by the author (Zaki) implies that females in general, as well as those found in novels, are only capable of being nurturing and caring individuals both in life and text.

Scholars will argue that there is opposing historical evidence with women serial killers such as Aileen Wuornos (Pearson, 2007) and women who murdered their own children such as Andrea Yates (Connell, 2002). Beyond the murderous individual, females are capable of a variety of personalities, some of which are not nurturing or caring. Just as males have a vast array of personalities and characteristics that afford them the multiple opportunities provided to them by society, females are indignantly the same. Despite Zaki's stereotyping, women have unique traits, skills, and abilities that can make them model housewives, successful business owners, or ferocious murderers.

Topics about females continue to flourish as additional scholars recognize that there is a general lack of female authors in the field of dystopian literature. "However contemptuous he or she (more often he) may be of the defects of contemporary society, the fact of the connection remains: no matter how deeply buried in the text, the relation

between utopia and reality is always a crucial aspect of utopian fiction” (Ferns, 1999, p. 3). Ferns makes a strong argument in that there was a lack of female authors in the field at the time of publication, but also that there is an undeniable relationship between the text and reality. The background of each author must be explored as part of the investigation into the novels that they have written.

Ferns refines this statement by giving variables to consider when analyzing text, which include: the historical circumstances prevailing at the time and place of composition; the writer’s gender and class background; psychological factors-variables which in turn give rise to an assortment of imagined social structures (Ferns, 1999). When analyzing great literary works such as Shakespeare or Austen, the voice of the author is usually given great consideration. There is a plethora of books available on the life and background of such authors to aid readers understanding of the material produced (Baker, 2009; Archer, 1996; Martin, 2010). The authors themselves had to make observations; experience elements included in the novels, and create relationships that seem natural and organic, just as their characters would. Otherwise, readers would not believe the plot of the book and instead question the authors’ purpose.

The purpose of a writer can vary greatly, especially when considering authors of the many different fields and genres available. Ferns reminds readers that when an author articulates the purpose of a novel, or even provides the inspirational context for which the novel was created, this must not be confused with the power the novel can have. Purpose does not equal reach. “What might best be described as an ambiguity of intention: often it seems that the writers themselves are not entirely sure what effect they are aiming at” (Ferns, 1999, p. 3). Collins has long stated that her inspiration for the novels came from

watching news coverage of the Iraq war while also seeing clips of reality television shows (Clemente, 2010). Her actual intent may have been to entertain audiences with familiar topics; however, her novel has reached across international borders and inspired actual war-time protestors to recreate the three finger salute, as well as facilitated countless discussions in classrooms about oppression, social classes, and equality.

The Hunger Games

One of the pleasures of reading a novel is the individual interpretation or application of the message. Each individual who reads a series may identify themselves within a character, relate to a particular struggle or embrace the overall literary message as part of them. There are novels that become a defining point on an individual's timeline of maturity. Novels expose readers to new ideals, societies, and circumstances that change the perspective of those witnessing societies' most horrific crimes against humanity for the very first time. *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank, *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut, and *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch have been listed as "books that will change your life" (LaRosa, 2013, para. 2). Academic research into literary works is warranted and necessary because of the cultural impact and reach that novels can have on a generation.

The most substantial evidence of success the trilogy has perhaps is the fandom that has followed. Collins has given countless interviews to newspapers, magazines, and television stations (Pharr & Clark, 2010). Even more evident is the hundreds of essays and stories focused on deciphering the themes, messages, and character traits of the story. Common themes include power, identity, and culture. These themes are relevant to this

study and will be discussed later in this chapter, but consideration must first be given to the perspective and background of the creator: the author.

The Author

Collins has written messages and meaning into the context of her novels from the Greek mythologies through present day works of fiction. The possible hidden agendas of these literary works are dependent on the author. The novel development by the storyteller has served as basis for countless researchers and been foundations for important theories in various fields including work by Sigmund Freud:

Explaining why he turned to analyzing fictitious dreams in a novel, Freud writes: Story-tellers are valuable allies, and their testimony is to be rated high, for they usually know many things between heaven and earth that our academic wisdom does not even dream of. In psychic knowledge, indeed, they are far ahead of us, ordinary people, because they draw from sources that we have not yet made accessible for science. (Hyman, 1962, p. 351)

Freud further recognized the complexities of an author's voice presented through the characters created. The basic premise of *The Hunger Games* was developed from a dream Collins had while watching TV (Collins, 2015) and fittingly, analyzing dreams was part of the legacy of Freud's research.

Sutherland (1985) has observed that "the values which shape a book are the author's politics. The promulgation of these values through a publication is a political act (157)" (as cited by Pavlik, 2010, p. 36). The author becomes the Creator, deciding the fate of the characters, the obstacles presented, and the circumstances of the story. The creative power enables authors to have full control over the development of the story as

well as the presentation of their views to the audience. Other theorists hold an opposing viewpoint in which “the author of a novel or, even more, a play, has a problem of ‘voice’ which a non-fiction author escapes. We can never unguardedly assume that the sentiment put by an author into the mouth of one of his actors, even his hero, are his own sentiments” (Drucker, 1974, p. 83). For example, Orwell was open with his purpose of *1984* as a novel for social change, while other literary works are left to speculation.

When authors leave the purpose of the novel to the reader, its meaning is open for interpretation or simply for the readers’ entertainment. Although Collins has been forthcoming in her inspiration for the trilogy, she has merely hinted at the purpose by giving credit to the circumstances and people that served as muses including her father, the Vietnam War, and reality TV (Collins, 2015). Nonetheless, “readers of all ages and backgrounds can empathize with Katniss’s personal anguish, the implications of her story more than merit scholarly discussion” (Pharr & Clark, 2010, p. 13) including this paper’s ideological criticism.

Just as the Capitol watched Katniss’s struggle, readers watched the story unfold with enthusiasm similar to popular television viewing practices. “In an interview, she (Collins) explains that she employed the dystopian setting of her novels to explore the power of television and how it’s used to influence our lives” (Frankel, 2010, p. 55). As previous generations are able to remember their exact location when hearing of John F. Kennedy’s assassination, this generation will forever remember their experience with 9/11. A national symbol of tolerance and acceptance of the oppressed, The Statue of Liberty stood in the distance from the smoke and ash of the World Trade Center during the 9/11 attack, which served as a shifting point in dystopian literature as previously

discussed. Americans stopped and watched their television screens in horror, not only at the loss of life and the destruction, but at the idea of an attack on American soil. The horror continued because television broadcasts continued to memorialize the tragedy nearly 15 years after it became a defining moment in American culture. Similarly, the citizens of Panem get to re-experience the rebellion each year with President Snow's message presented before the reaping ceremony every year.

Our culture has had a strong love/hate relationship with the television. Television that depicted the tragedy of 9/11 also showcased the first moonwalk and introduced America to its first female presidential candidate. Even before technological advances like DVR, Video On Demand and Pay Per View, television has been a source of support and critics alike. "Our national priorities seem distorted. Television, one of the finest triumphs of technology, daily inculcates materialism, status seeking, and other false values. Clearly, something is wrong" (Layton, 1973, p. 2). Other authors have picked up on the warning. "The trilogy is not so much an allegorical warning about the future as it is a portrayal of the nature of current times and the way the same scenario is constantly played out in both domestic and international politics" (Pavlik, 2010, p. 36). The author was inspired by television, reality TV, and war coverage (which are obvious themes throughout the series); the message of the series can also be interpreted and applied to other aspects of American culture.

Prior to entering the arena, tributes are sent to an individual appearance before the Gamemakers. The tributes showcase a unique talent, skill, or ability in hopes of impressing the Gamemakers. Once all of the tributes have been seen, the Gamemakers then issue a score, like a report card, that is displayed to the public to aid in the betting

and sponsorship of tributes while in the arena. When Katniss enters the showcase she is the last of the 24 tributes. By this time, the Gamemakers have become disinterested in the tribute performance, instead focusing on the large feast featuring a stuffed pig. Katniss says “they don’t even have the decency to pay attention to me. I’m being upstaged by a dead pig” (Collins, 2008, p.101). She is a little upset that the Gamemakers are not giving her their full attention so she launches an arrow through the apple in the pig’s mouth as a warning sign to take her seriously as a competitor.

The dead pig can be considered an allusion to one of the authors that inspired Collins’ trilogy, George Orwell. “The Hunger Games is part of a genre of post-apocalyptic political fiction, the best known example of which is George Orwell’s *1984*. Suzanne Collins has said that *1984* is a book she reads over and over again, and the Hunger Games shows a great debt to Orwell’s novel” (Borsellino, 2010, p. 30). One of Orwell’s other famous literary novels, *Animal Farm*, also features pigs as characters leading a revolution.

Katniss appeals to novice and experienced readers as she defies the obstacles and fights to survive a very tough and demanding world. “Suzanne Collins has explained that Katniss Everdeen is ‘a girl who should never have existed,’ an unexpected outcome of a security glitch in the Capitol’s regime, just like the mockingjays. ‘She is the girl who slips under this fence...and along with that goes a degree of independent thinking that is unusual in the districts’” (Borsellino, 2010, p. 31). Independence and individuality are two themes not often found in the high school halls where many of Katniss’s readers absorbed the tale of the girl on fire. A novel about a teenage girl, aimed at a teenage audience implies similar struggles between both character and reader. The trilogy is now

being used inside the classroom as a means to motivate students to become interested in literature beyond social media and tabloid magazines.

Trilogy Themes

Previous analyses of the trilogy includes several collective works including *The Girl That Was On Fire*, edited by Leah Wilson and *Of Bread, Blood, and The Hunger Games* edited by Pharr and Clark. These two collections, as well as several others, gather writings from various authors and organize them into themes. “Probing inwards as well as outwards the series touches issues of history and culture, identity and gender, ethics and aesthetics under duress, and resistance under an increasingly pervasive atmosphere of high tech surveillance and control” (Pharr & Clark, 2010, p. 12). There are three distinct themes that relate to this study: the societal ideas of power, identity, and culture.

Power. The most common and well-documented theme depicted by the fans and scholars is the theme of power. The power of hunger, poverty, and family serve as the motivation for Katniss to compete. She volunteers to die as a means to save her younger sister; however, the Capitol uses power through surveillance and violence, as well as a means of control.

A general idea of surveillance would be the concept that someone is always watching. The phenomenon has sometimes been called Big Brother, and the public has come to accept that there is no longer a sense of privacy thanks to technological advances that place a camera in every smartphone user’s pocket, in addition to the thousands of security cameras found on buildings, in ATMs, and traffic light systems. The trilogy features two specific themes of surveillance: military (or police) observations and the footage used by the Gamemakers. For political power President Snow watches Katniss’s

every move after she returns from the 74th Hunger Games, and the audience is eager to also watch her every action while inside the arena, demonstrating the power that the entertainment industry employs.

Surveillance for political power can include military operations, such as spying on public citizens or the observation of prisoners. “Katniss’s transformations, many constructed for public consumption, must be read within the context of the use of confinement, surveillance, and spectacle, embodied in and mediated by Panem’s panopticons” (Wezner, 2010, p. 148). The power of surveillance is not only who is being watched, but also in who is watching. In the arena, Katniss’s struggles are broadcasted for the entire country to see.

Wezner emphasizes that the images of dying children serve as a reminder to the viewers at home that no one is beyond the reach of the ruling class. “The Capitol ensures compliance with constant surveillance by informers and peacekeepers, but also with frequent theatrical reminders of the districts’ powerlessness and the potential punishments for disobedience” (Wezner, 2010, p. 149). The public display of suffering is welcomed by the elite, as it is celebrated with feasts and parties in the Capitol where viewers anxiously wait to see the first drop of blood.

This entertainment serves as both a reminder and a distraction to the audience. District citizens watch closely and root for their own hometown tribute, while observing the hunting practices of opposing districts. The mutual disdain for the opposition blinds the audience from the true murderers found in the Capitol. Frankel compares the Panem distraction to modern day: “Sadly, we Americans are also living in a world of bread and circuses, filled with more entertainment channels than news. We are kept amused,

distracted, fed to the point of being overfed” (Frankel, 2010, p. 55). Citizens are encouraging the displacement of hard news coverage by tuning in to superficial television including reality TV, lifestyle segments that promote vanity, and even Food Network/HGTV that encourages extravagant consumption of food or elaborate renovations as a way of “keeping up with the Jones” or flaunting wealth/success.

The second form of power used in the trilogy is violence. Violence has been used to the flaunt power of the ruling class in every society in history (Elster, 1986b). Furthermore, violence as entertainment is as old as Roman gladiators that battled lions in front of thousands of spectators in the ancient coliseums. “Through Katniss’s eyes the reader is privy to the Capitol’s atrocities and oppressive machinations, the most omnipresent and overt being the Hunger Games themselves, as both a symbol of an ideology of oppression and a means of controlling the populace through a stylized act of violence” (Pavlik, 2010, p. 30). Sources of violence come from four different subjects in the trilogy: peacekeepers, Gamemakers, tributes, and the “other” (fear of the unknown).

Fandom scholar and New York Times best-selling author, Louis Gresh, compares the districts to prison camps and peacekeepers as the guards (Gresh, 2011, p. 21). The author supports her claim by highlighting the barbed wire and electric fences, watchtowers, and the newly installed gallows. In *Catching Fire*, Gale faces a public whipping from a new peacekeeper who scares the district citizens into fleeing to their homes and remaining behind locked doors. Peacekeepers are the guardians of the district, serving as militarized police and spies for the Capitol.

The use of violence by peacekeepers seems simply occupational; however, Clemente (2010) deduces that the peacekeepers are actually enslaved by paying a debt,

similar to the districts that must sacrifice two tributes. The power of a debt is often under-explored as a manipulation tool, however “Snow clearly plays this tune, recruiting men and women from the Capitol and District 2 to join the government as so-called peacekeepers, district guardians, whose debts are often forgiven for their service” (Clemente, 2010, p. 25). Peacekeepers seem to have an ideal occupation that leaves them exempt from participation in the Games, provides adequate compensation that keeps their families fed and healthy, with the small compromise of being the Capitol’s henchmen and enforcers of punishments on their neighbors and friends.

Peacekeepers are not the only bad neighbors in the districts. Neighbors turn against each other every reaping day in the districts. As children are shuttled into the Justice Building courtyard, parents eye each other as they hope their child’s name is not drawn, thus wishing the pain to inflict another family. Gresh (2011) proposed that children enlisted in warfare are a humanitarian nightmare and war crime (Gresh, 2011, p. 145). However, the idea of killer kids provides the Capitol with the much desired entertainment value. Tributes kill to survive, but as Gresh (2011) points out “at what point does a child shift from killing for survival to killing out of habit” (p. 145). Katniss begins the novels as a skilled hunter with several kill shots from her quiver; but her experience is limited to small animals and game used to feed her family. She is reluctant to make the transition to killing humans. Consequently, by the end of the novels, readers find Katniss not only comfortable with killing to survive in the arena; she assassinates the newly promoted President Alma Coin without instruction from Haymitch, Gale, or anyone else.

The ease of killing comes more naturally for some tributes compared to others. In the novels, some deaths are described in detail including the weapon used and the location of the wound, as well as credit given to the tribute who made the kill shot. The audience celebrates some of the deaths while others are grieved. One example is when Rue is trapped and wounded. Katniss lands an arrow in the neck of the boy that speared Rue, earning Katniss the respect and celebration of Rue's home District 11; and even the citizens of the Capitol were deeply saddened by the loss of the little girl (Gresh, 2011).

Violent capabilities also vary among Gamemakers. The first identified Gamemaker, Senneca Crane, is uncomfortable with some of President Snow's methods for dealing with Katniss, but he eventually appeases the ruling leader. Contrarily, Gamemaker Plutarch is complacent in his occupation and multiplies the terror of the arena twelve-fold by assigning a new punishment to each section of the clock-like obstacle course. The violence inflicted by the Gamemakers is different than that experienced by tributes, as the Gamemakers are almost faceless or anonymous beings behind a screen. The protection of the detachment from the object of punishment enables the Gamemakers to feel less burdened or guilty for their actions. Even when the Gamemakers create mutant dogs to speed up the games, there is little hesitation or consideration given to the act of robbing children from a few more precious days of life in exchange for a more enjoyable viewing experience.

The Gamemakers are one group of characters largely under-researched or considered. This is an area that deserves more acknowledgement, not only of the two known Gamemakers (Seneca and Plutarch) but also of the original Gamemakers who forecasted the Quarter Quell instructions and left an everlasting stamp of misery for

future generations. The violence of the Hunger Games is largely due to the actions of the Gamemakers, who determine the obstacles, arena format, and environmental challenges faced by the tributes. Even with watching every season of the Hunger Games, tributes are unprepared to enter the arena, because the obstacles are changed every year making it impossible to have any confidence in previous training.

The uncertainty of arena environment and the fear of the unknown is one of the biggest challenges for the tributes. Prior to entering the training facility, the only knowledge that tributes have about other districts included the materials they produce, and the killing methods used by past tributes from that district. The fear is in the unknown, the skills that a competitor has perfected, yet Katniss has never even seen. One example is Finnick performing CPR on Peeta in *Catching Fire*. Katniss observes Finnick covering Peeta's nose and banging on his chest, and she thinks Finnick is in the process of killing Peeta, when in fact he is saving him.

Fear of others is also evident at home, as citizens get the rare opportunity to see people outside of their district, magnified in a more malicious light and through the television screen. Tributes who resort to cannibalism or torture leave a long lasting impression for all citizens that define the accepted behavior for their home district. "Pitting district against district in a death match also reflects the way each district is dislocated from the others, through a political strategy of divide and conquer that maintains the Capitol's elite position" (Pavlik, 2010, p. 31). The Capitol harnesses the power of the unknown by controlling the districts, and keeping them completely isolated from one another by large geographical gaps and fences, thus reducing the chances for future rebellions.

The third form of power is through control, and one of the most obvious forms of control in the trilogy is hunger. Food or the lack thereof has a distinct effect on Katniss's ability to think and thrive. The use of food throughout the books is well researched as authors have examined the decadence of Capitol cuisines compared to the slop like substance served in Districts 12's Hob (Vizzini, 2010). The hunger felt by district citizens is a generational hunger in that each family member must suffer through an empty belly and never experiencing a full stomach.

To extend the Capitol's reach, citizens who are unable to survive on their yearly food allowance are encouraged to take tesserae, additional food sources in exchange for extra entries in the reaping lottery. Gale and Katniss have already taken the tesserae several times yet discourage their siblings as a means to save them from increasing their chances for selection. The selection creates then another anonymous "other" in the reaping process: the unknown fate of every person entered into the lottery. This is disguised as a means of helping citizens access food sources when in fact it is "the system [that] disadvantages the poorest citizens, who must improve their chances of getting harvested by 'cashing in their odds' for meager food stuff" (Clemente, 2010, p. 25). Some citizens, like Prim, are scared of increasing their chance of selection while others, like Gale, knowingly accept tesserae as often as possible to provide relief to his family's hunger.

Readers know there are alternatives to the Capitol's power; nevertheless it is not the end of Katniss's struggle against oppression. Once Katniss is saved from the arena in the Quarter Quell, she is taken to District 13, a district that was successful in rising against the Capitol by holding a nuclear standoff until reaching a cease-fire. The Capitol

then agreed to leave District 13 alone under the condition that the rest of the districts would believe District 13 had been destroyed by the Capitol's power. Katniss soon learns that there are different forms of oppression. "With [District 13's] constant security drills, strict discipline, and daily routines tattooed onto people's arms, this is a constrained social system of self-denial, again supposedly for the greater good, with efficiency and precision as its watchwords" (Pavlik, 2010, p. 33). The security drills, strict discipline and daily schedule are reminiscent of other oppressive systems including military operations in current society.

Ultimately the power struggle must end. "Consequently, the final picture in *Mockingjay* is out of a new social order, where District 12 produces medicine not coal, and where Panem's children are no longer sent to die but rather sent to school to learn from their nation's violent history" (Pavlik, 2010, p. 35). Katniss's children are being sent to school, an education system, to learn from the violence but maybe not to learn of the violence. Earlier in the series, Katniss alludes to the lack of details surrounding the first rebellion and the reasoning behind it. The only thing citizens of Panem know of the first rebellion is that the rebels lost, the Capitol won, and these facts are presented as annual reminders through the production and reproduction of the Hunger Games.

Culture of the Games. The culture of the Hunger Games and the citizens who observe them vary vastly in the novels. Citizens watch the identical footage broadcast but for very different reasons. Parents of tributes watch scared and horrified at the actions of these children that goes against all mannerisms seen at home, while also terrified yet hopeful or their safe return. In the Capitol, elitists watch anxiously to see who has made

the best “bet” and selected the best tribute, similar to the gambling found at the Kentucky Derby. Hanlon (2010) further describes:

In Panem, the extreme contrast between living conditions in District 12 and the luxuries and technical marvels of the Capitol echoes old stereotypes about backwardness and poverty in rural Appalachia; the contrast also reflects serious realities of our world in which the poor still do dangerous work while the rich get richer and enjoy luxuries provided by those workers. (p. 62)

Even among districts, the culture is widely different and impacts the characters’ personalities, but more importantly, their strategies within the games.

Traditions. Inside the arena, a few traditions are used to help Katniss win, some of which are not even hers. For example, Rue teaches Katniss how to use the mockingjay to send signals without exposing her location. Rue explains to Katniss that in District 11, where agriculture is produced, the long hours of harvesting and working the fields are brought to an end by the signal of a mockingjay. The bird carries the signal deep into the crop field and is a welcomed sign to stop working.

Outside of the Games, in District 13, citizens from all over Panem are able to gather and learn from each other. One event in particular highlights the various traditions held among the districts: Finnick and Annie’s wedding in *Mockingjay*. Hanlon (2010) points out that this ceremony is actually a blend of different cultures. The bride and groom are from District 4, so children from the district sing a traditional wedding song as they celebrate. However, the reception is filled with the traditions of District 12 as the lone surviving fiddler plays music that gets the crowd off their feet. Katniss and Prim then “proudly demonstrate their footwork [which] could be referring to Appalachian

clogging or flatfoot dancing, which mountain people of all ages continue to enjoy in formal and informal settings” (Hanlon, 2010, p. 65). Hanlon (2010) continues to distinguish similarities of District 12 and Appalachian traditions including the white liquor Haymitch is so fond of that is reminiscent of moonshine.

Folklore. The word folklore provokes ideas of campfire stories and tales of great ancestors. Folklore plays a crucial part in every culture of society, both fictional and real, as these are the stories that help define our world (Hanlon, 2010). In Native American beliefs, there is a shaman who provides healing protection over the tribe. Katniss has a similar person in her life; “she’s lucky to have a mother who is, for all practical purposes, a medicine man, or as I think of her, a medicine mom” (Gresh, 2011, p. 198). Katniss’s mother plays a pivotal role in the story, as she is able to heal Gale after a terrible public whipping, and eventually becomes an important doctor figure in District 13 which inspires Prim to follow suit.

With the importance of Katniss’s mother, there is the question of what to call her. The character is never named, which adds to the mystery and illusion surrounding her healing powers. Similarly, Katniss’s father is also never named in the trilogy, but he passes down vital information about the foods available in the forest, including the cattail from which Katniss is named.

The trilogy features medicinal herbs, sleeping syrups, and snow blankets that all conjure images of rural medical practices from afar to modern society to afford the convenience of traditional pharmaceuticals. Neither Katniss’s mother nor her father received formal education instead, her mother relies only on the information passed down

through storytelling and the apprenticeship offered from past generations that showed her healing remedies from the kitchen sink.

Music in The Hunger Games. Katniss's darkest hour, when she considers suicide at the end of Mockingjay after the assassination of President Coin, she begins to sing the songs of her father, day and night. "I begin to sing. At the window, in the shower, in my sleep. Hour after hour of ballads, love songs, mountain airs. All the songs my father taught me before he died, for certainly there has been very little music in my life since" (Collins, 2010, p. 37). The mountain airs comfort Katniss, as they remind her of home life with her father.

The trilogy lists two specific songs that comfort Katniss during a difficult time. One, the lullaby she sings to Rue (a fellow tribute in the arena from District 11) while she is dying (Collins, 2008, p. 232). The second was her father's "The Hanging Tree" which Katniss sings to Pollux (a mute man on her media team). The use of music is reassuring to the audience members, who recognize the comforting qualities music can have. In addition, the lyrics of "The Hanging Tree" become symbolic of the difficult choices Katniss has to make while in the arena.

After the rebellion, the story concludes with an epilogue by Katniss, where she is watching her children play in the meadow that has grown over the ruins of District 12. "With limited knowledge of cruelty and suffering, they [Katniss's children] take for granted the comforting words of the old lullaby about love in the meadow" (Hanlon, 2010, p. 65). Each time, as Katniss feels lost or out of control, she turns to music and the familiarity it provides to her as it reminds her of home.

Identity in the Games. The separation among districts comes from identifying the material produced. This is evident in each of the grand entrances of tributes before the Capitol audience, where each tribute is adorned with a costume reminiscent of the commodity item of their home district. This is an identification marker, whereby the Capitol citizens do not know the names or faces of the tributes yet, but they know which material item they represent. The crowds cheer to show support for their favorite districts, and they cheer because “the citizens of the Capitol, so used to their superficial lives, crave novelty, but they also crave genuineness. And there is nothing more genuine than a real fight to survive, fought by the guileless children from the more primitive districts” (Frankel, 2010, p. 52). Frankel makes a distinct argument that the districts are “primitive” compared to the Capitol elitists.

Vanity. The Capitol citizens are able to dress extravagantly, while adorning their bodies with gold tattoos and superficial cosmetic surgeries that give them the appearance of tiger stripes, horns, and tails. “The world that Collins has created is a paradigm of decadence, its façade on inane elegance supported by framework of human suffering and social inequity” (Pharr & Clark, 2010, p. 13). Katniss comes from a city of coal dust and rags for clothing. Her nicest outfit is reserved for the reaping ceremony which may be her last time to see her family. When encountering Capitol citizens for the first time, Katniss is quick to turn up her nose at their loud clothing ensembles, unnatural hair color, and tacky jewelry. Similarly, the superficial Capitol elitists look at Katniss like a stray animal in desperate need of a bath and nourishment.

Before 9/11, America had become increasingly superficial in the intolerance of immigrants, legal or illegal, snubbing those who sought refuge here as somehow beneath

moral consideration (Pavlik, 2010). Similarly, “she [Effie Trinkett, a Capitolists’ charged with keeping Katniss on schedule] believes that anyone without a Capitol upbringing is sadly lacking. America today, of course, is often less than kind to those who can’t speak the language or blend in” (Frankel, 2010, p. 50). Unfortunately, the U.S. continues to struggle with the acceptance of those who are different as evidenced by the continued political unrest on issues such as immigration, marriage equality, and the rising tension and perception of racial discrimination among law enforcement (Daniels, 2010; “History”, 2015; Perez, 2015).

Image. The author proposed a unique lead character, the reluctant protagonist who desperately tries to avoid the spotlight and responsibility of the heroine title. The hesitant character of Katniss spends most of the trilogy trying to find a sense of self, while being placed into various identities including star-crossed lover, rebellion spokes-model, and survivor. The appeal of this identity crisis through the eyes of the main character is that the target audience of this literature genre is teenagers and young adults, who also are trying to find their individuality among the masses, despite the social pressures to fit a mold established by cultural expectations.

As much as Katniss struggles to find her identity, so do the readers of the trilogy. The audience finds that “in addition to not fitting the mold, Katniss can be even more difficult for readers to know because though the books are told in first person, Katniss has strikingly little self-awareness. We have to work to figure Katniss out, because as often as not Katniss doesn’t know who she is, what she feels or the kind of influence she wields over other people” (Barnes, 2010, p. 18). Even when Katniss is holding out the poison

berries, she is unaware that this move is seen as treason by the Capitol as she has broken the rules of the Game with little regard to the consequences that will follow.

Prior to entering the actual arena, Katniss must be fitted and primed for her stage debut and interview with Ceasar Flickman, a television personality similar to Ryan Seacrest on *American Idol*. The interview serves to introduce the audience to the different tributes prior to the game, and give Capitolist's an idea of each individual's personality and skills so that they (the Capitol) can bet on a winner. Katniss is aware that the audience perception of her is important because they can sponsor her while in the games, sending her supplies like food and medicine. "The weight of the populace's expectations weighs heavily on Katniss, influencing both her actions and her feelings" (Brennan, 2010, p. 4). After Peeta declares his love for Katniss, she accentuates this new character of star crossed lover to gain favor with the television audience.

Television today has a new genre in reality TV that has become popular over the last two decades, such as *Toddlers & Tiaras*. "On *Toddlers & Tiaras*, tiny competitors must present giant, fixed smiles, must blow kisses and flirt" (Frankel, 2010, p. 52). Katniss finds herself in a similar situation when on stage prior to entering the arena. She is dressed in an elegant gown, high heeled shoes, and asked to flirt with the audience to gain favor and support. This mirrors Frankel's description of *Toddlers & Tiaras* "the Miss America-style interviews, with high-heeled shoes, groomed nails, and heavy makeup, all mirror the pageantry of our culture - even among children" (Frankel, 2010, p. 51). Even beyond the screen, high school students are faced with pageantry through such traditions as prom and homecoming court.

Gender. Other scholars have focused on the gender identities of the characters. Gender identification is a realm of research all in its own, and Katniss does not fit in a traditional female stereotype. Her masculine athletic abilities of climbing trees and extracurricular activities such as hunting and gathering have given scholars additional research opportunities into gender fluidity.

Authors Lem and Hassel (2010) observed “Killer Katniss” and “Lover Boy Peeta” in their research on “gender-genred literature.” The authors validate their study by analyzing that the romance part of the character relationship is completely defined and started by Peeta, who reveals he has had a crush on Katniss for a very long time. Typically, the authors note crushes are considered a feminine description of attraction. The authors go on to explore the toys provided in modern society where kitchenettes (up until recently) were designed for girls, and nerf guns/bow and arrows were designed for boys as depicted by the packaging and coloring of materials used (pink and blue aisles). Katniss is an excellent hunter and performs flawlessly when in the natural element of the forest. Peeta is fond of baking and cake decorating, and is very talented at it.

After winning the Hunger Games, Katniss is required to take up a talent that the Capitol will show the audience as a human interest story to keep the propaganda rolling. To maintain interest in the Games, the Capitol follows the Victors after their win in the arena for the rest of their lives. The development of a special talent provides media material that makes the audience more interested in the Victors.

Katniss is unable to find a suitable talent as the only thing she is really good at is hunting, so Cinna (her stylist) begins making clothing designs for Katniss to present to the media as her own original work. “These required talents (Peeta painting and Katniss

designing clothes) not only reflect the foolishness of the Capitol, but also the “accomplishments” that ladies of quality once learned, such as dancing, foreign languages, and embroidery. There were the opposite of work, higher education, or higher thought, and were used to keep ladies useless and decorative, just as Katniss the spokes-model becomes” (Frankel, 2010, p. 55). The idea of ideal or recreational time is lost on Katniss; she becomes frustrated as the Capitol expectation for her to stop working (hunting, gathering, providing for her family) and to flaunt a new talent that she now has time for.

On stage, Peeta pronounces his love for Katniss who is shocked but also contemplative of what this declaration means for her. “At home, Katniss could be male, female, any combination of or between the two without actually thinking about gender performance. At this moment, Katniss begins to become aware that she can consciously perform a gender identity, as the audience deafeningly responds to her girls blush” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 133). The expectation of the audience is for Katniss to be “girly” and her prep team delivers with the beautiful dresses and adorned eyelashes that accentuate features Katniss likely has never seen in the mirror before.

The role of gender and sexual orientation is not exclusive to the main characters, as researchers have also explored Finnick, the handsome and charismatic tribute who wields a powerful trident and becomes one of Katniss’s closest allies. Finnick has already won one round of the Hunger Games, after which he was swept away to the Capitol to be used as entertainment for the elite. Gresh exhibits “poor Finnick who wins his Games only to become the erotic object of obsession for both men and women in the depraved Capitol, [like] gladiators in ancient Rome served both sexes as well” (Gresh, 2011, p. 59).

Finnick is in love with a girl from home, Annie, who he eventually marries. However, his love for Annie is used as a weapon by the Capitol, which threatens to kill her if Finnick does not comply with their perversion and extortion of his new celebrity status.

In addition to the three major themes of power, culture, and identity, there are several other critical essays and academic works that feature *The Hunger Games* trilogy as the feature artifact. Fan fiction and fandom theories continue to be a growing field, with a lot of interest not only from academia but as well as the general public. The public continues to show interest in deciphering literary and cinematic works for hidden messages and meanings (Greenring, 2013) such as character overlaps into other fictional works.

While the author has concluded the trilogy, the audience continues to want more details on their favorite characters. In addition to the societal issues depicted in the trilogy, authors have also gone as far as to analyze the names of the characters including the Latin and Greek roots. In *The Many Faces of Katniss*, Frankel (2013) investigates the foundations and implications of the main character's names. Frankel considers the Latin roots, scientific origins of the plants (Primrose, Cattail, etc.), as well as compare to other literary works that have used the same name (Plutarch, Seneca, etc.).

Summary

This chapter focused on introducing key concepts of the dystopian literature genre, and explored the available research already published on *The Hunger Games*. The research was organized into three different themes power, identity, and culture. Chapter three explores the key concepts of ideology and a description of selected theorists.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter explored the available research of *The Hunger Games* trilogy and grouped the common themes explored by authors and scholars. This chapter provides a similar framework for the theory of ideology, which is defined as, “shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups” (Giddens, 1997, p. 583). A general overview is followed by key concepts, terminology, and primary theorists divided into three common themes.

Ideological Criticism

The application of ideological criticism to literary material is common-place (e.g., Atkinson, 2005; Lester, 2005; Lev, 1998) with many novels serving as artifacts for rhetorical analysis; however, *The Hunger Games* has not yet been academically analyzed as a piece of political narrative or social change catalyst. The trilogy has provided material for analysis in various fields of academia but not yet using ideological criticism. Literary texts used for rhetorical analysis are beneficial because the artifacts are easy to obtain, and they maintain a permanent transcript as opposed to oral artifacts like speeches that may become muddled through transcription (Biber, 1986).

The actual impact of such texts depends greatly on the readers themselves as well as on the environment surrounding them. The environment is not limited to the physical setting of the story, but also to those of the reader because, “the ideological effect a novel

can have will depend of course on the political situation in which its readers live” (Drucker, 1974, p. 90). The relationship between the plotline and the purpose of the novel are as important as the relationship between authors and their audience. The author has a purpose, maybe even a political agenda, or a message that seeks to be shared; however, the way the audience perceives the argument - and by extension - gets interpellated into the ideological critique is sometimes less apparent. While the novel can still gain popularity and success, it may miss an opportunity to create social change.

Furthermore, scholars use literary texts for rhetorical analysis to discern what lies deeper in the message. Such heritage is evident, as noted by Elster (1986a):

Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud are currently seen as the great debunkers, who taught us never to take words at their face value but always to look behind them for some psychological or social interest they express or some situation that unbeknownst to the agents shape their thoughts and desires. (p. 168)

Generally, ideological criticism is used to analyze texts with three primary themes: economic, political, and social substance and importance (Elster, 1986b). Critics analyze the texts, speeches, and other works to explore the inherent meaning in the text in relation to these three themes.

Economic. Marx’s conceptualization of ideology through his writings in *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto* primarily considers the relationship between the ruling class and the working class. Marx looked at the relationship between employer and employee which he described as the willingness of the laborers. Employees were more willing to work when treated fairly, given proper wages, and respectable work

environments. Laborers fortunate enough to find themselves in an ideal (or at least considerate) work environment required less force or micromanaging from employers.

On the contrary, employees in poor working conditions with low wages and unsafe work practices required more force from the employer. For example, Marx compared some industry employment practices to slavery, binding employees to work in horrid conditions with low wages and unsafe work practices. While the employees are overworked and undercompensated they are powerless to leave this environment because the conditions are likely universal depending on the industry, or conditions may be worse depending on the management found at a competing firm.

Another comparison to enslavement is the education of the working class. Marx considered the knowledge of the working class as a key to creating a fair economy system:

Marx conceived free and labouring [sic] activity as feeding each other, and favoured [sic] an educational system which would contribute to this end. In many connections he stressed the vital linkage of production and education, of work and education, of practical and theoretical education. (Duncan, 1973, p. 186)

The mode of production can further be described as the spectrum of employee to employer relations. An unemployed person seeking employment will be highly satisfied with the employer who offers financial stability through a labor position. After a period of time, the employee will become complacent with their production role and begin to seek satisfaction through other means like bargaining with the employer for better wages, hours, or working conditions. If the employer agrees the employee can then become once again temporarily satisfied but at some point the employee will then again find

dissatisfaction with management tactics thus seeking change in working environment through their current employer or seeking employment opportunities elsewhere.

On a similar trajectory, the employer or ruling class in the relationship, will hire an employee with gratitude to have another laborer to increase production. The eager new employee will then become complacent and settle into a routine, following the standard practices of other more established employees. The complacency will continue, but at some point the employee will seek more from the employer through wages or work environment changes without offering a change in the employee's production output. This constant struggle in the relationship between expectations and production of both the employee and the employer is an example of the mode of production described by Marx. Furthermore, "ideologies belong to the superstructure, defined as the set of noneconomic phenomenon in society that can be explained by the economic structure" (Elster, 1986a, p.172). The superstructure is often described as the ruling class, which could be a governing entity.

The relationship between the mode of production and its relationship to ideology can be seen in the quote "I don't live to work, I work to live" (Manuell, 2015, para. 3). Often, people describe themselves first using their trade or profession as an identity adjective, instead of a career path. People then become their profession instead of an individual. The transition from individual to profession is an unconscious shift (Carson, 2001), yet shows the strong connection between financial and individual identity. Althusser further recognized a shift of dominant sources and power. He noted that:

the Church has been replaced today in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus by the School. We can now claim that the unprecedentedly deep crisis

now shaking the education system of so many states across the globe ... playing a determinant part in the reproduction of the relations of production of a mode of production threatened in its existence by the world class struggle (Althusser, 1971, p. 157).

The little education provided to citizens outside the school system is considered on the job training and is very specific (i.e. not easily transferred) to the company and the employment position. Althusser explains that, “on the spot” training is becoming more widely accepted as the labor force continues to be trained for specific employers, which does not easily transfer to competitors or alternative industries (Althusser, 1971, p. 132). The skills taught in the classroom are often different than those required in a profession. This leaves the employee to either seek higher education or accept a less demanding job function.

Gramsci explored the individual position or “man-of-the-masses” participation in the cultural acceptance of the ruling class. He analyzed the role and awareness of the individual as a participant in the ideologies of society. Gramsci (1972) elaborates “the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is knowing thyself as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (p. 47). Debord went a step further in exploring Marxist ideals on commodity taking what Gramsci refers to as, “one” Debord considers the “I” or individual. Debord (1988) investigated the actual product of the economy which he determined is society:

As soon as society discovers that it depends on the economy, the economy, in fact, depends on society. This subterranean force, which grew until it appeared

sovereign, has lost its power. That which was the economic it must become the 'I'. The subject can emerge only from society, namely from the struggle within society. The subject's possible existence depends on the outcome of the class struggle which shows itself to be the product and the producer of the economic foundation of history. (p. 52)

The economy is dependent on the society through consumerism. In turn, society is dependent on the economy to provide job stability and financial security.

From birth, individuals are conditioned by the culture, people, and exposure to beliefs, values, and traditions of those around them, which then influences the individuals' identity within society. A person is not born with a sense of patriotism or racism, instead these ideals are learned by the individual, often by the words and actions of others.

From his work, Gramsci (1972) identified two types of people capable of moving others to action, termed as "intellectuals." Gramsci believed that there were traditional intellectuals, those who "are the administrators for existing social and cultural institutions, such as schools, various religious denominations, corporations," and organic intellectuals who "rise out of membership in social groups or classes" (Leitch et al., 2001, p. 1136). Traditional intellectuals create a movement out of duty or responsibility to the establishment that employs them. On the contrary, organic intellectuals create movement out of self-interest; what is good for the group is good for them as well.

Political. Propaganda and other political messages have an historical precedence of encouraging conversation among citizens, from Presidential slogans to Nazi war cries, while spreading the ideology of the ruling class; literature, likewise, can function to

service dominant ideologies. “Certainly, a literary work is no less political in its ideological baggage than any other medium of communication” (Pavlik, 2010, p. 36).

The ideas of revolution or reform include capitalism, communism, and liberalism that have strong roots in literary history, as their founding fathers used pamphlets and texts to share the messages of change. These pamphlets served as a means to spread political ideas to various groups without holding a meeting or general assembly.

The pamphlets transitioned to expanded texts or novels. Political message or propaganda is no longer delivered through small printed materials passed hand to hand. Instead authors are free to publish material with the wide availability of independent publishers and eBooks as well as traditional and respected publishing houses. The target audience, however, remains the same: “the novel is the appropriate form of fiction for taking an ideological message to literate a middle-class audience” (Drucker, 1974, p. 89). American citizens are first exposed to the use of propaganda and underground publications through history lessons such as Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, or Benjamin Franklin’s *The Silence Dogwood Letters*. Students are first exposed to war crimes of the Nazi army through literary works like *Diary of Anne Frank*, and learn of the Axis of Evil while attending any sophomore history class (“We remember”, 2015).

Althusser took the foundations of Marxist theory and added to the field by identifying two distinct categories functioning within the superstructure. RSA (Repressive State Apparatus) includes institutions that use force to control the general public, such as police, government, or even court systems. RSA uses the fear of punishments and violence as the controlling force. ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) on the other hand uses the fear of social consequences such as ridicule, public humiliation,

and ostracizing as the controlling force. ISAs typically include schools, churches, entertainment, and families (Althusser, 1971). Althusser argued that “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 1971, p. 162). The two state apparatuses can then create an environment of unparalleled manipulation over the non-ruling class, through both real and imagined power.

In addition to learning reading, writing, and arithmetic Althusser recognized that school systems introduce the first rules of society, establishing social expectations of children behavior that will later translate to adulthood (Althusser, 1971). Political leaders as the rulers of society determine the rules, which then lead to a generational acceptance of cultural normalcy.

Social. One country can support several different types of industries that then create several different economic classes within a small geographic area. The different economic factors then generate different social conditions that can lead to class struggles. Within each economic class there are certain societal norms or expectations for behavior.

One of Marx’s closest followers was Freidrich Engels, who has been described as “Marx’s loyal friend, political associate, intellectual collaborator, and chief disciple” (Sperber, 2013, p. xvi). Engels has often been credited for taking the words of Marx and making them more applicable and accessible for public understanding. Engels researched and published several articles on topics independently of Marx, including a look at the socialist movement after the French Revolution, known as Utopians. Engels described the group:

Utopians attempted to evolve out of the human brain. Society presented nothing but wrongs; to remove these was the task of reason. It was necessary, then, to

discover a new and more perfect system of social order and to impose this upon society from without by propaganda, and, wherever it was possible, by the example of model experiments. (cited in D'Amato, 2014, p. 10)

Engels and Marx both agreed that history consists entirely of class struggles. When one society is flourishing it is at the expense of another, just as when one social class is profiting another is declining. Engels looked deeper into the impact of capitalist production and the results on the laborer. He argues that the monotony of industrialized production methods deplete the working class (also considered the suffering class). Engels compared industrial production lines to the Greek myth of Sisyphus, who is charged with the task of pushing a rock up a never-ending mountainside (Elster, 1986a, p. 160). The work is never completed, and the task deprives the worker any form of creative or independent thinking.

Engels was a supporter of the working class as evident in his first published work *The Bedouin* a poem “eulogizing the noble savagery of the Bedouin people undone by their contact with Western civilization” (Hunt, 2009, p. 33). Engels tried to articulate the journey of the once proud tribe, now forced to street performances. Early in his friendship with Marx, Engels took on a role of financial responsibility for his friend. These obligations lead Engels to increase his business profits and further classify himself as an elitist. In public Engels was the image of a wealthy entrepreneur in charge of running his family’s very successful textile mill, while in his writings he sympathized with the struggles of the working class.

The public perception of images leads to the work of Debord, best known for his work *The Society of the Spectacle* where spectacle is defined as “a social relation between

people that is mediated by images” (Debord, 1988, p. 5). His thesis concludes that the images mediated by the ruling class generate power in a similar fashion to the use of force or ideologies as control mechanisms. Modern society is largely controlled by the use of images that help shape morals, values, and aspirations. Technology like Instagram, along with other social media companies allow users to upload images that have been filtered and edited beyond realistic expectations. These images then transcend from the screen and into the unconscious mind of any viewer, imprinting an image of an ideal life.

The sharing of filtered images becomes a relational exchange among people despite their actual relationship status with each other. Strangers on Instagram can “feel” a kinship with celebrities in Hollywood or strangers from a foreign country just through these shared images. These images serve as mechanisms that can reinforce perceived shortcomings of the viewer which leads to negative social movements such as body shaming, and parenting shaming on topics like breastfeeding, working mothers, and discipline. Additionally, positive social movements can also be generated from these mechanisms that tackle topics like fat phobia and body perfectionists (Fischer, 2015).

Ideological Trilogy

These mechanisms are further explored by scholars who consider the themes inclusive instead of exclusive of each other. Xiao (2012) explains the interdependence “by adhering to the fundamental intellectual principle that man’s social being determines his social consciousness, they defined ideology’s reactive mechanism and social function in terms of the interrelationship of economic, political and mental life”(Xiao, 2012, p.5). Although the three themes are listed separately, they are not exclusive of each other. In

most cases the arguments of Marx, Engels, and other scholars rely on all three themes to form their argument even when the scholar focuses on one topic.

Xiao's research continues by looking at the base of ideology and explained that some scholars look at ideology descending from heaven to earth. Instead of ideology being based on religious beliefs, he counter argued that:

ideology is not made out of nothing, but "built" on the economic base; it does not descend from heaven but expresses the intention, rights and interests of the people who control the material means of production; it is not only the spirit of ordinary people, but mainly a dominant thought that combines with ruling power and is placed at the top level of society; it is not an inert rational consciousness but a practical spirit that follows economic activities actively, positively pursues political goals, is involved in real life and seeks to maintain social order. (Xiao, 2012, p. 6)

By articulating the chronological order of ideological establishment (economic, then political, and ending with social), Xiao provides scholars with a framework to compare the effect economical production has on political structures that in turns effects social systems.

Xiao further expands the ideological field by giving consideration to the movement ideology has within society. He describes the momentum or sequence of ideology:

this sequence of theoretical inferences and phenomenal interpretations, moving from economics to politics and thence to spirit and culture, amounts, in fact, to the derivation of causality in the sequence of the socio-economic structure, political

structure and cultural structure, revealing the self-reactive mechanism of ideology with regard to the driving role of society, economy and political life. (Xiao, 2012, p. 6)

The self-reactive mechanism is important and under articulated in current academia. The domino effect that can happen with one change in a society's economic structure can drastically impact the political or social systems as well. One example would be the Great Depression, when the bank system failed and the political and social unrest resulted. Americans had long believed in the safety of the banking system, compared to past generations that chose to keep all extra income in the home.

More importantly than the stock market crash (that is accredited to being the start of The Great Depression) "the crash sparked doubts about the health of the economy, which led consumers and firms to pull back on their spending" (Wheelock, 2007 p. xi). The spark of doubt created a wildfire across the country, quickly creating panic for families and would leave lingering concern for generations. Children of The Great Depression era have biased views on the financial industry because of the environment they were raised in, further showcasing how an economic base can affect social attitudes.

Method

Branching from the currently available ideological studies that focus heavily on politics and economics, this critique adds a fresh lens to an old topic by revisiting the social aspect of ideology. "The central question, which is usually left unresolved by Marxist writers on ideology (including Marx), is how-by what mechanism-the interest of the ruling class is supposed to shape the views of other members of society" (Elster, 1986a, p. 168). If knowledge is power, then the key to more power for the ruling class is

to limit knowledge to everyone else. The Hunger Games competition showcases what happens when individuals from different backgrounds are denied access to skills they need, they come into the world unprepared and leave unsuccessful.

The research analyzes the three novels in the trilogy from an ideological perspective. Scholar Carl Burghardt (1995) explains this method: “close textual analysis seeks to study the relationship between the inner workings of public discourse and its historical context in order to discover what makes a particular text function persuasively” (p. 513). The analysis does not include information from the movie franchises, as the information sometimes deviates from the original literary work, and at the time of this study the final movie had not yet been released.

The method for rhetorical analysis first begins with acquiring and interpreting the text. The author first read the three novels included in the trilogy. During the first reading there were no notations or remarks made in relation to the research. This allowed the author to then experience the plot, character growth, and relationship development like other audience members who read the books for pleasure or extracurricular fashion. The author then coded the books, by highlighting all character descriptions, as well as any identifying information provided about pivotal places such as the arena, training facility, and cornucopia.

Next, the author compiled all data into an Excel spreadsheet. The information was gathered and entered by book, page number, speaker, textual description or quote, and category (or the topic being discussed). After the compilation of information, the data were sorted by category and then analyzed for common themes per character and place with respect to themes outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided information on the founding principles and theorists of ideology. Consideration and explanation of key terms and ideals included the two types of power, force and fear, as well as descriptions of superstructures. The chapter then provided information on three themes commonly used in ideology; economic, political, and social.

The next chapter provides the critique of the trilogy elements and applies them to the key principals of ideology as previously outlined. The chapter considers geographically similar communities for comparing the fictional elements of the trilogy to modern U.S. society.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Chapter Four provides the results of the textual analysis. The results are categorized into two different realms of oppression, institutional and individual forces. The realms of oppression are then analyzed with textual material and categorized following the three themes of ideology as previously discussed: economic, political, and social.

Institutional Forces of Oppression

The Capitol, as the ruling class, controls the modes of production within the districts. The districts supply the Capitol with the raw and finished materials required for the comfortable lifestyle Capitolists have come to expect. As part of this contract, the Capitol establishes quotas for production and has the power to change the rules of production by requiring longer work shifts, larger material orders, or shutting down district industries for any amount of time thus ceasing any financial exchange among citizens.

The 13 districts of Panem resemble the 13 original colonies, founded by citizens fleeing from the oppression of Great Britain. The colonists faced economic, political, and social oppression by a ruling class that used taxation and unfair representation in the decision making process (Bryant, 2009). This technique mimics the situation in Panem where the decision makers are known as Gamemakers. The rhetorical significance of this title implies that people with this label hold power or control over the Games, which

holds power and control over the districts. Their job is to play with the population by creating an entertaining competition that manages to kill 23 children yet still be enjoyed, even celebrated, by some groups of people.

The institutional forces of oppression follow the three previous themes: economic, political, and social. The relationship between the Capitol and the districts varies depending on the commodity item produced in the district and the need of the Capitol following a typical supply/demand relationship. The Capitol then reinforces the employee-employer relationship using political tools such as propaganda, violence by way of Peacekeepers, and physical barriers to contain any potential trouble makers. Finally, the districts experience social consequences including poverty and hunger, compromised traditions, and a broken education system.

Economic. The Capitol uses the idea of divide and conquer, and takes that philosophy to a new level. Rulers cannot control what they cannot contain. The division of districts is more than geographical; instead it is the foundation of the Capitol strategy. Separating the districts limits the interaction and communication in-between, but also limits any type of resource sharing. Districts that produce food like fish and agriculture are not allowed any extra food rations, but are also unable to share their food source to another district in exchange for fuel or fabric. Instead of being a self-reliant community, the districts are left dependent on the grace and mercy of the Capitol, which hoards all resources for self-consumption.

The Hunger Games themselves serve as a strategic device to identify the most vicious tributes who will become Victors. Once the Hunger Games conclude, Victors are separated from their homeland and then taken to the Capitol to act as agents. The Capitol

is able to see the tributes as they train, interview, and perform in the Hunger Games. Then a committee, the Gamemakers, create a scorecard for tributes measuring the likelihood of success in the Arena. The Gamemakers are also determining which tributes show the most promise to recruit while also observing who is moldable to Capitol values. The Capitol then forms its own favorites to win, and doesn't shy from manipulating the obstacles in the Games to serve the interest of the chosen Victors, often the Careers. The rhetorical significance of this title implies that the highest recognized profession in these districts is the title of Victor, which is a lifelong title similar to a Career. President Snow and the Gamemakers have a long relationship with the Careers, which creates a mutual understanding and expectation of the job performance once a tribute is awarded the title of Victor. The Victors suffer post-traumatic stress, like Katniss clearly describes in the trilogy, which further aids in the manipulation of Victors like Finnick. The Capitol can also offer additional sources of comfort, like the drug morphling, to aid in persuading Victors to deliver President Snow's sugar coated messages to the public. The Victors then become the strongest form of oppression because they come from the district grounds and have strong relationships within their home district, which makes any message they deliver more believable, thus more likely to be accepted.

Looking outside the Arena and instead at the districts there are clearly class struggles that encourage comparing the very wealthy to the very poor. The Capitol understands that if there is dissent amongst each community, with every family constantly observing the general health of other families, the constant comparison amongst them removes comparison to the Capitol. Katniss herself cannot grasp the level of accommodations on the train that takes her from District 12 to the Capitol with the

luxurious fabrics, soft furnishings, and bountiful food servings. She has never seen fine dishes, and even then she is more interested in the delicate food she describes in every location. Katniss is very familiar with each family in her community that is well-fed like Mayor Undersee and Madge as well as the families that suffer like her own. She has a running ledger of those who buy wild strawberries or game from her and Gale; yet she remains uninformed about the origins of the original rebellion.

The class struggle is not district exclusive; instead there are wealthy upper class citizens living in districts who look down on other citizens of the same district. For example, families with Victor children live in a special neighborhood called Victors' Village that separates the families from other community members. The Capitol is further segregating the communities. When Victors return home, they bring a more educated understanding of Capitol practices as they have become exposed to the lifestyle and extreme personalities. The Victors are no longer doe-eyed, fresh faced children who could never imagine a full belly. Instead they have eaten the proverbial apple from the tree of knowledge, their eyes wide awake and aware that there is a much better life available in the Capitol. President Snow tries to pacify the Victors' new thirst for the finer things by establishing the Victors' Village, a compromise that provides an upscale lifestyle in the Victor's homeland, although segregated from the community, while still having access to friends and family.

Additionally, the profession of individuals enables them to be at the higher or lower spectrum of wealth by district, just like each district places differently on the spectrum of the country. The Capitol might assign a profession to certain people like Effie and Cinna, or the citizens might be able to choose a profession for themselves.

However, the Capitol limits the type of professions available as another form of restricting power in the districts. Although Katniss's mother would choose to be a formal doctor, she is not allowed as it may give her a level of authority or respect within the district making her a risk to the Capitol. Jobs are strictly limited based on the commodity production needs of the Capitol and any profession or skills outside of those needs are discouraged and often punished.

The class struggles of Panem do not stop at the electric fence that separates the districts. Just as Katniss experiences the most extreme poverty of District 12, Peeta is considered wealthy by comparison. When compared to Madge Undersee, the daughter of District 12's mayor, Peeta is considered poor. The Capitol, thus, economically controls the people by: (1) controlling the division of labor; (2) controlling the modes of production; and, (3) controlling the distribution of resources resulting from labor and production. These three levels form an economic stratification which is rhetorically framed as a necessary evil for a safe and stable society

Division of labor. The districts are divided by labor, which enables the Capitol an efficient operation of production as well as isolating resources. Districts are unable to individually produce all of the materials a society needs to thrive, which forces the dependency on the Capitol to orchestrate all sources and distribute accordingly. Districts 1, 2, and 4 provide tributes to the arena known as the "Careers." The three districts usually form an alliance in the Games and have been very successful with this strategy. Several Victors have come from these three districts including Gloss and Cashmere from District 1, Enobaria and Brutus from District 2, and finally District 4 Victors Finnick, Annie, and Mags. The Capitol encourages the Careers, not only by constructing game

manipulation that leans to their favor, but also in forms of sponsorships. The Careers are given high ratings in the individual assessment, encouraging sponsors to bet on these tributes which also leads to more support in the form of sponsorship of supplies.

Although these three districts partner up in the Games, the communities actually have three very different economic bases that contribute to very different lifestyles.

The luxurious District 1 is in the shadow of the Capitol. This district produces luxury items for the Capitol like jewelry, perfume, and the other accessories required for the extravagant elitist lifestyle. Luxury items require raw materials produced in the other districts like textiles from District 8 and lumber from District 7 to produce elaborate furniture, curtains, and other household items; this reduces the amount of production time which then reduces the size of the workforce. The smaller workforce allows District 1 the luxury of sparing district children from entering the workforce at an early age compared to the other districts. The Capitol is pleased with the tribute performances in previous Games, and thus rewards District 1 with additional opportunities and resources. District 1 has the closest relationship with the Capitol; this allows District 1 to see the Capitol abuse of resources through frivolous parties and waste. Because District 1 produces the elaborate and extravagant luxury items, the abuse of resources is very evident to the citizens. The Capitol wouldn't want the other districts to find out about the very comfortable lifestyle the elitists enjoy while other districts struggle to get through the day.

District 2 is responsible for fulfilling the masonry needs of the Capitol. This includes decorative stonework found in the architecture of the Capitol, but also the fortification of military structures such as The Nut described in *Mockingjay*. President

Snow also uses District 2 as a recruiting opportunity for Peacekeepers, the militarized police force of the Capitol. Like many military families, a sense of honor and duty to country are instilled in the youth of District 2 from a very early age. District 2 is the last district to stand with the Capitol after the rebellion breaks loose because of the sacrificial culture and highly controlled environment that is built on compliance. The Capitol needs to keep the highly militarized District 2 under constant surveillance to ensure there is no rebellious murmurings as this district has access to all the weapons as well as the very well-fortified military structure The Nut. The Capitol should fear this district as the citizens are well trained to fly hovercraft as well as having a network of Peacekeepers in every district. District 2 could create a series of connections with weapon resources to tackle the Capitol, but because of the military training and indoctrination, the citizens are groomed to follow the rules and expectations established by the Capitol without hesitation or question.

The next economic group is the working class where the districts put in the long hours of back-breaking work. The citizens of Districts 9, 10, and 11 work plowing fields, raising animals, and other duties found in the Midwest farm and ranch communities. Children are not exempt from the long work hours and expected to participate willingly to help their family and community try to fulfill the never satisfied Capitol demand. The Capitol recognizes that this group of districts could pose the biggest physical threat with the highly populated workforce required to work the fields. Thus, the Capitol ensures compliance by limiting any type of recreational activities or leisure time that could encourage group conversation. The Capitol also restricts all food sources harvested, which leaves the workers satisfied only to the point needed to produce with nothing extra

offered or available. The mental torture of harvesting food while hungry is another control mechanism. Like the cliché of dangling a carrot in front of the horse, this serves as a daily reminder to the agriculture workers that the Capitol is all controlling.

For example, Rue from District 11 specifically works in an orchard, where she learned to spring from tree to tree and uses mockingjays as signals for the end of the working day. The people of 11 have very little time off from their work day; most are even exempt from attending the reaping as Katniss notices the population shortage “because there's not much of a city to begin with, things being so spread out, or maybe because they don't want to waste so many people while the harvest is on” (Collins, 2009, p. 54). Katniss imagines that the Capitol holds preliminary drawings in this district so there is no waste in workforce to attend the reaping.

The working poor class is made of District 7 and District 8. These two districts are able to maintain the production quota set by the Capitol but struggle with the working conditions of their industries. These laborers face unsafe working environments including heavy machinery. The Capitol uses the heavy and outdated machinery as another form of control, requiring more workers to run the plant operations as opposed to upgrading the machines for similar and more efficient products. The outdated machines require a constant flow of workers ensuring a high turnover rate among the districts. In addition, their work can be isolating and difficult. This is another means of control as the Capitol limits communication among workers, making it difficult for the citizens to organize.

District 8 produces the fabric and textile materials of Panem. With the elaborate fashion industry in the Capital this district stays very busy all year long. Bonnie and Twill are two unique characters who are not from District 12 and not tributes. Katniss has never

met anyone outside her district except those she meets at the Capitol, through the Games, or in District 13. She feels pity for the two lost girls and provides them with some wilderness skills like starting a fire and finding food, skills that they obviously didn't have access to in District 8.

The most impoverished community in Panem is District 12, which is responsible for mining and producing coals for the Capital. As a mining community there is a shared fear of a cave in or explosions. Readers know more about District 12 than any other district because Katniss lives here and is able to provide detailed descriptions about The Hob (the black market), The Seam (a ghetto like community), as well as the mining production and other town features. District 12 receives the smallest form of resources from the Capitol. As such, the Capitol often ignores District 12 which creates an environment that encourages illegal activity because the rules have been relaxed. The Capitol ignores District 12 for several reasons, but the most prominent reason being the geographic separation between the Rocky Mountains (the Capitol) and the Appalachian Mountains (District 12). Power is proximate, with the strongest power over those closest to the source of power such as Districts 1 and 2. The Capitol is also not as reliant on coal for heating or fuel as the technology available even to the stylists far surpasses the fossil fuel limitations. Cinna is able to set Katniss on fire without any coal, matches, or lighter fluid. The Capitol likely uses coal more as a distraction commodity item rather than an essential need.

Almost all of the families in District 12 are accepting tesserae because the food provided by the Capitol is not enough to supplement the lack of income opportunities. There is a shortage of job opportunities, as experienced by Katniss's mother, which then

leads Katniss to begin hunting illegally in the forest outside the district fence. Katniss has bent almost every rule in District 12 and is still barely able to survive the harsh living conditions. At the time of volunteering as tribute the only thing Katniss had left to lose was her sister, Prim. This desperation to save the only thing of value led Katniss to volunteer, and this desperation is seen again at the end of the 74th Hunger Games when Katniss only wants to return home to Prim. Katniss knows that if she died in the Arena it would be a better fate than returning to a community she shared with Peeta whom she was expected to kill. The Capitol's disregard for District 12, viewing it as a pitiful and powerless community, enabled Katniss to live at rock bottom for so long she no longer had anything to lose by refusing to stay stagnantly complacent.

Modes of production. Not only is labor division controlled, but also modes of production. Finnick Odair comes from District 4, where fishing is the primary commodity. This district faces more obstacles than District 1 and 2 because this workforce is at the mercy of environmental factors. A natural disaster such as floods (common to East Coast due to hurricanes), earthquakes (common to West Coast), or even a microbial plague in the water system would devastate this district. Compared to stone quarries for District 2 and small boutique-like industries in District 1, this district faces more obstacles when meeting the production demands of the Capitol. The Capitol knows that in the event of a natural disaster, some districts would implode upon themselves when families would attack families, leaving the Capitol free of any blame.

The uncertainty of the weather, and the never guaranteed but still required raw material of District 4, likely causes tension amongst the fisherman. If there were a shortage of fish then the district would shut down fishing vessels causing people to

quickly become unemployed. This could then cause hardship on the families of the unemployed since there is not a diverse work environment. With the highly regulated production system, fishermen are not trained to easily cross over into a different field. Even if they were, the Capitol would not allow unemployed fisherman an opportunity to seek work in the other districts.

There is a shift from the high-end commodities the Career districts provide into the service or convenience items of Districts 3, 5, and 6. This requires a skilled workforce with education in technology, engineering, and logistics. The items produced for the Capitol are less about production of materials and more about functionality and convenience. The shift to a service industry offers citizens an opportunity to live in demand of the Capitol, with little or no threat of interruption. The middle class districts meet their production quota with little fluctuation between seasons, compared to other districts that face feast or famine workloads. The Capitol must exercise caution with these districts, as the technology provides more opportunity to create than any other districts. Uneducated Peacekeepers could unknowingly watch as District 3 built a communication system for the rebel forces or tampered with Capitol operations systems. These districts likely have large populations of Peacekeepers for monitoring daily activities, even though the districts are non-violent compared to others.

Textile industries have a notorious reputation for abusing employees through unsafe working environments, long hours, and low pay (Rahikainen, 2002). District 8 seems to follow this stereotypical work practice as Katniss learns from the two district refugees she encounters in the woods. The incomes are so low in District 8 that Twill mentions a second job in a four hour shift in a Peacekeeper uniform factory after her full-

time job as a teacher. Even Bonnie, a child, works four hour shifts after school. The textile industry has long used piecework compensation plans which encourages mass production of cut pattern materials to then be sewn together to form a garment. One perk of piecework compensation is that employees can choose to work quickly to increase their wage, although this creates a dangerous work environment where speed and safety are difficult to coexist. Piecework compensation can be debilitating to employees who are struggling with illness or some type of disability that keeps the employee from reaching production quotas (Huberman, 1996). These districts represent an environment in which the employer holds power over the employee. Piecework does not require any sort of technical skills, meaning the positions in District 7 and 8 are easy to replace in the event an employee becomes dissatisfied or unable to meet production standards. The employer then has several options of candidates vying at a chance to work for very low wages and in despicable conditions. Workers in District 7 and 8 become pawns, casualties that are not only easily replaced but just as easily forgotten once the industrial machine has exhausted them as a source of production.

Since the District 12 area is largely a mining community, the hours are long and the work is very physically demanding. Workers are sent deep down into the earth to mine for coal, a dangerous environment that resulted in the death of several miners including Katniss's father. Women are not allowed to work in the mines, as suggested in the trilogy, which results in Katniss's family becoming destitute without a male provider among them. The job availability for males further exemplifies the inequality of men and women in the workforce. This then leads Katniss to hunt illegally in the forest outside of

the District 12 electric fence. Katniss becomes conditioned to bend the Capitol rules in order to provide for her family.

Distribution of resources. Some professions ensure more resources for families, such as the benefits awarded to Victors as well as Peacekeepers. In exchange for Peacekeepers and military recruits, District 2 as a whole is well cared for. Katniss notices the differences “by other districts standards the Capitol babies the inhabitants here. Just by looking at the District 2 rebels, you can tell they were decently fed and cared for in childhood” (Collins, 2010, p. 193). Although the children are well cared for, those who are recruited to be Peacekeepers become indebted to President Snow and will spend their life executing his orders.

The Career districts have the closest relationship to the Capitol because the number of Victors awarded through the Hunger Games. The Capitol is able to pick freshly traumatized Victors out of the Arena and mold them into agents, thankful for the gracious mercy of President Snow. “Career tributes are overly vicious, arrogant, better fed, but only because they're the Capitol's lapdogs” (Collins, 2008, p. 161). In exchange for compliance, Victors’ families, friends, and districts are spared from the harshest punishments including famine. The relationship between the Career districts and the Capitol displays a stage in the mode of production where both the employer and the employee have accepted and agree to comply with the unspoken terms of employment. The Careers perform tasks as required without resistance, and in exchange, the Capitol allows the Districts to have specialized training academies in addition to other controlled forms of freedom. The Capitol is counting on the Career districts to provide able bodied

and well-mannered Victors to later become Capitol spokesmodels, thus explaining the allowance of higher education in these districts.

By contrast, Katniss explains how poor the District 12 community is when she tries to sell some old baby clothes in the middle of a rain storm in order to feed her family. Katniss and Gale offset their family hunger by accepting the Capitol tesserae multiple times and hunting illegally in the forest beyond the district fence. While this activity is discouraged by the Capitol, even Peacekeepers are hungry for fresh meat and allow this practice to continue. Ignoring District 12 and its Peacekeepers, the Capitol sets up an environment where boundaries between law and citizen become blurred. Peacekeepers are dissatisfied as are the citizens, leaving a common ground for the two groups to establish a mutual understanding based on hunger.

Unfortunately District 12 represents the poorest class and is often under considered as part of the economic system. The district is made up of the underemployed and unemployed, consisting of citizens who, despite the best of efforts, are unable to provide their families with the most basic needs. This class can be made up of homeless people, welfare recipients, and people who are unable to provide for their family through their current employment position or due to lack of employment options. This group consists of the future employees, eager at a chance to bring home a paycheck and thus willing to accept any work conditions and any wage, leaving all the power to the employer.

Ideological criticism considers the relationship of the worker and the employer. The Capitol encourages compliance by providing the District with the basic essentials, food and water, as well as access to materials for shelter. Districts that show opposition

suffer with resources being restricted or eliminated, such as District 12 having no medical care and District 11 having no established education system. The Capitol has created security features to monitor for compliance, although some districts face less enforcement. Despite the best efforts of President Snow, some districts are able to have some power because the district skills are very important to Panem and are difficult to duplicate.

For example, BeeTee and Wiress know the weaknesses of the Capitol and openly entertain ideas on how to overthrow the electrical force fields that protect it. These districts have a unique relationship with the Capitol, where the power leans toward the employee instead of the employer. BeeTee knows the Capitol systems and is able to extort the technology to leak the Mockingjay propaganda messages, and the Capitol is powerless to stop this sabotage. This relationship represents the part of production where the employee has become more knowledgeable than the employer and thus becomes empowered to challenge the relationship. Employees in this stage can feel irreplaceable, believing that the employer would suffer without the employees' skills or abilities in the workplace. Althusser further explores man and the relations of production:

the reproduction of labour[sic] power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation. (Leitch et al., 2001, p. 1485)

BeeTee is no longer submissive to the ruling ideology; instead he is challenging the agents of exploitation, the Capitol, by using his skills to tamper with operating systems.

Such bold forms of resistance can then surface such as sabotaging a system or product knowing that it will upset the employer and create further need for the skilled employee.

One thing about the people of District 11 is their work ethic. Katniss picks up on this very quickly after taking Rue as an ally in the Arena: “‘Orchards, huh? That must be how you can fly around the trees like you've got wings.’ Rue smiles. I've landed on one of the few things she'll admit pride in” (Collins, 2008, p. 191). The labor force is proud and resilient while also resistant to the Capitol regime. The long hours in the field allow this group large periods of time together, which enables the sharing of ideas and frustrations through hushed voices. This environment mimics an organized workforce or union, where individuals can discuss concerns prior to approaching the employer. This exchange and open communication affords the employees a close relationship that turns into an “us” (employee) versus “them” (employer), and because the employees outnumber the employer their greatest power is in the numbers (Yates, 2000). While the employees are dissatisfied like most of the other districts, this group must take time to organize together to stage their form of resistance such as walkouts.

District 12 is so poor that it has to form an illegal black market known as The Hob, where citizens can trade or sell items to supplement their income. Some of the citizens have cast blame on the Capitol for the poverty, including Gale. Katniss explains, listen to him rant about how the tesserae 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, 2008, p. 14)

Gale is the minority in District 12; others are either oblivious or too famished to notice the oppression. While others are oblivious to the root of the problem, Gale is able to look at the bigger picture and recognize that the enemy is not the other families in District 12 or even the other districts in Panem, instead he knows that the Capitol is playing all sides against each other.

Those who oppose the Capitol face harsh punishment. For example, District 8 formed a plan to overtake the Peacekeepers on the night Katniss and Peeta were engaged on Panem's national television broadcast. While the district was temporarily successful, the Capitol quickly responded:

In the utter chaos that followed, it was all people could do to make it back to their homes alive. It took less than forty-eight hours to subdue the city. Then, for a week, there was a lockdown. No food, no coal, everyone forbidden to leave their homes. The only time the television showed anything but static was when the suspected instigators were hanged in the square. (Collins, 2009, p. 134)

The Capitol lifted the lockdown once District 8 was on the brink of starvation. This limitation of food and heat sources is the most archaic form of punishment and oppression. The Capitol is able to control these sources because the manufacturing process of all goods leads to the Capitol, no district has a stockpile or access to anything other than what is produced by that district. With District 8 producing textiles and fabric, the options were very limited as to how long they would have been able to withstand a boycott of Capitol resources.

Political. The economic control is then reinforced through political ideology. President Snow is acutely aware of the power of media and images as evident at his discussion with Katniss:

Of course, you don't know. You have no access to information about the mood in other districts. In several of them, however, people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same? (Collins, 2009, p. 20)

As such, President Snow ensures there is widespread propaganda across all areas of Panem, never allowing citizens to forget the cost of the rebellion. This political technique echoes the efforts of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany (Frood, 2010). From the well-crafted introduction at the reaping ceremony and the heavily edited images of District 13, the Capitol is very careful about the images displayed to the public. The Capitol broadcasts these messages throughout the year, and even more so during the Hunger Games, to remind the district citizens the cost of a rebellion. These messages are broadcast during the most fragile times of the year; times when descent begins to boil to the surface and the messages are used as a cautious reminder. Just like a wooden paddle hung on a principal's wall, students don't have to have experienced the actual pain to imagine the consequence of poor behavior. Althusser defined ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Leitch et al., 2001, p. 1478). A citizen that has witnessed public whippings (or any form of discipline) does not have to personally experience the lashings of the whip to imagine the pain and suffering

that follows. Sometimes the imagination of the punishment is more severe than the actual course of behavior modification.

Propaganda. Life in the districts is mundane until reaping day, the day when television crews and cameras arrive in District 12. The production team sets up camera angles and formalities for the ceremony that will select the next two tributes to compete in the annual Hunger Games. There is a formal ceremony where:

The mayor steps up to the podium and begins to read. It's the same story every year. He tells of the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (Collins, 2008, p. 17)

The government has carefully crafted a message that warns off rebellious thoughts by reminding citizens of the consequences. The Hunger Games then provides a distraction from the oppressive nature and intent of the reaping system that required 23 children to die as retribution for a generations old rebellion. Additionally, the Capitol doesn't reveal the reason for the first rebellion and unfortunately the citizens no longer ask questions. The Capitol avoids describing the events leading up to the rebellion, likely because the reasons for the past rebellion are still well founded and observable in the current society.

Previous generations became tired of the Capitol gluttony and demanded change.

Avoiding this explanation of a parallel situation with current residents, the Capitol hopes to avoid another rebellion that this time may prove successful.

By not questioning the events leading up to such an important political moment in history, the Panem citizens become complacent in the repercussions deemed necessary by the governing body. The national acceptance fits into the idea that “the Marxist critique of ideology must look at what is typical, widespread, and mediocre” (Elster, 1986a, p. 169). The Capitol succeeds at marketing the Hunger Games as a debt of society and a burden for all to bear. The societal debt, however is not a burden for the Capitol residents who are rewarded for past generation loyalty. While the Capitol rewards the loyal lineage of past generations, consideration must be given that even descendants of loyal families can then develop into rebellious followers like Cinna and Plutarch. Despite their aristocratic upbringing, Cinna and Plutarch see the unequal treatment and distribution of resources through their professions, and choose to support the underdogs instead of their neighbors.

This idea, a burden for all to bear, is hypocritical considering that the Capitol residents are exempt. Ironically, after overthrowing President Snow, Alma Coin proposes the exact same plan where Capitol children are sent to the Arena as retribution for years of oppression. Katniss knows firsthand that the Arena is no place for an innocent child to be sent and hunted for spectator sport. Katniss then decides that Coin must be stopped before another 75 years of cruelty masked as entertainment ensues.

Peacekeepers. Another political method of control is the Capitol enforcers, the ironically named Peacekeepers. The rhetorical significance of the Peacekeeper label is the fact that nothing is peaceful about this profession, charged with the responsibility of acting as violent enforcers of the Capitol ideologies. The Peacekeepers are recruited from District 2, and responsible for enforcing the Capitol rules within the districts by any means necessary. Some districts require less physical punishment because the districts are compliant or the Peacekeepers are complacent and accommodating, as with District 12. Districts that are content with their relationship with the Capitol require less enforcement and punishment from Peacekeepers. These districts meet Capitol expectations in production quotas and show no signs of opposition to the Capitol, thus earning them resources. These resources then reinforce the districts' complacency, as to not bite the hand that feeds them. Districts that are deprived are more vulnerable and dissatisfied with current living conditions leaving citizens to find a source of blame. As the controlling force the Capitol becomes a target for opposition.

The Head Peacekeeper of District 12 is named Darius, and he leads with a light touch meaning that there is very little physical violence while he is in control. Katniss explains "most of the Peacekeepers turn a blind eye to a few of us who hunt because they're as hungry for meat as anybody is" (Collins, 2008, p. 5). Peacekeepers can choose to accept the illegal activity, and thus the bounty it produces because Darius also feels oppressed.

As a recruit from District 2, Darius has no family in District 12, unless he was allowed to marry and start a new lineage. His customs, traditional foods, and other cultural practices are left in District 2, leaving him an outsider in a new land which is a

very isolating experience. Darius, and other Peacekeepers find themselves vulnerable and lonely, likely to seek friendship by any means necessary. The loneliness pushes Peacekeepers into questionable situations themselves. Another Peacekeeper in District 12 turns young girls into prostitution, taking advantage of their poverty and hunger in order to pacify his own dissatisfaction:

Cray would have been disliked, anyway, because of the uniform he wore, but it was his habit of luring starving young women into his bed for money that made him an object of loathing in the district. In really bad times, the hungriest would gather at his door at nightfall, vying for the chance to earn a few coins to feed their families by selling their bodies. (Collins, 2009, p. 114)

Some Peacekeepers show subtle signs of their own rebellious nature by choosing to relax some Capitol rules, and break other laws entirely for self-interest. Other districts aren't as lucky, as Rue describes District 11 faces public whippings on a daily basis. Peacekeepers who perform their job duties with such diligence likely are indebted to the Capitol through a high cost contract. It is assumed that there is collateral used against those in the Peacekeeper profession, likely family members, that keeps the officers motivated to perform as the Capitol demands.

Darius begins to disappoint the Capitol, and is then removed from service. Once Darius disappoints the Capitol, he is turned into an Avox, his tongue removed and sent to a life of indentured servitude. By removing his tongue, the Capitol tries to silence Darius and further oppress any rebellious or treasonous acts. Despite this effort, Darius finds at least one way to defy the Capitol when he touches Katniss hand under the dining room

table. Since Avoxes are expected to be silent servants, the Capitol disapproves of any physical interaction with citizens.

Darius is replaced by a much more violent protégé named Thread. Thread takes his responsibilities very seriously and is committed to the Capitol. To make sure District 12 knows how serious he decides to make an example out of Gale who was caught hunting illegally:

Gale's wrists are bound to a wooden post. The wild turkey he shot earlier hangs above him, the nail driven through its neck. His jacket's has been cast aside on the ground, his shirt torn away. He slumps unconscious on his knees, held up only by the ropes at his wrists. What used to be his back is a raw, bloody slab of meat. (Collins, 2009, p. 104)

The District 12 community is shocked at the swift change in physical punishment and retreat to their houses. Katniss, Haymitch, and Peeta are the only people who stand up against Thresh and who then drag Gale to the Everdeen house to be healed by Katniss's mother using illegal herbs. The Peacekeepers are expected to enforce the Capitol rules within the Districts. This includes monitoring any District supplemental income opportunities, like hunting or the black market, as well as watching for rebellious murmurs among the community. This also includes monitoring for rebellious activity such as groups gathering beside team production activities, as well as any signs of disobedience like using the three finger salute or whistling the mockingjay tune.

Barriers. The Peacekeepers are also responsible for maintaining the physical barriers that separate the districts. Some districts, like 12, are not closely monitored while others are heavily guarded. The resistance is strong in District 11. The rebellious attitude has been taking place even before the loss of Rue. Katniss notices the security features that are very different from District 12. As Katniss arrives by train for the first leg of the Victory Tour she notices:

a fence rises up before us. Towering at least thirty-five feet in the air and topped with wicked coils of barbed wire, it makes ours back in District 12 look childish. My eyes quickly inspect the base, which is lined with enormous metal plates. There would be no burrowing under those, no escaping to hunt. Then I see the watchtowers, placed evenly apart, manned with armed guards, so out of place among the fields of wildflowers around them. (Collins, 2009, p. 52)

This image of a prison-like working environment is reminiscent of historical plantation paintings, showing people enslaved to masters and forced to work long hours for low or no wages. These barriers mimic the border fences along Arizona and Texas, designed to deter immigrants traveling from Mexico. Although there is now an established minimum wage, there are still migrant workers and other laborers who go through the system that earn significantly less than they should, considering the amount of hard work and long hours.

Social. The consequences of an oppressive regime are most evident at the society level, particularly at the culture of the oppressed. Citizens are left to live in a cycle that reinforces oppression by limiting basic human rights. Social consequences that maintain

the power of the oppressor include poverty and hunger, manipulated traditions, and compromised education.

Poverty and hunger. The Capitol continues the reign of power and control by closely monitoring the production of resources in the form of food rations in the Districts. Food supplies are distributed by the Capitol and any family that is unable to survive on the small rations must then take tesserae which is the process of accepting additional entries into the Hunger Games in exchange for food rations. Althusser articulates the “accounts of the societal mechanisms that inculcate such consent, as well as a psychoanalytic account of how ideology makes individuals ‘subjects’ of the dominant social forces” (Leitch, 2001, p. 1477). The consent of the individuals is not voluntary but instead necessity as a form of survival. District 12 is described as the poorest district with Katniss and Gale accepting tesserae as many times as possible during the year, despite the risks of being selected for the Games. The Capitol provides the smallest food rations required to sustain life, which keeps the district citizens functional for production means yet weak and thus easier to control. This intentional deprivation further enables the Capitol to control citizens while also adding to the many reasons citizens hate the Capitol which leads to the rebellion.

Rue for example, has never had a whole chicken leg to herself. She is eager to have the meat that Katniss offers to her in the Arena, yet she hesitates. The hesitation is likely a feeling of guilt and also trepidation at the final cost of accepting the food. By accepting such a gift from Katniss, who is supposed to be her enemy in the Games, Rue enters into a nonverbal contract. The Capitol has kept strict limitation on food sources in the districts to the point that any exchange of food items is not for entertainment or

enjoyment; instead it is a barter system. Food becomes a currency in the districts, more valuable than money or jewelry.

Katniss in her youth becomes desperate for food, and at one point she is forced into a rain storm trying to sell baby clothes. This is when Peeta throws Katniss a loaf of bread he burnt on purpose, after seeing her starving under a tree outside his family's bakery. Later, Katniss is able to capitalize on the food shortages by trading the wild game to other families in District 12 in exchange for medicinal herbs or other supplies. The Capitol frowns on this type of commerce, as it allows citizens a way to supplement food rations through their own entrepreneurial endeavors. Katniss trades squirrels and wild turkeys in exchange for materials that the Capitol limited. District 12 trades and barter in order to survive, instead of following the Capitol's plan for the families to turn on each other. The Capitol is least present in District 12 likely hoping that the citizens will turn on each other, thus resolving the black sheep of Panem.

Tradition. The use of food as a form of currency then eliminates its application as a form of entertainment. Family feasts and celebrations are extremely rare in the districts, reserved for the family meal after the reaping ceremony and weddings. The citizens of Panem maintain different traditions as evident at the wedding of Finnick and Annie. To complete the special event, members of various districts offer a piece of their homeland traditions including dancing from District 12, music from District 4, and more. This wedding is the first cumulative event that represents a new social order where districts can blend to form one community that supports and celebrates each other. This, of course, is opposite of the Capitol strategy to keep districts divided and separated.

The only other cultural event described is the Hunger Games production including the reaping day. On this day, Katniss describes the special preparations, like her mother setting out a special blue dress for Katniss to wear. Prim also wears a special outfit and a blue ribbon in her hair. This is likely the nicest outfits the girls own and is reserved for very special occasions. This day brings anxiety and fear for little Prim, who is facing her first year as a candidate for tribute. Katniss must console her sister throughout the day and reminds Prim that her name has only been entered once, thus making her the least likely candidate to be chosen. The fear of being selected for the Hunger Games is an example of Althusser's concept of ISAs. The Hunger Games serve as a repressive institution that uses fear to ensure compliance; but in using it as entertainment serves an ideological oppressive function categorized by Althusser as a "cultural apparatus" (Leitch et al., 2001, p. 1494).

While at the reaping ceremony, Katniss volunteers as tribute to protect her sister from the Games. The rhetorical significance of the word "reaping" includes the definition, to take or gather. The appropriately named reaping ceremony gathers children and takes them from their families to be harvested as game competitors. After Katniss is introduced, Effie asks the crowd to give her a round of applause for the grand gesture. The citizens of District 12 do not clap, instead they give the three finger salute:

So instead of acknowledging applause, I stand there unmoving while they take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong. Then something unexpected happens. At least, I don't expect it because I don't think of District 12 as a place that cares about me. But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's

place, and now it seems I have become someone precious. At first one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means good-bye to someone you love. (Collins, 2008, p. 22)

Katniss explains that this tradition is old and often forgotten which makes the moment that more special. She has earned the respect of her district by sacrificing herself to save her sister. This moment is the first rebellious act by a community in the trilogy. Katniss doesn't realize that this is a significant moment in the rebellion, while the Capitol has likely seen this as a very big red flag. The community has never made such a bold gesture showing disapproval at the Games before. District 12 has been disregarded as any sort of political threat to the Capitol, which led to the relaxed Peacekeepers and rule breaking. The values of the community, however, outweigh the fear of the Capitol in this moment, where the citizens show more consideration for Katniss than the consequences of defying President Snow and his Hunger Games.

Beyond the clothes and salute, Katniss describes a special meal that is planned for when the family returns home after the reaping ceremony. Unfortunately, reaping day is considered the special occasion instead of a celebration event like a wedding, graduation, or christening. Prim gathers and forages for wild salad greens and Katniss plans to prepare some meat from the day's hunt. The family would sit together and watch the mandatory review of the day's events as dictated by the Capitol. Unfortunately Katniss never attends this meal as she is selected for the Games and is sent to the Capitol. This family meal is actually self-serving for the Capitol. Although it is never described as a

Capitol requirement, the family meal serves as a time of reflection on the day. This leaves the families gathered together, thankful for being spared from selection to serve as tributes. In past years, Katniss and her family become accustomed to this day even were planning a special meal of thanks, similar to thanksgiving celebration in America. This reflective moment is focused on how fortunate the family is, instead of the horrific events of the day where two children were selected to die on national television.

Education and knowledge. With the delayed work expectation, children in District 1 and 2 are sent to a specialized training academy that preps them for the Games by teaching skills like combat, and strategy. Once children turn 18, they graduate from the academy and are encouraged to volunteer for the Games, which in District 1 is considered an honor as Katniss describes:

The competition will be far beyond my abilities. Kids from wealthier districts, where winning is a huge honor, who've been trained their whole lives for this.

Boys who are two to three times my size. Girls who know twenty different ways to kill you with a knife. Oh, there'll be people like me, too. People to weed out before the real fun begins. (Collins, 2008, p. 36)

Every year there are volunteers in District 1 and 2 because the children are trained and ready to enter the arena. There is a social obligation to volunteer, even if a sibling has been Victorious as in the case of Gloss and Cashmere, the brother and sister team that won back-to-back years. The odds are actually in their favor to win, which leads them to glory and fame which comes with wealth and a life of stability. The expectation to volunteer is similar to the pressure to enter an established family business or tradition like military families. Children in military families face additional pressure to compete for

acceptance into military academies. Similarly, the families that have won the Hunger Games in the past know the business and therefore encourage their children to enter the Arena knowing that if they can survive a few weeks in the Games, they won't have to work for the rest of their lives or suffer poverty and hunger.

The three Career districts outlined previously have been appropriately deemed the Careers because the children of these districts are raised with future goals. The citizens have a culture that establishes a lifestyle with priorities and expectations for their children. There is more to life than the day-to-day routine of producing goods for the Capitol; instead there is opportunity for recreational activities and strong relationships with others. The Capitol will use the Victors as propaganda puppets and spokespersons, relying on the public image to transfer Capitol messages deep into the districts. Althusser suggested that one of the most direct form of subjecting individuals to the political State ideology is using "the communications apparatus by cramming every citizen with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc., by means of the press, the radio and television" (Leitch, 2001, p. 1494). Because the Victors come from the districts instead of the Capitol, citizens are more likely to be persuaded by the messages delivered by them. The Capitol counts on Victors to have social skills, quick thinking, and a commitment to the Capitol that is generationally founded through years of family relationships with President Snow. This political practice of reciprocity will eventually end at whatever point President Snow feels threatened or the relationship no longer serves his best interests.

In *The Hunger Games*, the career tributes meet up and enjoy a social game more so than any other tributes. For example, Katniss, Rue, and Foxface are alone throughout

most of the game, whereas the careers enjoy hunting as a pack and strategizing as a group. Careers are raised in environments that encourage social interaction among different families through school systems or shared work. The skills provided by these opportunities enable the tributes to capitalize on a social strategy that other districts ignore. Finnick uses social strategy even outside of the Games when he uses Capitol secrets as currency instead of the usual form of payment: money. The rebel forces then use these secrets to create doubt in the Capitol community about President Snow. Finnick announces that President Snow has remained in power despite all of his crimes by poisoning his opposition:

[Finnick speaking to camera and Capitol audience] Such a young man when he rose to power. Such a cleaver one to keep it. How, you must ask yourself, did he do it? One word. That's all you really need to know. Poison. Finnick goes back to Snow's political ascension, which I know nothing of, and works his way up to the present, pointing out case after case of mysterious deaths of Snow's adversaries or, even worse, his allies who had the potential to become threats. People dropping dead at a feast or slowly inexplicably declining into shadows over a period of months. Blamed on bad shellfish, elusive viruses, or an overlooked weakness in the aorta. Snow drinking from the poisoned cup himself to deflect suspicion. But antidotes don't always work. They say that's why he wears the roses that reek of perfume. They say it's to cover the scent of blood from the mouth sores that will never heal. (Collins, 2010, p. 171)

President Snow uses social interactions to poison his opponents using food and drink as the vessel to deliver it. This literary connection further implicates the use of food as a

form of control and power, while also using social engagements to cover and mask deception.

Children of Districts 1, 2, and 4 have future aspirations for success. While District 1 heavily emphasizes success in the Arena, all three districts enable the children to envision a life outside of production work. The Careers enjoy a lifestyle of upper-middle class Americans as there is financial stability, opportunity for higher education, and diverse employment opportunities. If *The Hunger Games* were a high school setting, the Careers would be the prom queen and king; after all they are the “crowd favorite” (Collins, 2008, p. 69). The Capitol knows the Careers will get loud applause from the audience, just like rooting for a favorite sports team. Even when players leave a sports organization, there is usually a lifelong commitment from a dedicated fan. When Capitol residents bet on their favorite district, it becomes their home team because there are no tributes selected from the Capitol residents. Instead, Capitol citizens bet on other districts to win the Hunger Games, which then generates sponsorships that further aid the favored districts to win the Games.

Children of District 3 are also well educated, likely well versed in binary code and electrical jargon. Without physically demanding job duties, the tributes from the district are at some disadvantage because the skills they have from home are limited to application in the Arena. While BeeTee used his techno savvy to electrocute other competitors, most tributes from District 3 do not become Game Victors. Their technical skills are not forgotten by competitors, as in Katniss’s first Hunger Games, it is the District 3 boy (unnamed) who reinstalls the land mines to protect the Careers’ stockpile at the Cornucopia; however, once the mines are detonated by Katniss, the boy is easily

killed with little remorse by the Careers. The expendability of a resource once it has served its purpose is another nod to Capitol behavior. The Careers see the other tributes as merely obstacles before the finish line, not as competition. The Capitol sees the districts as an unfortunate part of production, an unwanted obstacle that generates the finished products.

Other authors have looked at the identity crisis that is Katniss Everdeen. Scholars have argued that Katniss doesn't really know herself, which is why the audience has a difficult time predicting her behavior and love interest (Pharr & Clark, 2010). A different perspective would be that Katniss doesn't know much at all, at least from a traditional educational stand point. Her father died when she was 11 and she became the sole provider for her household. Because she spends so much time hunting in the woods it is likely she is no longer in school, and Katniss only mentions Prim having to go to school. At 11 years old, Katniss had the formal education of a 6th grader at best when her father died.

Throughout the trilogy, Katniss struggles with knowledge and self-awareness. She constantly questions her own instincts and relies heavily on the opinions and ideas of others. Her reliance in Cinna, Haymitch, Gale, and Peeta takes a large portion of her personal thoughts depicted in the trilogy. She listens to her allies, while also questioning the motives behind their decisions. While Katniss is the heroine of the trilogy, often it is the ideas of others that saves her from uncertain death. For example, cutting down the Tracker Jacker nest was Rue's idea; resulting in Glimmer's death from the venom which enables Katniss to get the only weapon she is really skilled at: the bow. The alliance that keeps Katniss and Peeta alive in *Catching Fire* is opposite of what Katniss wanted;

instead it is the decision and work of Haymitch that brings Johanna and Finnick into the picture.

Additionally, when Katniss is left alone she often makes poor decisions. For example, President Snow visits Katniss prior to the Victory Tour. He explains to Katniss that he isn't buying her star crossed lover story and believes her actions in the Arena were purposeful. President Snow explains that the citizens see a girl from District 12 daring to defy the rules of the Games, which can lead to the districts to follow. President Snow then advises Katniss to stay in line with Capitol expectations by not demonstrating anything that can be perceived as opposing the Capitol. Katniss decides to keep the threat by President Snow a secret. Later when Peeta offers restitution to Thresh and Rue's family, the citizens of District 11 give the three finger salute as a sign of solidarity. However, the Capitol sees the restitution and salute as signs of insubordination, going against the social expectations for Victor behavior. Prior to that, Katniss admits that she wasn't thinking or "lost her head" when frustrated with the Gamemakers:

I shot an arrow at them. Not exactly at them. In their direction. It's like Peeta said, I was shooting and they were ignoring me and I just . . . I just lost my head, so I shot an apple out of their stupid roast pig's mouth. (Collins, 2008, p. 101)

Katniss is a survivalist, thinking moment to moment instead of long term. By the end of the trilogy she is able to develop more strategic planning skills but only because of the experience she gains.

Considering Katniss likely only made it through 6th grade before becoming the household provider, there is no way to measure the curriculum or material offered to her. It seems the education system in District 12 is lacking, or at least is censored to protect

the Capitol's best interests. "Katniss suspects that school isn't teaching about past rebellions; most of the education revolves around coal and what localities owe the Capitol" (Hanlon, 2010, p. 62). This is another tactic by Snow to ensure compliance through limiting education in the districts.

Katniss is aware that the school system doesn't teach about the events leading up to the rebellion but instead focuses on the outcome. Students learn that the districts lost and the Capital won, with District 13 being decimated off the map. The truth to this statement becomes widely accepted with each passing generation. This acceptance is an example of Ducker's (1974) observation in "what is true of theories is true of ideologies. They suit their historical circumstances" (Drucker, 1974, p. 24). Each generation knows the history of the Hunger Games and the rebellion through the annual presentation, and thus do not question the truth or circumstances surrounding a civil war among citizens. When Katniss comes along, she serves as a symbolic threat to the ideology of the Capitol. Katniss is from District 12, the lowest district of Panem in terms of production and resources. She is the least educated, least nourished, and obviously least social of all the tributes. She doesn't match any of the Capitol standards of success and therefore represents a threat to this value system.

Perhaps Katniss's greatest fear in the trilogy is not a fear of the Games, instead a fear of the unknown. Being from the poorest district it is reasonable to expect that the educational foundation in District 12 is also lacking. Given her inadequate time in the school system, Katniss is extremely limited on formal knowledge as well as the social skills that accompany attending a formal institution.

Compared to the specialized academies offered to District 1, 2, and 4 tributes, this may be Katniss's greatest disadvantage in the Games. "Marxian ideology inspired likewise studies on the unequal opportunities for education in the different social classes; nevertheless it never built a bridge to replace the unparalleled leap to an ideological conclusion" (Feuer, 1975, p. 97). As Feuer suggests, there is additional research still required to establish and elevate the education system to superstructure status required of ideological criticisms. The uneducated and uninformed become pawns in the government's plan for oppression. Those who do not know they are being oppressed are those who become blind followers. This furthers the argument that education needs to include vigorous exploration into history and civics, giving future generations an opportunity to learn of past oppression and to be aware of the signs of a disillusioned government system.

The trilogy concludes with Katniss and Peeta creating a book to teach their children about the second rebellion. This book will serve as a warning call using the behaviors of the past to ensure a better future. Katniss's book is similar to a dystopian novel that uses a fictional future society to warn about behavior of today.

District 13 is the original rebel child of Panem. After the first rebellion, the Capitol and District 13 were in a standoff. District 13 held all nuclear weapons of Panem and threatened to use them against the Capitol. The Capitol was powerless against the threat of attack and came to an understanding with District 13. The district would go underground, become self-sufficient and the Capitol would tell the rest of Panem that District 13 was destroyed as a result of the rebellion. Katniss and the other citizens

believed District 13 no longer existed, trusting the Capitol's story as well as seeing the manipulated images showing the district broken down into rubble.

District 13 was the first to try to resolve all of the institutional forces of oppression through the militarized lifestyle. Economic oppression and class struggles are abolished through the identical living conditions and work schedules. Political power is limited as televised messages are limited to only Mockingjay propaganda used for motivation instead of oppression. Peacekeepers do not exist in 13 and neither do district barriers. Socially, the districts begin to blend together especially in common areas like the cafeteria and as seen through the contribution efforts at Finnick and Annie's wedding. Poverty and hunger are eliminated through the ration system designed to provide each citizen with a fair amount of food as required by their calorie use.

The only obstacle not fully remedied in District 13 is education and knowledge. As the spokesmodel for the rebellion, Katniss is often left in the dark and without information. She doesn't know about the rescue mission during the Quarter Quell or the alliance of Haymitch, Johanna, and Finnick. Furthermore, Alma Coin, plays coy with her reasons for sending an unbalanced Peeta into a war zone with access to weapons while still harboring hate for Katniss. Just like the Capitol, District 13 is utilizing Katniss to their own advantage. Katniss is easy to manipulate, as she relies heavily on the ideas of others. By limiting the information provided to Katniss, District 13 keeps her guessing and distracted trying to decipher their plans and questioning motives. Giving Katniss access to the entire strategy would give her an opportunity to question the plan as well as a chance to break it.

Individual Forces

After years of Capitol regime, a set of characteristics begins to form and imprint onto the citizens of Panem. These characteristics become individual forces of oppression. The characters develop these characteristics through their employment, political views, or as a consequence to the environment they are exposed to. Hegemony then results as the acceptance and buy-in of dominant forces, resignation to life's circumstances, or resistance. When there is little left to lose, it is often in the rejection of hegemonic forces that ignite rebellious acts.

Economic. The method a person uses to make an income begins to become a defining point in their life. Often, people will introduce themselves based on the occupation or current position they hold. In the Capitol, the position assigned to a person becomes another tool to further the oppressive cycle. For example, Effie Trinket is the Capitol appointed chaperone for District 12; her job duties require prepping the district children to be presented into Capitol culture. Likewise, Johanna Mason is the District 8 Victor, and her job duties include public appearances for the Capitol and then exclusion to the Victor's Village.

Cultural imperialism. Effie Trinket, the propaganda puppet of the Capitol, personifies cultural imperialism. She is excited and happy to once again be in the spotlight on reaping day. She is upbeat and perky, constantly critiquing other people's etiquette and manners. Effie is the epitome of Capitol couture lifestyle with outrageous hair colors, elaborate costumes, and matching jewelry. She is really excited about organizing a District 12 team that stands a chance at winning because she hopes it will further her own career, gaining her favor in the Capitol social circles.

Katniss views Effie as just another superficial Capitol resident in the beginning. To Effie, image is everything as she learned from her Capitol upbringing. Her concern is not only for her image, but the image of her tributes as well as the mentor they work with. Katniss notices how happy Effie is after the success of Cinna's costumes in the opening ceremony:

We're the first team she's ever chaperoned that made a splash at the opening ceremonies. She's complimentary about not just our costumes but how we conducted ourselves. And, to hear her tell it, Effie knows everyone who's anyone in the Capitol and has been talking us up all day, trying to win us sponsors.

(Collins, 2008, p. 69)

One must give Effie credit because she is a team player. She puts on her fake smile around Haymitch despite his drunk and disorderly state. The only time she breaks her positive exterior is when the actions of the team threaten her. One example is after Katniss shoots the apple during the scorecard session with the Gamemakers. Effie can't contain her disapproval but is quick to recover after Katniss scores an 11 after the stunt.

Almost every scene with Effie includes her correcting the actions of others, based on the manners of the Capitol. As part of her job as the chaperone, she is responsible for keeping tributes in line with the expectations of the Capitol. Effie corrects table manners, adjusts costumes, and reminds everyone to smile on the "big, big, day." Despite her best effort though, Katniss is reluctant to take most of Effie's advice on appealing to the public, "'well, that's the best I can do,' Effie says with a sigh. 'Just remember, Katniss, you want the audience to like you'" (Collins, 2008, p. 110). Effie knows the importance

of audience approval in the Games as it can earn the tributes sponsorships that help them inside the Arena.

However, Effie is also selfish as she sees the success of the tributes as a stepping stone to a promotion. Katniss notices, “because it's Effie and she's apparently required by law to say something awful, she adds ‘I wouldn't be at all surprised if I finally get promoted to a decent district next year’” (Collins, 2008, p. 132). Effie loves to be in the spotlight and she is very happy with the role given to her by the Capitol. With her job satisfaction, she is slow to question the motives of the Capitol or President Snow. Effie is blinded by her Capitol upbringing and unable to see anything else.

Marginalization. In contrast to Effie are those who refuse to accept the superiority of the Capitol, and must be contained to prevent any political reach with other employees. Johanna Mason represents the population that becomes marginalized, those who don't fit into social norms or expectations and then are cast out away from the general population. The marginalized populations are displaced and ignored by society, a role that Johanna has not only accepted but also used as a strategy to win her season of the Hunger Games. “She [Johanna] won by very convincingly portraying herself as weak and helpless so that she would be ignored” (Collins, 2009, p. 207). The ignored become the powerful, as Johanna used this strategy to win her games and District 12 produces the symbol of the rebellion. Their power is in the wait, being able to observe strengths and weaknesses of the opposition, and then attacking when the opportunity presents itself. After her Victory, Johanna has no problem with announcing her concerns about the Capitol, often publicly defying them on stage with Caesar Flickman (the master of ceremonies for the interview portion of the Hunger Games production) and in the Arena.

The Capitol is unable to control Johanna. As she explained to Katniss, there is no one left she loves, leaving the Capitol limited as to the torture they can use against her. Instead, the Capitol keeps Johanna separated from the population by isolating her to the Victor's Village. All Victors live in the village of their district, but Johanna is one of only two known Victors still living, with no family or friends, and very little contact with citizens from her home district. The isolation is a term of her contract with the Capitol, as she is required to live in the Victor's Village giving the Capitol continued control over with whom she interacts and communicates. Even with limited opportunities, Johanna capitalizes on every interaction to encourage dissent among other tributes. She challenges Katniss, after seeing her in the wedding dress Cinna designed, to make President Snow pay for parading her around in a celebratory outfit in front of the Capitol audience. Every social engagement to Johanna is an opportunity to spread her own political agenda to expose the crimes of the Capitol.

Political. There are different levels of political participation, and the rebels are no exception. Defying the Capitol is a bold move and warrants analyzing three types of political protesters. Although there are many different ways to oppose the Capitol, three characters stand out and those are Plutarch, Cinna, and Prim. Plutarch is the second Gamemaker of the trilogy, posing as a Capitol employee he is able to work with President Snow and relay information to the rebel forces. Cinna is Katniss's stylist, he uses his profession to design clothes that upset the Capitol and spread the mockingjay image across Panem. Finally, Prim is Katniss's sister and her non-violent support of the rebel efforts cost her life.

Rebels. The most obvious rebel, Plutarch is working not only inside the Capitol but also as a Gamemaker and confidant of President Snow. The name “Plutarch” has historical foundations in Greek philosophy, as the original Plutarch as a biographer; a person who wrote down the life story for people of influence (March, 1998). This is similar to Gamemaker Plutarch that manipulates and controls the life story of the tributes in the Arena. Plutarch returns as a Gamemaker after Seneca Crane was forced to commit suicide because Seneca allowed two tributes to become Victors which President Snow considers the spark that started the rebellion. President Snow is confident that Plutarch will respect the regime and follow commands to ensure Katniss does not survive the Quarter Quell; however, Plutarch has his own plans and has been working with the rebel forces likely for a very long time. Alma Coin has a strong relationship with Plutarch as evident by her trusting in his judgement and allowing him to make crucial decisions throughout the rescue mission as well as orchestrating the rebel propaganda messages. Snow has a similar level of trust in Plutarch, sharing information and concerns openly among themselves.

Plutarch makes subtle but big moves while in the Capitol. Perhaps the most obvious move is revealing his pocket watch to Katniss at the Victor Banquet held at President Snow’s mansion. This treasonous act was supposed to help Katniss identify the clock workings of the Quarter Quell Arena, but again Katniss is late to use the information around her as previously discussed. Instead it takes the crazed rantings of Wiress for the team to figure out the clock. Wiress is the other tribute from District 3. She is technologically gifted but suffering shock in the Arena making her allies dismiss her rantings of “tick tock, tick tock” deducing that she is suffering from madness. Often in

society, those who are most in tune with political corruption or strategy are also classified as suffering from madness or crazy. Consider whistle blowers and conspiracy theorists of society. Their thoughts are easily dismissed until proven, much like Wiress in the Quarter Quell.

Plutarch works with the rebel team; he is one of the leaders of the rebellion. His strategies require several other team members to allow Plutarch to be at low risk of being hurt in the process. For example, during the rescue mission inside the Quarter Quell Arena, Plutarch was able to excuse himself from the Gamemaker command center just before the force field was compromised. Since Plutarch designed this Arena as a clock and the lightning strike happened at midnight, he was able to establish an exact exit time from the game center.

Plutarch, however, shows the greatest risk in his movements, being that he is not only inside the Capitol but he is mere feet away from President Snow. Plutarch risks his career, his comfortable lifestyle, and the majority of his friends to support the rebellion efforts. In exchange, he is rewarded by being Alma Coins' trusted confidant and likely received a promotion in power. Plutarch supports the overall efforts of the rebellion, even if he doesn't always agree with the method because the rebellion serves to redistribute the power in Panem. Power in Panem is limited to President Snow, and because Plutarch likes power he wants an opportunity to gain more without risk of poison or mysterious illness further discussed later in the chapter.

Cinna is the opposite of Plutarch. Instead of a team rebel, Cinna acts as a rebel of one. Cinna clearly disagrees with the Capitol and is comfortable making subtle forms of resistance through his costume designs. He is careful to keep the rest of the prep team in

the dark about his final design plans in order to save them from any punishment or backlash, “don’t worry. I always channel my emotions into my work. That way I don’t hurt anyone but myself” (Collins, 2009, p. 205). The stoic and lonely rebel journey of Cinna is important as he defies the Capitol without risking anyone except himself.

Cinna is constantly considering his plans, adjusting as situations arise. When Katniss proposes the dual suicide with Peeta, Cinna must adjust his previous plan. Katniss no longer needs to earn attention from the Capitol audience, instead she needs to deflect the Capitol gaze as a denial of wrongdoing. Katniss understands Cinna’s mindset “this is a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary. I bite my lip trying to figure out his motivation” (Collins, 2008, p. 355). The reason for Cinna’s motivation is unknown as he isn’t gaining power like Plutarch. This is Cinna’s first year as a tribute stylist so he hasn’t established a career or any strong connections within the Capitol.

Although Katniss enjoys his design work, she is confused by his request to style District 12. Katniss explains that previous stylists always designed costumes that mimic coal, flat and black. Cinna on the other hand sees opportunity. The underdressed district presents a blank canvas. There is little expectation from the Capitol or Panem citizens for District 12 to draw any sort of attention. Cinna sees the opportunity to pull the wallflower into the spotlight, transforming societies forgotten into the remarkable. This technique encourages the smallest members of society, those who relate to the poor hungry girl from District 12, to have hope for a brighter future. In societies where everyday life is a struggle, there is little hope for a future. Citizens must focus on today, finding food and resources to survive the night. Tomorrow is not a guarantee for the district citizens, yet it is part of their national credo “Panem today, Panem tomorrow, Panem forever.”

Cinna uses his talents to provide a glimpse of the future. His rebellious strategy is to construct clothes that excite the crowds and are more beautiful than most could even dream about. Cinna is showing the citizens all the Capitol resources and technology can offer, he uses these advances to promote the most forgotten district. This form of rebellion is a use of Capitol tools, through a Capitol profession, to undermine President Snow. Cinna could always use a scapegoat for his action, declaring that it is required by his profession to design clothes that represent the district. However, Cinna takes this idea one step farther using the expectations and elaborate lifestyle of the Capitol to propel Katniss and District 12 front and center, demanding the attention of the Panem.

Lastly, there is the opposite of rebels, which is the non-rebels like Prim. She doesn't participate in violence, corruption, or rule breaking at any point in the trilogy. Instead, Prim contributes to the rebel cause by becoming a healer and learning to be a doctor. She provides aid to the injured and wisdom to Katniss. Prim avoids confrontation, only showing up after the fighting in order to heal the injured.

Prim's most political move in the trilogy is when she reminds Katniss of the power of the Mockingjay. "Katniss, I don't think you understand how important you are to the cause. Important people usually get what they want. If you want to keep Peeta safe from the rebels, you can" (Collins, 2010, p. 34). For the first time, Katniss doesn't feel like a victim or a pawn, she is empowered to make decisions and demands. This shift in perspective is because of Prim and is the encouragement Katniss needs to take on the role of the Mockingjay.

The trilogy starts out with Katniss's very first action "seeking Prim's warmth but finding only the rough canvas cover of the mattress" (Collins, 2008, p. 3). Before the

audience even knows the lead character's name, they know she has a deep love for her little sister. Katniss spends the entire trilogy seeking Prim, from looking to save her from the Games to looking for her in the final battle scene of *Mockingjay*. Prim represents the nonviolent contributors of change, those in society who work selflessly to help others find a better life without taking from others.

Prim is a pivotal character in the trilogy because: (a) she is the reason Katniss volunteered as tribute; (b) she is Katniss's voice of reason; and, (c) she represents an innocence that Katniss was unable to experience by being forced to become the family provider. The only thing Katniss loves in the world is Prim, which puts Prim at the greatest risk to be used as a tool against Katniss. The Gamemakers use Prim's voice in the mockingjay forest during the Quarter Quell, driving Katniss to the point of madness after just one hour of hearing her little sister's fabricated screams. Given the opportunity, the Capitol would have used Prim instead of Peeta to torture Katniss in District 13. The rebel forces knew this, and she was one of the first ones saved by Gale in order to avoid this situation. The consequence of being a nonviolent rebel is being unconsidered or discredited for the success of the rebel movement. Alma Coin ultimately decides that Prim no longer serves a purpose to the rebel forces and uses her as bait in a plan to kill Katniss.

The rebels use the mockingjay as their symbol for the rebellion. The mockingjay, like Katniss and the rebels, was never meant to exist as it is a government experiment gone wrong. The mockingjay is a hybrid of government influence and natural existence, the result of a jabber jay (government experiment) and a mockingbird (natural existence). The rebels symbolize the rejection of government influence and control within the system

of oppression. Had the government not experimented by using oppressive systems of control, then the rebel forces would not have existed, just like the mockingjay.

Social. Social consequences of an oppressed nation can include forms of personal oppression such as mental illness, addiction, and other debilitating conditions. Citizens who struggle with the consequences develop these conditions as a means of coping (addiction) or from the manifestation of not being able to cope (depression). Katniss's mother and Haymitch (Katniss's mentor) both suffer from ailments that make it difficult to contribute to society and the resolution of oppression.

Depression. The (unnamed) mother of Katniss is clearly depressed following the death of her husband. By not having a given name her portion of the story is diminished, and she further mimics the invisibility of the illness she suffers from. She represents those in society who are unable to cope with oppression. In order to survive she must check out of her life and responsibilities, turning away from the outside world and retreats to live inside her head. Katniss describes the aftermath:

The district had given us a small amount of money as compensation for his death, enough to cover one month of grieving at which time my mother would be expected to get a job. Only she didn't. She didn't do anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blankets on her bed, eyes fixed on some point in the distance. (Collins, 2008, p. 25)

The Everdeen family was a one-income household, with Mr. Everdeen acting as the breadwinner through his job at the mine. Because of the dangerous work environment and likely unsafe conditions, there was an accident that resulted in his death along with several other men in the community, including Gale's father. The Capitol provided a

small severance package to the families who were then expected to find work. In District 12 there is a shortage of jobs available to women. Mrs. Everdeen eventually started an apothecary business out of her home, but it took several years for her to find the strength to do this.

Katniss describes the first sign of trouble with her mother, “I guess I should have known there was a problem right then. Because why were we [Katniss and Prim] looking for her [after the explosion], when the reverse should have been true” (Collins, 2010, p. 208). The loss of this income put Katniss, Prim, and Mrs. Everdeen in a very difficult situation, and Mrs. Everdeen became mentally ill with depression.

The relationship Katniss has with her mother becomes strained. This highlights a current problem where society doesn't understand the struggle mental illness can cause a person. Depression, anxiety, and other forms are considered “invisible” because they don't come with observable side effects like hair loss in cancer patients or scars like heart disease. Since the consequences of the illness are largely unnoticed by the general population, there is a misconception that the mentally ill can just change their mind to think positive thoughts or choose to have a better day through sure will:

Katniss: “Listen to me. Are you listening to me?” She nods, alarmed by my intensity.

She must know what's coming. “You can't leave again,” I say.

Mrs. Everdeen: “I know. I won't. I couldn't help what” —

Katniss: “Well, you have to help it this time” (Collins, 2008, p. 34).

Unfortunately the only way Mrs. Everdeen could “help it” would be treatment, and since doctors are scarce in District 12, mental health workers are likely obsolete.

Mrs. Everdeen had few options after her husband's death, limited job opportunities as well as limited resources to help her depression. The reason for checking out on her family is clear, but the force that kept her in the darkness for so long is the lack of resources available. Her options for recourse were further limited by her lack of knowledge on treating depression. The Capitol isn't providing informational packets on how to heal depressed citizens because those who are suffering are again easiest to control. The Capitol uses any and every opportunity to handicap society as a means of continued control.

Addiction. Effie's nemesis is Haymitch who loves to drink the white liquor of The Hob as well as the fine cocktails of the Capitol. When he first appears in the trilogy he is described as "a paunchy, middle-aged man, who at this moment appears hollering something unintelligible, staggers onto the stage, and falls into the third chair. He's drunk" (Collins, 2008, p. 19). As the only living Victor of District 12, Haymitch must serve as a mentor and coach to Katniss and Peeta in the Games. Katniss is quickly frustrated with Haymitch as he is responsible for creating partnerships with the wealthy Capitolists that then send sponsorships to the tributes in the Arena. Katniss believes that Haymitch's drinking problem offsets the Capitolists leading them to take their business elsewhere to avoid interacting with the drunk.

Only after winning the 74th Hunger Games can Katniss understand why Haymitch drinks. She becomes consumed with nightmares from the arena and imagines that Haymitch uses the white liquor as a means to cope with his own demons. Substance abuse is common among Victors, as evident by the District 6 Victors who are addicted to

morphling and even Johanna Mason tries to secure the painkiller by stealing Katniss's IV drip throughout *Mockingjay*.

Even after leaving the Games, Haymitch's death toll continues to rise. Every year for at least 30 years he has served as a mentor (his formal job title) to two tributes from District 12. Since there have been no other Victors, Haymitch has watched at least 60 children die, after forming close bonds and relationships with them. Effie Trinket expresses the challenge of Haymitch's addiction:

You know your mentor is your lifeline to the world in these Games. The one who advises you, lines up your sponsors, and dictates the presentation of any gifts.

Haymitch can well be the difference between your life and your death! (Collins, 2008, p. 44)

After the Games are over Haymitch then returns to Victor's Village where he lives alone and in isolation, separated from the laborers and families of District 12.

As a Victor, Haymitch is exempt from traditional work because the Capitol provides his food and housing as reward for winning the Games. Haymitch then becomes entertainment, and his contribution to society is to produce entertaining clips for the audience when he is called to appear at the reaping ceremony. His relationship with the Capitol is strained at best, as he is described as the laughing stock of the ceremony. Effie Trinket can barely stand his presence and is forced to work with him. In terms of job satisfaction, Haymitch obviously hates his job and projects that hate onto those that act as an employer, President Snow and the Gamemakers.

Haymitch enjoys Katniss's antics and signs of insubordination against the Gamemakers during the scorecard session when Katniss shoots an apple out of a pig's

mouth. Haymitch is equivalent to the modern version of a war veteran, who has served his time in the trenches and has witnessed the worst humanity has to offer. After returning home, Haymitch suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder like most of the other Victors, yet he is now expected to train children to duplicate his success through any vicious means available.

Substance abuse is not exclusive to the districts; even the Capitolists have their own supply of pills and concoctions. At the Victor Banquet, Peeta and Katniss are appalled that the party guests gorge themselves on food and then take a drink of clear liquid that empties their stomach for more consumption (Collins, 2009, p. 78). The guests don't understand the wastefulness of their ways, while Peeta and Katniss are acutely aware of how the wasted food could help their district. Even more despairing is that the districts must treat infectious diseases, cuts, and wounds using snow and wild herbs. In contrast, the Capitol has enough resources it can create a gluttony pill to be consumed at parties like breath mints.

Addiction takes several forms through drug and substance as well as other forms of coping such as distraction. Capitol citizens are even addicted to the entertainment value of the Hunger Games. Entertainment and distractions like drug and alcohol abuse serve as another example of Althusser's concept of ISA. The Capitol uses ideological distraction to create fear and control. Addicts suffer public scrutiny and judgment for their behaviors. Society sees these behaviors as a conscious choice instead of an inflicted condition, often uncontrollable by the addict themselves. Addicts then become characterized and judged as being non-trustworthy and lacking self-control. The Capitol enjoys Haymitch's public display of drunkenness, knowing that no one takes him

seriously. With public perception of Haymitch at an all-time low, the Capitol wrongly assumes that he no longer holds any power and thus is not a threat.

Exploitation. While Katniss is obviously exploited, being used by both the Capitol and the rebel forces, other characters utilize their exploitation and use it as a tool against the Capitol. The pretty boy of the Victor circle is Finnick Odair, known for his charming personality and golden physique. Finnick is arm candy for the Capitol which uses him as an escort for wealthy Capitolists. The Capitolists purchase Finnick for entertainment, including sexual exploitation, and as a companion to Capitol events. Finnick tolerates this oppression because the Capitol has threatened to hurt his family and his love, Annie, if he refuses to fulfill his duties.

Finnick continues masquerading as a sex slave to cope with his own experience in the Arena. Finnick was the youngest person to ever win the Hunger Games; only 14 when he entered the Arena. An innocent and naive fisherman's son faced with opponents three times his size, Finnick was forced to make very difficult decisions that lead to the death of 23 other children. The guilt of taking so many lives in the Arena made the idea of losing another life (Annie) inconceivable to Finnick. He faced so much guilt over the lost lives during his Hunger Games, it became impossible for Finnick to risk any other spilt blood.

Finnick showcases this fear as he works tirelessly to save Peeta, conducting CPR after Peeta walked into an arena force field. Although many readers likely dismissed this as an obvious act proving Finnick's allegiance to Katniss, he was actually avoiding another death count on his watch. Finnick truly wants to avoid the death of those around him, so much so that he ultimately sacrifices himself to save Katniss in *Mockingjay*.

Before his death, Finnick begins to exploit his own captors by requiring payment through secrets instead of currency. As a Victor, Finnick is well cared for with a home and yearly food supply which leaves him wanting little that money could buy. Instead, Finnick begins to gather secrets about Capitol figureheads including President Snow. The information gathered is eventually used by the rebel forces for propaganda material that is broadcast to all of Panem. Finnick is able to change the relationship from exploited to exploiter as he uses President Snow's deepest secrets to cause harm and destruction.

Exploitation, addiction, and depression begin to reflect cracks in the hegemonic structures of Panem. The community is no longer accepting oppression as a social normalcy. Instead those citizens that have been pushed down too far and for too long are challenging their situation. The depressed gain motivation and a will to not only live, but to also provide life for others as Katniss's mother reenters society as a healer when Gale was whipped in the public square. The addicted become sober, as Haymitch makes a conscious effort to be present in the everyday decisions that impact Katniss and Peeta. The exploited then reverse the role and act as the exploiter as Finnick using industry secrets to blackmail and sabotage President Snow. These three characters refused to accept their current life defined as normal by the Capitol, instead challenged their situations and created a different future based on their own ideology of life.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the textual analysis of *The Hunger Games* trilogy and categorized into two different realms of oppression, institutional and individual forces. These two realms were then further categorized to follow the three themes of ideology, economic, political, and social. The chapter considers the actions of District 13 to combat

or negate the oppressive forces of the Capitol regime, emphasizing the one area unresolved by the new district which was education.

The next chapter discusses the missing education resolution by providing further exploration into the themes and symbols of education alluded to in the trilogy. The chapter then resolves the original research questions of the study, giving consideration to the original purpose of dystopian genre which is to serve as a warning call for current behaviors. These behaviors are discussed in terms of modern U.S. society as a reflection of obstacles faced within *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This analysis has used an ideological lens to examine *The Hunger Games* trilogy. The characters, places, and districts of Panem provided material to analyze different levels of oppression with some districts being shown leniency while others suffered harsh punishments including near starvation. Districts that are favored by the Capitol enjoy luxuries like specialized training academies that result in more Victors at the annual Hunger Games competition compared to other districts left starving. Young adult fiction can often mirror modern society, further justifying the significance of this study.

The class struggles and control mechanisms used by the Capitol led to an ideological study of the trilogy material. The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ 1: How does the dominant ideology function in the preparation of District tributes?

RQ 2: In what ways does *The Hunger Games* trilogy serve as an ideological critique of the U.S. social systems?

In answer to the first research question, consider the preparations and environments of the tributes in relation to the commodity production of their districts, the governing superstructure was categorized into two realms, institutional and individual forces of oppression as previously explored. The institutional forces are considered to

flow from the top of the superstructure down to the bottom, which included the work environment, material quotas, and rule enforcement. Individual forces are structured to keep citizens at the bottom through job duties, addiction, and other means that makes breaking the cycle of oppression difficult if not impossible. The two realms were further categorized using three themes of ideology: economic, political, and social.

The Capitol oppresses the Panem districts with economic tools including: (a) controlling the division of labor; (b) controlling the modes of production; and, (c) controlling the distribution of resources resulting from labor and production. These mechanisms create a superstructure built to oppress the public not temporarily, but for generations. By placing control mechanisms on every aspect of production, the Capitol retains all of the power. Furthermore the Capitol distracts citizens to place blame on other districts instead of the ruling class.

Key political forms of oppression included propaganda, Peacekeepers, and barriers. The propaganda techniques included the use of slogans like “may the odds be ever in your favor” (Collins, 2008, p. 19). This slogan shares a gambling undertone, as if winning the Hunger Games was a matter of luck. Unfortunately the Gamemakers are able to bend the Games to the favor of the Career tributes. President Snow then uses doctored images of a broken and destroyed District 13 as a warning to all other districts. The cost of a rebellion is death: the death of tributes and the destruction of an entire district. Like most propaganda messages there is a grain of truth that has been masked and exaggerated to serve the best interest of the Capitol.

The institutional forms of social oppression included themes of poverty and hunger, tradition, and education. The societal problems maintain levels of oppression by

restricting access to tools that would allow citizens to improve their livelihood, raise their social status, or awareness of the oppressive environment.

One of the major findings was the use of education as a tool of oppression. The analysis showed that District 13 tried to resolve the institutional and individual forces of oppression found in Panem. To combat hunger, strict rations were developed based on each person's body weight and needs. To reduce waste, detailed schedules with work duties are imprinted on each person's arm at the beginning of each day. District 13 was able to relieve almost all of the forces of oppression using a militarized living style and rigorous control over the rebel citizens; however, District 13 was unable to resolve one key part of oppression, education.

For the second research question, the theme of education is most applicable and observable in current problems of U.S. society. Throughout the trilogy Katniss struggles with lack of knowledge from not knowing who to trust to not knowing the real reason for the first rebellion. Katniss is constantly left in the dark, questioning those around her as well as herself. Education and information are valid themes worthy of further consideration especially following this textual analysis. When considering education as the unresolved form of oppression, one must consider the syntax of the author. The author chose to name the "Districts" instead of states, counties, or even cities which are common geographical terms. The word district is often used inside the education system with reference to school districts. A daily schedule is imprinted on each person's arm, with an hour by hour explanation of duties and responsibilities. The majority of adults in modern society do not have an hour-by-hour schedule. The last time most people experienced such a routine is in high school when there is a detailed class schedule

depicting the room number, teacher, and subject as assigned for the semester. The ringing of a bell signals the end of a class period, similar to the mockingjay tune used by Rue in District 11 to signal the end of a working day.

With the restricted schedule comes limited education and training, the few who are allowed are limited to skills designed specifically to help District 13. While District 13 offers more education opportunities than other districts previously, the opportunity is still highly controlled and regulated, not available to all. Katniss becomes very excited about the educational opportunities offered to Prim and Gale. Prim is able to train as a doctor, an opportunity Katniss knows would have never been available in District 12. Gale receives training to become a military commander, being trusted to work with BeeTee on military strategy and weaponry, a far cry from the mining job he held in District 12. District 13 allows these educational opportunities to individuals to further expand the success of the district as a whole. Alma Coin, however, is very careful with allowing people access to such tools as she is hesitant to allow Katniss an opportunity to train in the military facility. Coin likely recognizes that the mockingjay has significant power already, and understands that additional education or training will only magnify Katniss's threat as an enemy. This is another calculated system of control, one that should signal a red flag for Katniss yet goes unchallenged and unnoticed.

The location of District 12 further outlines the problems faced by rural education systems, such as those in current day Appalachia. Although this area is often stereotyped and unfairly judged, students from this area are largely underserved and the national test scores support this claim. West Virginia and Kentucky have less than a 50% pass rate on the standardized math test for eighth graders ("The FY 2014", 2014). This compared to a

national average of 82% showcases a still broken system. While the education slogan is commonly known as “No Child Left Behind,” a presidential enactment made by President George W. Bush in 2003, the system is unfortunately still missing groups of students in rural populations (“The FY 2014”, 2014).

Currently, public schools across the U.S. face pressure with the Common Core requirements, and the standardized tests as well as budget cuts from the federal government (Peterson & West, 2003). The standardized tests place schools in competition with each other, hoping to pass the minimum grade requirements or face being shut down by the government. Compared to the Hunger Games where the tributes are competing against each other to survive, schools are similarly trying to keep the doors open and outlast their own competition.

The budget cuts are largely impacting art, music, and other programs currently not included in the standardized tests (Peterson & West, 2003). The absence of these programs mimics the absence of Katniss’s father, who first taught her music and the folk songs she often turns to for comfort. The focus shifts off of creative classes and focuses on reading and math subjects. The focus on core subjects denies students opportunities to explore creative outlets.

Katniss was able to survive the Hunger Games because of her creative strategies and relying on her alliance members. Students who are well versed in limited subject areas are unable to adapt, much like tributes in the Games. Tributes who only know how to harvest grain, do not know how to treat wounds, hunt, or build a fire. Similarly students who only focus on math and reading may be unable to creatively problem solve in the workplace.

Marx considered a specialized workforce an unstoppable weapon against oppression (Duncan, 1973). The skills and training would ideally create job security thus giving power to the worker. Contrarily, highly focused and specialized education creates a robotic generation of students who are well read and able to compute math problems but will struggle with other obstacles in the workforce. The dominant ideologies of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, specifically economic, political, and social forms of oppression, mimic current U.S. social systems including education.

Individual forms of oppression, continued to follow the three previous themes: economic, political, and social. The themes were observed through various characters of the trilogy. The characters further remain oppressed through job duties or ailments that make breaking the cycle of oppression difficult if not impossible.

The economic forms of oppression use the job duties and employment of individuals to keep individuals powerless, including cultural imperialism and marginalization. Currently there is a cultural focus on image that is intensified with technology like Instagram with the countless filters and Photoshop that can easily alter images to suit cultural standards of beauty (Pharr & Clark, 2010). As a culture there is an unconscious acceptance of image alteration, where people no longer question real or not real, perhaps they don't care (Pharr & Clark, 2010). Celebrities, athletes, and even political leaders want to present the best image possible to the mass public which often includes airbrushing, skin tucking, and body alteration similar to the treatment Katniss must endure by her prep team prior to being presented to the Capitol audience. Effie Trinket embodies cultural imperialism and image management with her job as the Capitol

chaperone responsible for presenting Katniss and Peeta to the national audience of Panem.

The political form of individual oppression showcased three rebels: Plutarch, Cinna, and Prim. Each of these characters contributes to the rebel force in very different ways. The key finding is the spectrum of dissent, where one character uses insubordination as a weapon against the Capitol, while another character gives aid to strengthen the rebel mission. The various methods and weapons used against the Capitol show that even the smallest rebellious act can greatly impact the overall cause.

Social forms of individual oppression included depression, addiction, and exploitation. The three characters included Mrs. Everdeen, Haymitch, and Finnick. The characters overcame their ailments in order to serve the rebel forces. Mrs. Everdeen stopped wallowing in her husband's death and grieving, she chose to focus on healing other people which then healed herself. Haymitch focused on being sober to create alliances and earn sponsorships for Katniss and Peeta inside the arena. Finally, Finnick stopped being exploited as a sexual slave of the Capitol and instead used the secrets he earned in exchange for his body as blackmail against President Snow. The characters' ability to overcome the oppressive environments surrounding them is a motivation to readers who may sympathize with Finnick who feels trapped. These individual triumphs add to the overall Victory of the rebel forces that strategically target the Capitol tools of oppression and then use these tools against the ruling class.

Furthermore, ideological criticism historically includes breaking down the systems of different governments by focusing on identifying the superstructure and how it oppresses the masses. This organizes a structure, demonstrating how ideology is used

to control the districts, in which “it becomes clear that every ideology is composed of three ingredients, the first an invariant myth, the second, a compound of philosophical doctrines which alternate cyclically in the history of ideology, the third, a historically determined decision as to a chosen class of the time” (Feuer, 1975, p. 1). The ideological narrative described in *The Hunger Games* is that the nation of Panem is safe and secure. People have bought into the policy that two children from each district must be sacrificed as a restitution payment for the previous rebellion that happened 75 years prior.

This ideology led to the Hunger Games policy which has been accepted into Panem society and becomes a celebration in the Capital, an annual party for the society. The societal inclusion of this horrendous act into everyday life, further exemplifies the idea that “a partial myth might explicate a particular institution, some innovation in technology, or it might explain some particular sociological fact” (Feuer, 1975, p. 130). The information provided by the Capitol becomes truth for the district citizens. Whatever ideology the ruling class has will trickle down to the working population. The use of a partial truth with the history of Panem has a lasting impact as to the future of the country that enables the Capitol to control the population using fear tactics like the annual Hunger Games.

Although the villain of the trilogy is President Snow (and later Alma Coin), the bigger evil is the unnamed leaders of Panem who created the first Hunger Games. The original creator found a way to realign the social expectations of Panem, and fostered an environment that left parents helpless against the sacrificing of children. The original Gamemakers are able to use a partial truth, the history of a rebellion, to assert authority over the districts that participated. This follows the idea that “an ideology must therefore

enlist a certain minimum perception of sociological argument: it must at least avail itself of a minimum perception of social reality, some empirical facts which will lend at least a partial credence to its assertions” (Feuer, 1975, p. 96). This shift in moral truth leaves parents prepping their children with pretty blue dresses and matching ribbons in their hair to walk to the slaughter house.

The original creators had enough foresight and confidence in their newly depicted Hunger Games that they also created Quarter Quell. The Quarter Quell is a specially sanctioned and predetermined Games that happen every 25 years. For example, at the 75th Hunger Games the participants are not new tributes but rather any remaining Victors. By dictating specific directions for each quarter-century Hunger Games, the original creator has made a lasting impact on all generations of Panem. This essentially ensures immortality for the original creator as he or she continues to have a large presence at the games, even if they are never mentioned by name. The original creator then becomes “the ideologist, enveloping his myth in scientific language, aims to re-endow the universe with his political or racial, or national traits” (Feuer, 1975, p. 18). The universe surrounding Katniss and Panem citizens has forever been changed with this new national trend of homicidal entertainment.

President Snow serves as the governing master intellectual, as he has the foresight and ability to foreshadow the undertones of rebellion stirred up by Katniss’s act of defiance in the arena. Snow then embodies the idea that “it is an astonishing fact in the history of ideology that the ‘master-intellectuals’, the masters of ideology, of every generational wave have mostly agree on one proposition - that the intellectuals should be the governing elite in society” (Feuer, 1975, p. 117). Snow is not the only power hungry

individual in the series as Alma Coin also displays her concern for Katniss's power over the people with trepidation at the idea that Katniss may try to rise to a government title of power.

Katniss, the girl on fire, becomes a powerful character not through title anointment or societal relationships. She builds her power, reluctantly, by working side by side with other rebels to fight against a mutual cause. While the Capital touts its slogans "may the odds be ever in your favor," this is unacceptable to the masses as evident by the jokes shared between Katniss and Gale (Collins, 2008, p. 8). Instead, society becomes consumed with new slogans such as "girl on fire" and "fire is catching" (Collins, 2008; Collins, 2009). Katniss outsmarts the Gamemakers in the first book, her intellect and quick thinking earns her the title of "girl on fire." She then tours the neighboring districts during the Victory Tour which spreads her image and message even further into Panem as a symbol that embodies more than a Victory. Initially, Katniss thinks she is a symbol of the Hunger Games, instead she is a symbol for something bigger than she can even understand. The mockingjay symbol and "girl on fire" slogan exemplifies the argument by Feuer (1975) that "every generational wave in ideology tends to be associated with some distinctive catchword which dramatizes its principal unconscious impulse. As a parade has its slogans, so does an ideological movement "alienation in 1960's, solidarity - 19th century" (Feuer, 1975, p. 135). She is spreading fuel to the rebellion and adding fire to a cause that had previously been mere kindling.

The original Gamemaker or creator of the Hunger Games designed a distinct and purposeful attack on the lower class citizens of Panem. The decision to send two children from each district as sacrificial lambs as payment for a past rebellion is horrendous,

however, the creators were calculating in the exclusion of Capitol citizens as a means to save any descendants from suffering the fate of being selected to participate. “The official theory [by Marx] - the ruling ideas are the ideas that serve the interest of the ruling class” (Elster, 1986a, p. 172). The original creators served self-interest and self-preservation in the exclusion of Capitol residents.

Capitol residents have little knowledge of the oppressive nature suffered inside the twelve districts where food is scarce, resources limited, and fear is abundant. This lifestyle is opposite of the Capitol gluttony that encourages citizens to induce vomiting as a means to consume more food at a party. When Katniss and Peeta attend a gala ball at the president’s mansion, they are faced with the reality that the Capitol citizens will throw away more food from that one party than their district will likely see in an entire year. The two different groups, district tributes and Capitol citizens, attend the same party but do not have a shared experience. This situation is an example of “how the members of different strata and of groups differentiated by profession, rank, and achievement perceive events and actions, how they evaluate them and incorporate them into their respective world views” (Barth, 1976, p. 33). Katniss and Peeta are upset by the actions of the elites, and the elites seem upset at their lack of participation in festivities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study expand the field of rhetorical criticism by applying ideology through textual analysis of a young adult novel. Rhetorical scholars have previously underexplored the genre of young adult novels and the trilogy has been under considered in academia. The purpose of the study was to analyze the different backgrounds and preparations of tribute to better understand how the Capitol oppresses

citizens. With the function of a dystopian novel being to provide a warning call to current generations, analyzing such literature using a rhetorical lens enables scholars to apply the authors' message to current social obstacles.

The obstacles include themes of inequality among classes. District 12 struggles to get the minimum food rations and is often forgotten by the Capitol. The sporadic occurrence of electricity and the relaxed presence of Peacekeepers further prove this point. By comparison, District 1 enjoys a comfortable (although still limited) supply of food that enables the district to produce tributes that are three times bigger than Katniss (Collins, 2008).

The inequality continues with consideration of the force present in the districts. District 12, at first, has a relaxed working relationship with Peacekeeper Darius who doesn't enforce the fence line or issue punishments for illegally hunting wild turkeys in the forest. District 11, comparatively, faces daily whippings in an environment that includes 12-14 hour working days with little opportunity to engage in illegal activity. The inequalities present in current society include perceptions of police brutality against specific races, for example the Ferguson riots resulting from police shooting of Michael Brown in 2014. Another example is the persecution of immigrants seeking refuge during war time. While some countries have adamantly opposed accepting the immigrants, others simply ignore the border like Darius ignores the fence line.

Education is another example of a current social institution which served as a prominent theme of oppression in *The Hunger Games* trilogy and was compared with the current U.S. educational institutions. Cultural artifacts, particularly popular young adult fiction, are powerful tools that can be used to critique social institutions in the United

States, helping make visible examples of dominance that should be resisted. *The Hunger Games* becomes more than a trilogy about the “girl on fire.” As the U.S. education system promises that no child will be left behind, the Hunger Games promised no child is safe.

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APPENDIX

List of Characters (alphabetical order by first name)

Alma Coin: *District 13 (Nuclear Weapons)* The ruler and organizer of the rebel forces. She looks to overthrow President Snow by using Katniss to deliver political propaganda.

Annie Cresta: *District 4 (Fishing)* Victor and love interest of Finnick Odair. She suffers from anxiety following the Hunger Games. She is captured by the Capitol following the disruption during the Quarter Quell.

BeeTee: *District 3 (Technology)* Victor and alliance member for the rebel forces. BeeTee designed the idea to use the Arena force field to stage the rescue of Katniss from the Quarter Quell.

Blight: *District 7 (Lumber)* Victor with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces.

Bonnie: *District 8 (Textiles)* School teacher and refuge found in the forest outside of District 12. Bonnie and Twill were trying to escape their home district and find protection in District 13.

Brutus: *District 2 (Masonry)* Victor with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces.

Caesar Flickman: *The Capitol* The master of ceremonies for the Hunger Games production. He conducts interviews with tributes and Victors prior to entering the Arena. Thus he generates audience interest in the competitors.

Cashmere: *District 1 (Luxury)* Victor with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. Sister of Gloss.

Cato: *District 2 (Masonry)* Tribute with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces.

Cinna: *The Capitol* Katniss's stylist and friend. He creates all of the transformative costumes, using his design work to show dissent against the Capitol. The 74th Hunger Games was his first year as a stylist.

Clove: *District 2 (Masonry)* Tribute with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. Clove almost succeeded in killing Katniss during 74th Hunger Games until Thresh intervened.

Cray: *District 12 (Coal)* Capitol appointed Peacekeeper, he uses his position to coerce District 12 girls into prostitution.

Dalton: *District 10 (Livestock)* A refuge in District 13 who explains to Katniss the population shortage of children is due to a plague.

Darius: *District 12 (Coal)* Capitol appointed Peacekeeper who purchases wild game from Katniss, displaying a relaxed attitude for Capitol rules and regulations. He is later turned to an Avox (a Capitol servant whose tongue has been cut out) for unknown reasons.

Effie Trinket: *The Capitol* Capitol appointed chaperone for District 12. Her job includes maintaining the image and schedule of tributes as well as preparing speeches for their appearances. During the rebellion, Effie is taken prisoner and held in District 13 under deplorable conditions.

Enobaria: *District 2 (Masonry)* Victor with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. She is known for having filed her teeth into sharp daggers to be used as weapons.

Finnick Odair: *District 4 (Fishing)* Victor who first forms alliance with Katniss and Peeta during the Quarter Quell. He presented Katniss with a gold bangle as a sign of Haymitch's approval of the alliance. Finnick is used as a Capitol escort, trading his body

for political secrets. Finnick is in love with Annie Cresta and marries her after they are both safe in District 13.

Foxface: *District 5 (Energy)* Tribute during the 74th Hunger Games with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. She is quick witted and closely monitors her competitors using their supplies and techniques to her advantage. She tries to steal some berries that Peeta has gathered but ends up poisoning herself.

Gale Hawthorne: *District 12 (Coal)* Best friends with Katniss Everdeen. Has a family of brothers, sisters, and a mother who count on him to be the family provider following his father's death in a mining accident. Has never competed in the Hunger Games.

Glimmer: *District 1 (Luxury)* Tribute with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. She was killed by tracker jackers during the 74th Hunger Games, which allowed Katniss to steal her bow and arrows.

Gloss: *District 1 (Luxury)* Male Victor with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces. Brother of Cashmere.

Haymitch Abernathy: *District 12 (Coal)* Victor and mentor for District 12 tributes. His job includes overseeing the training and development of tributes prior to entering the Arena. He is also responsible for forming relationships with Capitol citizens and securing sponsorships for Katniss and Peeta. He is known as a drunkard who relies heavily on the white liquor illegally produced in District 12.

Johanna Mason: *District 7 (Lumber)* Female Victor and rebel alliance member. She has no friends or family left, and is very outspoken about her disagreement with Capitol politics. She is captured during the Quarter Quell and tortured by the Capitol along with Peeta Mallark.

Katniss Everdeen: *District 12 (Coal)* 16-year-old female, sister of Primrose Everdeen and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Everdeen. She serves as the family provider after her father's death. She is best friends with Gale Hawthorne. Peeta has a crush on her. Katniss continues this act as a star-crossed lover façade with him to earn Capitol attention and favor,

Madge Undersee: *District 12 (Coal)* The daughter of Mayor Undersee and the person who gives Katniss Everdeen the mockingjay pin. The pin was a family heirloom and supposed to bring good luck to Katniss.

Mags: *District 4 (Fishing)* An older woman Victor who volunteers as a tribute to spare Annie Cresta from participating in the Quarter Quell. Mags chooses to commit suicide during the Quarter Quell to further advance the alliance of Katniss, Peeta, and Finnick.

Marvel: *District 1 (Luxury)* Tribute with no known alliance to the Capitol or rebel forces.

Mayor Undersee: *District 12 (Coal)* The mayor of District 12 and father of Madge Undersee. His job includes speaking during the reaping ceremony, as well as delivering Capitol messages and propaganda.

Morphling Addicts: *District 6 (Transportation)* One male and one female Victor who competed in the Quarter Quell. The female Victor is thought to have sacrificed herself to save Katniss, implying that there was an allegiance to the rebel efforts.

Mr. Everdeen: *District 12 (Coal)* The unnamed father of Katniss and Primrose Everdeen, husband of Mrs. Everdeen. He is credited for teaching Katniss how to shoot a bow, as well as the songs she sings to Rue and Pollux. He died in a mining accident.

Mrs. Everdeen: *District 12 (Coal)* The unnamed mother of Katniss and Primrose Everdeen, widow of Mr. Everdeen. She comes from a wealthy family, by District 12 standards, but chose to marry a miner instead of a person within her class. She is depressed following her husband's death but eventually is able to function as a healer in District 12 and a doctor later in District 13.

Peeta Mellark: *District 12 (Coal)* Selected to serve as tribute for the 74th Hunger Games. He fosters a romantic crush on Katniss Everdeen for several years. Peeta is captured during the Quarter Quell and tortured along with Johanna Mason.

Pollux: *The Capitol* He serves as a cameraman for Katniss's production team in District 13. He is an Avox (a Capitol servant whose tongue has been cut out) for unknown reasons.

Plutarch Heavensbee: *The Capitol* The second known Gamemaker of the Hunger Games. His job includes designing and overseeing the Arena used for the Quarter Quell. He is a rebel supporter and political spy stationed inside the Capitol.

President Snow: *The Capitol* The ruler of Panem, he is the villain of the story. To maintain control he has used poison to kill his enemies as well as any ally who shows to be a potential threat.

Primrose Everdeen: *District 12 (Coal)* Sister to Katniss Everdeen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Everdeen. Also known as "Prim," she is 12 years old at the time of being selected to serve as tribute for the 74th Hunger Games. Her sister volunteers to serve in her place. She is known to be a gentle and kind person, beloved by all that know her. In District 13 she begins training to become a doctor.

Rue: *District 11 (Agriculture)* A 12-year-old female tribute who forms an alliance with Katniss during the 74th Hunger Games. She is knowledgeable in plants and provides medical attention after her plan to use tracker jackers results in Katniss being injured. She is aligned with the other District 11 tribute, Thresh. She is ultimately killed by Marvel from District 1.

Seneca Crane: *The Capitol* The first known Gamemaker. His job includes constructing obstacles and designing the 74th Hunger Games Arena. He is forced to commit suicide after disappointing President Snow by awarding two Victors (Katniss and Peeta).

Thread: *District 12 (Coal)* Capitol appointed Peacekeeper for District 12 following the removal of Darius. He strictly enforces all Capitol rules including returning electricity to the border fence and imposing public whippings on citizens, including Gale Hawthorne.

Thresh: *District 11 (Agriculture)* Male tribute aligned with Rue. Before Clove tries to kill Katniss, Thresh overhears her (Clove) bragging about her alliance members killing Rue. This resulted in Thresh taking out Clove as a reimbursement for the kindness Katniss showed the little girl, Rue.

Twill: *District 8 (Textiles)* A school aged child traveling with Bonnie to seek refuge in District 13. She is forced to work in a peacekeeper uniform factory after attending school, indicating that her family is very poor.

Wiress: *District 3 (Technology)* Close friend to BeeTee and rebel supporter. After entering the Quarter Quell she begins to show signs of distress and symptoms of shock. This makes other alliance members like Johanna Mason ignore her rantings. However, she is the one who discovers the clock framework of the Arena, a big part of the escape strategy used by the rebel forces.

