MEDIA AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION: THE POWER DYNAMICS OF MEDIA IN THE
YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIAN FICTION OF M.T. ANDERSON AND SUZANNE
COLLINS

by

Kaline Elizabeth Baker

B.A., Trent University, 2006
B.Ed., Queen’s University 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2015

© Kaline Elizabeth Baker, 2015
Abstract

Using a wide array of research on media and youth, combined with theories about dystopian literature, this thesis examines the portrayal of media in the young adult novels Feed, by M.T. Anderson, and the Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins. This research study is a part of the larger critical discussion about how adult anxieties concerning media use by youth manifest themselves in the fiction written for adolescents by adult authors. By examining the concepts of surveillance, discipline, punishment, and resistance through the critical lens of Michel Foucault’s theories in his work Discipline and Punish, as well as the work of Roberta Trites in Disturbing the Universe, this study finds that media is classified as a social institution in Anderson’s and Collins’ young adult dystopian narratives. In these novels, the dystopian regimes utilize media to maintain social order and behavior. This study explores how the young adult protagonists are disempowered by media, learn how media as a social force controls their lives, and gain agency through a reversal of media use to reinforce their personal power and independence.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, K. Baker.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................ ii

Preface .......................................................................................................................... iii

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... vii

Dedication ...................................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Origins of Interest ................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Rationale for Selection of Primary Texts ............................................................. 3
  1.3 Research Focus and Questions ............................................................................ 7

Chapter 2: Literature Review ...................................................................................... 10
  2.1 Media ..................................................................................................................... 10
    2.1.1 Deconstructing the Dichotomy: The Neutral and Positive ......................... 13
      2.1.1.1 Family Connections .............................................................................. 14
      2.1.1.2 Sociability and Friendships .................................................................. 15
      2.1.1.3 Advantages for Young People with Special Needs .............................. 17
      2.1.1.4 Education .............................................................................................. 19
      2.1.1.5 Youth Participation in Democracy and Cultural Resistance .............. 22
    2.1.2 Deconstructing the Dichotomy: The Dystopia Negative .............................. 25
      2.1.2.1 Wealth and Social Inequality ................................................................. 27
      2.1.2.2 Consumerism ....................................................................................... 29
      2.1.2.3 Violence and Aggression ..................................................................... 32
6.1.2 Resistance Through Media ................................................................. 150
6.2 Limitations of the Study ........................................................................ 153
6.3 Recommendations for Further Research .............................................. 154

Works Cited.................................................................................................... 155
Acknowledgements

This thesis has only reached completion because of a handful of special people. First of all, I would to give my profound thanks to Judi Saltman, the chair of the Children’s Literature program and my thesis supervisor. Her support, reassurance, and feedback were just what I needed to persevere throughout this journey. I would also like to thank Eric Meyers, for his early guidance during this process, and my committee member Rick Gooding, for his unwavering understanding and support during my writing process.

As an educator, I truly appreciate great teaching, particularly when on the receiving end. Therefore, I sincerely thank Kathryn Shoemaker, Theresa Rogers, and again Judi Saltman and Rick Gooding, for making the coursework for this degree truly enjoyable.

Last, but not the least of my academic appreciation, I must express my gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for their financial support during my time studying at U.B.C.

Finally, I would not have gotten through the last few years without my personal cheering squad. My family and friends, as well as my colleagues and students at Brockton, have been encouraging and supportive throughout this entire process. Thank you all.
Dedication

My initial supervisor and mentor when I first started this program was Judy Brown. Her kindness and bravery were truly inspirational, and I would like to do what little honour to her memory that I can by dedicating this thesis to her, as it was her enthusiastic guidance that laid the foundation for this work.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origins of Interest

When I first began teaching intermediate and senior high school students at the International School of Uganda in Kampala 2007, I was amazed at the generation gap between myself and the students when it came to media usage, even though I was closer in age to them than I was to the rest of the staff. I had expected to be familiar with the majority of their media trends and preferences, but I was very mistaken. When I listened to their talk about TV shows I had never heard of, game consoles like Wii’s, and new social networking devices like Twitter, I realized how out of touch I was. Students possessed technology I had never heard of; some even had cell phones with “Mosquito” ring tones: rings downloaded from the internet at such a high kilohertz frequency that adults couldn’t hear them, allowing the students to text one another without getting caught in class.

Some teachers at the school viewed this media saturation of the student world as a positive influence, making comments such as “Isn’t it amazing, look at the wonderful things these students can create! Look at these projects they can do!” Most, however, saw media as a plague: it was a constant interference, a distraction, and, as our school librarian so eloquently put it: “This crap is going to rot their brains.”

As a result of this philosophical division, media literacy became one of my favourite units to teach in grades 8 and 9. The students enjoyed the debatable pro/con aspect of media as we studied television, music, internet, advertising, and news reporting agencies. While teaching, I defined media to my students as a social institution, as media communication affects a wide
array of people, and often modifies human behaviour (Miller). I relished the challenge of trying to balance the two extreme views of media influence on youth, and I found I learned as much from the students as they learned from me. While they kept me up to date on new devices, websites, and applications, I encouraged them to examine media critically, and think about how it may shape their everyday opinions and attitudes. It was an ideal situation. The students felt it was a privilege to study media, while I witnessed student epiphanies and revelations, because we were looking at material that was relevant to their daily lives.

It never ceased to amaze me when teaching these units that while students were accomplished at using software and creating amazing projects and assignments, they demonstrated little critical awareness of media as a source of power in, and even over, their lives. Power, particularly institutional power as Michel Foucault has argued, is a continual process of repression over individuals in a particular society (Discipline and Punish 90). My students in Uganda thought of media as entertainment, or as tools at their disposal to be used at their leisure. It came as a surprise to most students to consider that media is an institution that was also using them to make a profit.

Near the end of my teaching contract in Uganda in 2009, a colleague lent me the novel Hunger Games (2008), written by Suzanne Collins. I was enthralled. Here was the kind of protagonist my students could admire! Although the main character Katniss is victimized by the media, she is at the same time conscious of how it works around her. Consequently, she struggles to calculate her actions to manipulate the television attention to her own advantage, and makes the best of her situation as a contestant by critically analyzing the motivations of the Gamemakers. She is the perfect example of a teenage character that possesses media awareness;
she is a protagonist that young people can emphasize with and learn from. I immediately started recommending the book to my students.

1.2 Rationale for Selection of Primary Texts

When I began to seriously consider how media is portrayed in young adult fiction as a potential topic for my thesis, I knew without a doubt that I wanted to use The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins. Although a trilogy seems like more than enough material to cover in one research study, the trilogy was not yet complete when I started to explore this topic. I also wanted more than one author. Considering that my interest was in media, which is a very broad topic, narrowing my study to one author seemed limiting. I wanted a variety of authors who wrote about a variety of media-related issues, as I felt a comparative study would be less biased.

However, aside from admiring Katniss as a protagonist, I couldn’t yet put my finger on what it was I liked so much about The Hunger Games. I only knew I hadn’t read anything like it before. When I started to discuss my ideas about the representation of media in YA novels with colleagues and professors in the Master of Arts in Children’s Literature program at the University of British Columbia, many different primary texts featuring media were suggested, among them the Gossip Girl series (2002) by Cecily von Ziegesar, The Secret Blog of Raisin Rodriguez (2005) by Judy Goldschmidt, ttyl (2004) by Lauren Myracle, Audrey, Wait! (2008) by Robin Benway, and Media Meltdown (2009) written by Liam O’Donnell. Though these novels were entertaining, after reading them I realized that they were not what I was looking for. In the Gossip Girl series and The Secret Blog of Raisin Rodriguez, both narratives are written in blog form, while ttyl is written entirely in instant messages. Though the authors of these texts are pioneers in the use of a social-media-based format, the purpose behind this kind of work seems
to be more a style of delivery for the story that young readers would identify with, rather than a narrative about the power of media itself. *Audrey, Wait!* was a closer fit, as the main character Audrey is subjected to sudden media fame against her will, when her ex-boyfriend writes a number-one song about their break-up. While Audrey struggles to deal with paparazzi and other invasions of her privacy, she still does not seriously question the institution that has put her into this predicament, the way that Katniss questions the Hunger Games. In the graphic novel *Media Meltdown*, the child characters Bounce, Pema and Jagroop battle a local land developer by using the media and internet. Though the text does lay out how media institutions work, and shows how children can use media as a means of resistance, it is a very didactic and instructional text with a rather weak plot. It is also a book for child readers rather than young adults, which is not the age group I wish to focus on.

While I continued to also search online for more potential young-adult novels on my topic, I came across a novel called *Leaving Simplicity* (2007) by Canadian author Claire Carmichael. The story takes place in a near future where advertising corporations and politics are one and the same, creating a dystopian world where citizens are constantly bombarded by advertisements. An “Ads-4-Life Council” directly involved with the government is responsible for invasive advertisements appearing absolutely everywhere. The young adult protagonists resist the influence of these advertisements when they discover a government murder scandal that would incriminate the Council, and struggle to reveal the truth about the corruption of the government. The themes of *Leaving Simplicity* were appealing, and a more appropriate fit for my comparison with *Hunger Games*. It then struck me that I was going about searching for texts to study alongside *Hunger Games* in an entirely wrong manner. What I wanted was a selected group of dystopian narratives where media played an important role.
I then began searching for young adult dystopias that would be in line with Leaving Simplicity and Hunger Games. Several titles recommended at Vancouver Kidsbooks included Incarceron (2007) by Catherine Fisher, Little Brother (2008) by Cory Doctorow, and The Knife of Never Letting Go (2008) by Patrick Ness. Incarceron I immediately realized was not going to work in conjunction with my other two choices, as the perpetrator of the dystopian state of the world in Fisher’s novel is technological, but not media focused. While the standpoint on technology in this narrative is fascinating, it unfortunately isn’t in line with the media theme I wished to explore. Little Brother was a much closer fit. It features several teenagers who, after being held illegally and tortured by the Department of Homeland Security in a secret interrogation facility after a terrorist attack on San Francisco, innovatively use technology and the internet to resist and protest how San Francisco has become a police state. The title also tips its hat to 1984, one of the foremost adult dystopias in which media plays a prominent role. The focus of the story, however, is more on the uses of technology in aiding resistance rather than the type of media-driven dystopia I was looking for.

I considered using The Knife of Never Letting Go in this thesis, as it depicts a dystopian world where the Internet appears metaphorically as the ability of the characters to read one another’s minds. In a distant future humans have emigrated to another planet where men gain this ability to read the minds not only of each other, but also of animals as well. However rather than being a blessing, this ability to read minds is a curse. Coined as “Noise,” it is characterized as information overload, causing all sorts of problems for the characters in the novel. Though it is the sort of dystopia I was looking for, I concluded that this text wasn’t a perfect fit because “Noise” is something the characters can’t help. It is biological, and not something the characters can resist. After this became clear to me, it helped me to further narrow my research. I realized
that what was so interesting to me about these media dystopias was that media functioned as a tool to exercise state power and control the masses.

One of the final recommendations was M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002), and I knew I had found a primary text I would use that was comparable to *Hunger Games*, as *Feed* follows several teenagers in a world controlled by corporate Internet companies. The novel also has an ending that is more in line with adult dystopias, as its conclusion is distinctly pessimistic about the future, rather than hopeful, like so many young adult dystopias (Reid 200). The downfall of the major characters emphasizes that there is a need for change in the world, and unless this change takes place, there will be dire consequences for the future (Sambell, “Presenting the Case for Social Change” 166). Most young adult dystopias, including the *Hunger Games* trilogy, end on a more hopeful note with the success of the hero, in order to inspire children with the message that change for the better is possible (Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 252; “Presenting the Case for Social Change 164”). This stark difference in endings between *Feed* and my other chosen texts is something that I think is valuable to contrast, as they present very different potential futures for their main characters.

Although at first I planned on using *Hunger Games*, *Leaving Simplicity*, and *Feed*, I decided to drop *Leaving Simplicity* as a primary text in my research study. I originally chose it because the novel fit with what I wanted to research, and as an added bonus, it was by a Canadian author, which would help prevent my study from being too American-centric. However, while its themes were in line with what I am exploring, the plot of the story was not as compelling and its characters were not as captivating as those in *Hunger Games* and *Feed*. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on *Hunger Games* trilogy and *Feed* as my primary texts.
1.3 Research Focus and Questions

The central subject of this research study is the representation of media in the young-adult dystopian fiction of Anderson and Collins. Among the key terms important to this subject is “young-adult fiction.” In the 2009 Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s Best Books for Kids & Teens, young-adult fiction is defined as books “Ideal for Teens Ages 12-18” (24). Roberta Trites, Professor of English at Illinois State University, states that the main difference between adolescent and children’s literature is the issue of how social power is explored during the story (2). She says that “in the adolescent novel, protagonists must learn about the social forces that have made them what they are. They learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function” (3).

The key term “social institution” is somewhat ambiguous, and definitions vary from discipline to discipline. For the purpose of this thesis, I use Seumas Miller’s definition from the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, which I find is the clearest and most concise. He defines social institutions as “complex social forms and mechanisms of social order” that govern the behaviour of society. They have a “social purpose of making and enforcing rules” which govern cooperative human behaviour (Miller).

My focus is on books that depict teenage characters who strive to understand their own power by struggling with the institutions in their lives. I have chosen to look at dystopias, because according to scholars such as Carrie Hintz, the power structures of dystopian societies are implicit warnings about what our own society could eventually become (255). Dystopias can be defined as the opposite of utopia: societies that portray a bleak and desolate future, showcasing exaggerated conditions that often reflect the concerns of contemporary society.
In particular, the books I have selected are novels that depict media as the primary instrument of the perpetrators of totalitarian regimes.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, media is defined as the various means of mass communication, for example, newspapers, radio, television, etc. It can also refer to the employees of media organizations, such as reporters and journalists (“Media” def.2). For this study, media is interpreted as the communication technologies explored in the primary texts I have chosen. In Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, television is the medium I focus on, as it is through television that state power is exercised. In M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*, the internet is what drives the dystopian state of the world, as corporate power is exercised over citizens of a future world by blue-toothing them to the Internet through an implant in their brains.

In my study, I examine the power dynamics in these primary texts, using the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Roberta Trites to explore how media can be understood as a social institution in the course of these narratives. I explore the attitudes of the protagonists toward media, looking closely at how they interact with the power structures that utilize media as a tool to influence their population, such as schools, corporations, and government, as well as the varying extent to which they succumb to or rebel against them.

In Chapter 2, the literature review examines scholarship on media phobia and youth and analyses of dystopia fiction. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the power theories of Roberta Trites and Michel Foucault, and outline my constructed theoretical method and critical framework (power analysis with a focus on media), and the parameters of the analysis. In Chapter 4, I discuss Foucault’s concepts of Surveillance and Discipline, focusing on how media as a social institution in the primary texts uses the theory of the Panopticon and creates docile bodies. In Chapter 5, I use both Foucault and Trites to discuss Punishment and Resistance within the primary texts. I
explore how the dystopian power structures use media to facilitate punishment, as well as how the characters fight back against the power structure, and use media as a means of rebellion. In Chapter 6, I draw conclusions related to my analyses, discuss the limitations of my study, and suggest further avenues of research.

Key questions guiding this study include:

1) In what ways do the primary texts construct media as a social institution? How does media function as an instrument of the governing authority?

2) How is the relationship between media and disempowerment constructed in these narratives?

3) In both narratives, the adolescents revolt against the hegemonic power structure. How do the protagonists use media to empower themselves? In what ways are they successful or unsuccessful in gaining agency through the very media used as an instrument of power against them?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of my research study crosses several disciplines, requiring me to draw on knowledge from various areas of academics. Therefore the following literature survey is divided into three different sections. The first is a survey of media studies. In particular, this section will review scholarly research and popular articles that explore common adult opinions about how media potentially impacts children and young adults. The second section will concentrate on scholarly writing about dystopia, specifically examining essays that discuss dystopian narratives for young adults. The third focuses on relevant articles about the primary texts.

2.1 Media

Definitions of media are numerous and diverse, but in general, the term “media” refers collectively to various means of communication, such as television, radio, music, film, news reporting agencies, advertising, the Internet, and so on (Potter 32). In the same vein, “mass media” refers to identical means of communication, however is specific about the large audiences these communications reach (“Mass Media” def.1). Today, enormous multimedia and news conglomerates in North America such as Disney, Time Warner, and CBS Corporation own much of the media that the general population is exposed to, and consequently, the majority of the content – or images and messages – that society consumes is controlled by a privileged few. According to Dr. Gail Dines, a professor of Women’s Studies at Wheelock College, it is therefore essential for participating populations to examine media, in order to “understand how
we as consumers and as citizens interpret the media, and the role media play in socializing us into certain belief systems” (Dines).

Professor Sonia Livingstone, renowned media theorist at the London School of Economics, states that the role of media in children and young people’s lives is changing, and, therefore, is of growing interest and concern to the academic community, public, and policy makers. At the forefront of the public agenda, regular headlines about the influence of traditional and new media on youth has created a flurry of hype and anxiety, generating pressure to be seen as “doing something” and a fear of not “keeping up” (“Children and their Changing Media Environment” 307).

In her paper “Old and New Media: Access and Ownership in the Home,” Leen D’Haenens, Professor of Communication Science at K.U. Leuven University, indicates that another reason for the fear of being out of step is due to the fact that the pace of media change is speeding up. She defines “widespread acceptance” as the time it takes new technologies to go from conception to fifty million users. Radio reached widespread acceptance after thirty-eight years, the personal computer in sixteen, television in thirteen, whereas it only took the Internet four years. In other words, the World Wide Web has undoubtedly been the fastest growing facet of media so far (54).

The importance of this rapid acceptance of technological innovation when it comes to media is that change often brings about heated and emotional reactions. It is the speed of this accelerating change in communication mediums that has adults concerned about the influence of media evolution on children and young people in particular. The cycle of generational change, in which the older generation often criticizes the younger, reminiscing about the societal norms of
their own youth, manifests itself in what Danish media scholar Kirsten Drotner calls “media panic.” She indicates that the characteristics of media panic are:

…the media is both instigator and purveyor of the discussion; the discussion is highly emotionally charged and morally polarised (the medium is either "good" or "bad") with the negative pole being the most visible in most cases; the discussion is an adult discussion that primarily focuses on children and young people; the proponents often have professional stakes in the subject under discussion as teachers, librarians, cultural critics or academic scholars… (“Dangerous Media” 596)

These characteristics are starkly evident in the plethora of published material about the influence of media on modern-day society. There is an overwhelming focus on children and young adults, and a wide spectrum of professional opinion across many disciplines. Research about the impact of media on young people can be found in education, cultural studies, psychology, economics, political science, library science, sociology, and medicine. Just as Drotner indicates in her article, much of this research polarizes media influence as either damaging to or beneficial for today’s youth. Therefore, the following media section of this literature review will examine the wide spectrum of positive vs. negative opinions across these disciplines of the media’s influence on children and young people.

To discuss every single aspect of the positive and negative views of this debate is beyond the scope of this research study. This will be a survey of only the most common praises and concerns about media influence on young people in order to contextualize the opinions and concerns of the authors of my primary texts about media and youth.
2.1.1 Deconstructing the Dichotomy: The Neutral and Positive

One of the ways in which people are coming to terms with the challenging and changing new forms of mass media is to argue that we need to lead children and young people to embrace media as a specific and valued opportunity for freedom of expression and connection (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 9). Ideologically, these researchers argue, media can deliver new prospects for communication, information, and empower youth in developing their adolescent identities (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 4).

As stated in Drotner’s definition of media panic, the neutral or positive side of the polarization of media opinion has a substantially smaller number of supporters than the negative. Often, academic findings are a direct oppositional response to imagined fears proposed by the public, as the moral panics around new media have not necessarily been supported by empirical research, according to Livingstone (“Young People and the New Media” 67). On the other hand, much of the research also upholds the naïve belief that young people are the youthful pioneers that are leading the way into the future (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 2).

All in all, the positive and neutral sides of the media and child influence debate is one that is generated by a public agenda of hopes: hope that the negative risks of media are not as significant as public moral panic makes them out to be, and hope that media gives rise to new opportunities for self-expression, community engagement, new ways of thinking and learning, and new literacies. Although exploring all of the potential positives of media influence is beyond the scope of this literature review, a brief examination of family connections, advantages for special needs, sociability and friendships, education, and youth participation in democracy and cultural resistance will provide a basic understanding of common topics used in the defense of young people engaging in the mediated world around them.
2.1.1.1 Family Connections

A common assumption among academics in the discourse surrounding negative media influence on youth is that this influence has a negative impact on family cohesion and parental control over children (Bauerlein 81-82; Shroeder and Brocato 61; Strasburger 99; Weber 366-372). However, this presupposition is discredited by numerous studies, even inadvertently by those scholars whose main argument is that media influence is damaging youth. For example, while grudgingly acknowledging some potential positives of teen spending power, Mark Bauerlein references a *Time* magazine survey which declared that young people today relate better to their parents, with over half of the teenagers terming their relationship with their families as “excellent” (Bauerlein 36).

Social media can especially help family members to feel more closely bonded. It can reduce the anxiety of separation for parents with the use of internet and cell phones, making it easier to stay in touch with their children (May and Hearn 205). In his article “Social Media & Family: Finding the Balance,” Curtis Silver interviewed several full-time working parents to learn how they use social media to help them facilitate their work and family time. Many said that the use of Skype, Twitter, and Facebook helped them to stay connected to their families during the workday and while away on business, and their ability to check email on their cell phones allowed them to spend more quality time at home rather than having to go into the office (Silver).

Some media can be a centerpiece of family interaction, and reinforce the links between family members. For example, brothers may bond over video game playing; a mother-daughter link may grow stronger by watching a television program they both enjoy; as may a father-son link around using new computer programs (Roe 17). While some argue that increasing
technology installed in children’s bedrooms encourages separation and isolation, this is not necessarily the case. In a comparative study of family lifestyles in Flanders, France, Italy, and Sweden, researchers found that despite more equipment being in children’s bedrooms, their media experience led to more independent use, but not solely to individual use. Their media experience still tended to be shared with other family members (Pasquier et al. 506). Often, a second piece of media equipment in a separate room (for example a television, CD player, game console, computer) is viewed by family members as positive, as it helps to avoid conflict by keeping family members apart during times of tension. The presence of multiple spaces to peruse media was seen as functional for family cohesion (Roe 17).

This finds reflection in this study’s primary texts. In Feed, both negative and positive influences of media are portrayed through family scenes around the dinner table. While on the one hand, the family undertakes group activities together, such as watching memories from vacation trips, they are also distracted and often disengaged from family discussions, due to news programs, advertisements, and virtual chatting taking place over their feeds. In The Hunger Games, although the reality television show of teenage tributes killing one another is mandatory for all Panem citizens to watch as punishment for rebellion, families and communities bond together to overcome their subjection to watching their children being murdered, which eventually fuels a revolution.

2.1.1.2 Sociability and Friendships

As young adults begin to move out of the inner family sphere and into the wider world of their local and school communities, social connections and the ability to make and sustain friendships are of paramount importance. As they make the transition from family life to wider
peer groups, young people often find that media, especially mobile media and the internet, is a resource for constructing their identity and for mediating social relationships (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 20).

One of the many challenges for media researchers is to examine how media has played a role in redesigning the communities that children now participate in when experiencing the world, as they are surrounded by and interact with peer-based networks, especially in the West (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 17). Many argue that this negatively impacts social interactions amongst teenagers, keeping young people apart from one another, as they no longer need to be face-to-face, but interact behind a “screen” (Roe 17). Some have even gone so far as to indicate that teenagers are “transformed [by media] into lonely, isolated addicts unable to communicate with each other” (Livingstone, “Young People and the New Media” 67). Whether media, however, keeps people apart or brings them together is dependent on the context, and who is interacting with whom. In an article on young Danes’ media use, Drotner states that in the 21st century, youth interaction will often involve their engagement not only with each other, but through and within different media and media contents. These varied and diverse forms of communication that children can now have with one another have increased connectivity opportunities more than ever before (“Difference and Diversity” 151).

Many studies have shown that media does not appear to cause problems in teenage friendships. In fact, rather than substituting for personal communication, media is integrated into social settings with friends through themes of conversation, communal use, and the creation of a sense of group identity which strengthens social relationships (Roe 17). For example, electronic games can be catalysts for meeting friends, the internet can be used on mobile devices to socialize, play games, and watch television, and children visit one another’s houses to talk about
their favourite media, just as they visited and swapped comics, sports cards, and marbles in an earlier generation (Drotner, “Global Media through Youthful Eyes” 283; Hobbs and Jensen 5; Livingstone, “Young People and the New Media” 67). Although characterized negatively, this social bonding is evident in Feed, as Violet, Titus, and his friends are constantly interacting with and discussing the various mediums they experience via the feed, such as music, soap operas, and advertisements for products. Violet’s father also discusses the social atomization one is subjected to without a feed, and explains his choice to have one installed for himself and Violet when he is unable to get a job or interact in public without being mocked for his lack of biotechnology.

All in all, as Josiane Jouët and Dominique Pasquier state in their article “Youth and Screen Culture,” young people now live in a world where media occupies a significant amount of leisure and social time (31). But although media has the potential to alter social interaction amongst youth, media is not necessarily central to all social interaction. Media has not supplanted face-to-face communication or other group activities (55), rather media could simply be considered an additional leisure activity that has entered the youth consciousness in the 21st century.

2.1.1.3 Advantages for Young People with Special Needs

In addition, the advantages of social interaction via media can work to be more inclusive among certain teen populations often excluded from these sorts of experiences. In her work on the use of media among young people with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and other physical conditions, Dr. Parimala Raghavendra of Australia’s Flinders University asserts that feeling connected with friends is a significant part of life participation for
teenagers with disabilities, and is important for their health, well-being, and social adjustment during and after high school (“I could never do that before” 553). Young people with disabilities often have smaller social networks, feel more isolated, and have considerable anxiety when it comes to making friends, more so than their typically developing peers (“They think I’m really cool and nice” n. pag.). Part of the drive for Raghavendra’s work is in response to the parents’ significant challenges in helping their children with disabilities connect with others, as they recognize that their children have fewer reciprocated friendships. Parents of her participants identified the need for support in developing social networks as a key priority for their children (“They think I’m really cool and nice”). Raghavendra found that once media such as Skype, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube videos, email, Livewire, and games were introduced with technology that allowed teens to use them by themselves, young people emphasized the importance of these programs in helping them to develop and maintain friendships, which in turn reduced their feelings of loneliness (“I could never do that before” 557).

Harvey May and Greg Hearn, in their work on future effects of new media technologies, have also found that the deaf community now has a much more level playing field with the hearing community, with the advent of texting, twitter, and other social media, which allows for independence and opportunities not known beforehand (203). This is most evident in the use of mobile devices, which have also begun to make their way into the classroom. Therese Cumming and Iva Strnadová, both senior lecturers in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales, conducted research at a school in Sydney on the use of mobile devices in the classroom as a learning and instructional tool for students with developmental disabilities (Cumming et al. 4). There has been widespread use of mobile devices in the classroom, such as iPads, to assist special needs students, but to date there has been very little published academic
research to support the practice (Cumming et al. 12). In an action research approach with students of various ages and various disabilities such as epilepsy, autism, dyslexia, global developmental delay, and intellectual disabilities (Cumming et al. 6), researchers partnered with teachers to incorporate iPads and apps in the classroom to improve participation and learning (Cumming et al. 4). By tailoring the choice of apps to students’ individual education plans, as well as content and skills taught in classes (Cumming et al. 9), students and teachers met with great success. Teachers found that it was easier to differentiate instruction for each student, the curriculum was more accessible to students, there was improvement in student work (particularly in literacy and numeracy), students were able to be more independent learners, and most importantly, there was an increase in enthusiasm and engagement with class content (Cumming et al. 15). Overall, this integration was not only beneficial for students with disabilities, but also for entire classes, as these students were educated in an inclusive environment. Teachers found that all students were able to successfully participate using mobile devices, as the apps could be modified to individual needs at each student’s learning level (Cumming et al. 12).

2.1.4 Education

Although everyone is affected by the ubiquity of new media, youth are usually among the earliest and most enthusiastic users of communication technologies (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 20). While this is true of social interaction amongst their peers, many researchers are exploring the impact and potential advantages new mediums of communication can have in terms of education. Many argue that media content can be used in new and powerful ways to encourage creativity and learning (Hobbs and Jensen 5).
Throughout the majority of school systems in the West, there is still a traditional focus on interacting with print-based texts (Jocius 310; Kellner and Share, “Toward Critical Media Literacy” 370). However, many argue that it is not enough to teach students to read and write solely with print-based materials, as the world in the 21st century is media saturated, with the majority of information we receive being disseminated via different media such as visual images, complex sound arrangements, and multiple media formats. This requires that systems of education facilitate media education and empower students to read and produce their own media messages (Kellner and Share, “Reconstruction of Education” 3).

Because young people are often the first users of new social media (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 20), educators frequently assume that children know more than they do, and overestimate their abilities (Hobbs and Jensen 6). However, just because students understand how to use social networking tools such as Twitter or Facebook, does not mean that they are able to instinctively interpret when, why, and where they should use these available communication tools. In their work on critical media literacy, UCLA Education professors Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share advocate for media education in which young people learn how to think critically about how the media, “…constructs meanings, influences and educates audiences and imposes their messages and values” (Kellner and Share, “Reconstruction of Education” 4).

Many young people are already content producers, and have developed complex literacy skills through the use of email, online chatting, and texting (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 22), yet in the face of media culture saturation, according to Kellner and Share, educators who incorporate critical media literacy into their curriculums help their students to further interpret, rather than simply use, multiple literacies (Kellner and Share, “Reconstruction
of Education” 5). Although print literacy is still of utmost importance, knowledge of different tools and modes of communicating such as information literacy, technical literacy, and multimodal literacy, can help students to understand and analyze the politics of representation (Kellner and Share, “Critical Media Literacy Is Not an Option” 62). Through media arts, students cannot only learn an appreciation of how media is constructed, they can also learn to decode and analyze media messages. To further encourage media engagement in a sophisticated manner of higher level thinking, students can also re-design and create alternative media, such as advertisements, movies, etc. with oppositional interpretations of gender, violence, and ethnicity, among other subjects (Kellner and Share, “Critical Media Literacy Is Not an Option” 62-63). In an article on the use of digital media in academics, Robin Joicus explores the benefits of multimodal media responses to literary works using texts, speech, images, sounds, music, and video, which allowed students to explore different semiotic systems to construct meaning (311). In “The Past, Present, and Future of Media Literacy Education,” Renee Hobbs and Amy Jensen present how they explored different media as potential pedagogical tools in subjects such as English, Social Studies, the Arts and Science and how they consistently increased student engagement with the topics they were learning (8).

Overall, encouraging active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive creates young people who use their skills and experiences to decipher their own meanings when interacting with various media (Jocius 312). This is evident in The Hunger Games as soon as Katniss volunteers herself as a tribute. Once the camera starts rolling, she consistently deconstructs her own and others’ behaviours and motivations. On the other hand, Titus, in Feed, is trapped in a trademarked education system (School™), which is run by corporations rather than the government. The teenagers of the novel are subjected to lessons on how best to use their
feeds to be better consumers. As a result of this insufficient education system, he is crippled by his own ignorance, and utterly unable to question or resist the world around him. Both novels send a clear message that knowledge is power, and that a lack of understanding when it comes to media is not only detrimental, but can also be dangerous.

2.1.1.5 Youth Participation in Democracy and Cultural Resistance

When discussing mass media and youth, adults often believe young people’s interaction with communication mediums falls into one of two camps: one is commercial media (hinging on the notions of commercialism), and the other public service (focusing on the notions of citizenship) (Drotner, “Global Media Through Youthful Eyes” 301). Drotner, in her article, “Global Media Through Youthful Eyes” asks two questions that summarize the hopes and opportunities most adults have for teenage media use:

How do adults secure that the media not only address the rising generations as consumers but equally as citizens? How do we see to it that the young are able not only to understand and interpret media output made by others (i.e. adults), but are equally in a position to use the media themselves in accordance with basic traditions of informed citizenship? (301)

The answer to these two questions that summarize the hopes adults have for young people’s media use is: to educate and give them the tools to do so, and to provide opportunities and encourage their media use to enable them to become informed citizens of the world.

As discussed above, education is a key factor in youth making the most of their media use. According to Kellner and Share, foundational knowledge of multiple literacies and the ability to navigate them can ensure that social media networks and entertainment technologies are tools that enable youth to be active participants in one’s culture, society, and the democratic
process (“Reconstruction of Education” 5-6). Critical media literacy education promotes the understanding and use of media in all its forms, not only resulting in young adults becoming more knowledgeable about the world around them, but also in their awareness that this connectivity and digital engagement fosters notions of citizenship (“Reconstruction of Education” 8). As demonstrated in both *The Hunger Games* trilogy and *Feed*, media, information, and power are intimately connected. Both Katniss and Violet understand that the technologies of communication are powerful instruments that can liberate or dominate, manipulate or enlighten, and use this knowledge to rebel against their surrounding hegemonic power structures (Kellner and Share, “Critical Media Literacy Is Not an Option” 62). This ability to critically analyze and use media can empower teenagers to join their local and global communities (Hobbs and Jensen 9); it is clear that critical media literacy is essential for young people in real life, not just in fiction, to gain similar skills.

Clearly, if democratic participation is to be encouraged, young people must be educated to use a wide range of media tools (Drotner, “Global Media through Youthful Eyes” 303). In order to facilitate youth’s use of these media possibilities, Drotner argues that young people must be offered a diversity of media forms in their own language, with free and public access. If social and cultural democracy is to develop among young people as well as adults, then the same elements of public service offered to adults through media must be extended to young people as well (“Global Media through Youthful Eyes” 301). Free access to email and websites (Wilson 314), as well as reading the newspaper, newsmagazines, and watching the news, all increase youth knowledge of social issues, transcending education settings into social action (McLeod 48; Wilson 308). Youth groups who wish to voice their opinions on various world issues are more
likely to do so if they are well-equipped with the tools they need to access information (Wilson 309).

In his article “Ethnography, the Internet, and Youth Culture: Strategies for Examining Social Resistance and ‘Online-Offline’ Relationships,” Brian Wilson examines youth methods of utilizing cyberspace in social resistance. The Internet, he argues, has given birth to a means of media communication that allows young people the freedom to develop youth-driven social activist networks and organizations that address an abundance of social issues. These youth groups have become abundant, and at times prominent, addressing a range of issues that are often youth-specific (e.g., bullying) and more universal (poverty, the environment, human rights, etc.) These youth groups exist, and in some cases thrive, because they have access to, and make strategic use of, easily accessible media technology (312).

The rise of Internet communication has also contributed to various social movements and revolutions around the world (Wilson 311). New methods of communicating through social media have also made cyberactivism and collective mobilization much easier to facilitate (Eltantawy and Wiest 1207; Shirky 2). In their article on the use of social media during the Arab Spring, Nahed Eltantawy, Professor of Journalism at High Point University, and Dr. Julie B. Wiest, Sociology Professor at West Chester University, discuss how social media provides opportunities for political expression (1208). Although this is a political sociology essay and not focused on youth and media, there is an abundant, yet clearly inadvertent use of the word “young.” They consistently discuss social media use and the people who primarily used it, as “young social media activists” (1213), “young people” (1211), and “youth” (1214). It becomes clear throughout the paper that the youth in these countries were the primary activists during these political movements, and it was their knowledge of social media that allowed them to take
on this leading role. They comment that, through the use of blogs, mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, “Egypt’s youth…offered guidance on everything from using technology to escape government surveillance to facing rubber bullets and setting up barricades…” (1213). Clearly, the social media expertise of young people throughout this and parallel political events has been indispensable to social change.

The Arab Spring showed the world that media and communication technology can be tools for empowerment, especially when people who are most often marginalized and misrepresented in mainstream media receive the opportunity to use these tools to tell their stories and express their concerns (Kellner and Share, “Reconstruction of Education” 9). In both primary texts, Violet and Katniss do this as well. Violet manipulates her feed to prevent a consumer profile being formed so that she can’t be catalogued as a means of resistance. Katniss, as her time in front of the camera progresses, is able to eventually create her own media messages to prime revolution throughout Panem. Enabled by their knowledge of how the media system works, both characters become empowered, just as youth can be in the real world.

### 2.1.2 Deconstructing the Dichotomy: The Dystopia Negative

When it comes to mass media and young people, society often envisions the future with both utopian and dystopian possibilities (May and Hearn 198). While the positive and neutral side of the media influence debate focuses on hope, opportunity, and the possibility of youth empowerment, the negative emphasizes fear of the unknown. According to Harvey May and Greg Hearn, media researchers at the Queensland University of Technology, over the past century new media often encounters naysayers predicting doom and gloom (199). In their article on the permeation of the mobile phone into everyday life, they state that, “Fears for children’s
wellbeing, end of the world scenarios, lurking dangers, medical horrors and threats to moral decency find a home with the emergence of many now everyday technologies” (198).

This fear of the unknown, and the worst assumptions that go with it, is what often fuels a “protectionist” approach to media research; an approach that attempts to guard and shelter young people from the dangers of media manipulation (Kellner and Share, “Reconstruction of Education” 6). In this sort of research, children are often characterized as victims, with little or no agency, (Livingstone, “Do the Media Harm Children?” 8) and researchers frequently anchor their investigations by referencing a social problem in childhood, and then ask to what extent media is to blame (Livingstone, “Do the Media Harm Children?” 5).

This protectionist approach predominates when it comes to adult anxieties about youth and media, because adults (and particularly parents) are fearful of a future they can no longer predict. Modern media and technology changes at an alarming rate, and there is no way to foresee the future (Robinson). As a result, parents can no longer look back on their own childhood as a guide to managing their children’s experiences in today’s world (Livingstone, Children and the Internet 7). The resulting social consequence is that there is a disconnect between parents and children and their media practices, creating parental unease that they cannot protect their children from media influences (May and Hearn 203).

Another source of adult concern about media influence is the lack of a standard North American curriculum for media education. Kellner and Share effectively summarize parental anxiety in this regard when they state, “It is irresponsible in the face of saturation by the Internet and media culture to ignore these forms of socialization and education on young people” (“Reconstruction of Education” 4). This lack of education leaves the responsibility for teaching
media literacy to parents, and as stated above, this is a responsibility for which many parents feel ill-equipped (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 8).

In her attempt to address the wide spectrum and polarization of scholarly opinion on media harm and child vulnerability, Livingstone acknowledges that among academics who investigate the effect of media on young people, the generally accepted (although far from unanimous) opinion is that youth are “particularly vulnerable to media influence and, further, that the media do harm some children, in some ways, under certain conditions” (”Do the Media Harm Children?” 6). Regardless of what extent this potential harm may cause, it is indisputable that a significant amount of scholarly research on children and media focuses on the perceived negative influence it exerts over young people. A discussion of all potential negative effects upon children is clearly beyond the scope of this literature review. Therefore, a focus on some of the most common topics, such as wealth and social status, consumerism, violence, unhealthy choices, and literacy and education, will present a brief introduction to the multitudinous issues that are embedded in the moral panic surrounding media influence and young people.

### 2.1.2.1 Wealth and Social Inequality

A common anxiety in the information age is the problem of inequality between “information-poor” and “information-advantaged” groups within society (D’Haenens 54). There is concern that new media has the potential to exacerbate the disparity between the economic realities and access to media and information of young haves and have-nots (Livingstone, “Young People and the New Media” 67).

This is especially evident in education. For example, while the use of media devices in the classroom can contribute to interesting lessons and unique learning experiences, a teacher in
the public education system cannot assume that all students will have economic access to the same equipment (Hill). Teachers who attempt to integrate social media in the classroom with activities such as sharing class information via Google Docs, giving web quests for homework, requiring students to blog responses or email essays, run the risk of isolating those students who do not have the same opportunities to participate in these learning activities (Hill).

Another example of this inequality is apparent in the amount of web-produced content among young people. As discussed above in the Youth Participation in Democracy section, the Internet has given young people the opportunity to utilize cyberspace as a place for social resistance, creating their own content to support the movements of their choice (Wilson 312). However, on average, only students who have at least one parent with a university degree are likely to create content for this purpose (Hobbs and Jensen 5). When one considers Canadian statistics in this light, with only twenty-two percent of citizens possessing a university degree in 2012 (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013), the opportunity to engage in creative activities of democratic participation remains unequally distributed by social stratification (Hobbs and Jensen 5).

The social backgrounds of characters and their access to media devices is also a major contributing factor in Feed and The Hunger Games trilogy. Both Violet and Katniss come from poorer economic backgrounds, which greatly affects their lives in regards to media. Violet is unable to have her feed fixed, resulting in her death, and Katniss, as a resident of one of the districts, is forced to be a contestant in an annual reality TV show where children fight to the death. Although using poverty as a plot device resulting in death may seem extreme, nevertheless it reflects the anxiety of media access inequality, and makes the assumption that a higher social class is more likely to be associated with such privileges as use of various media devices.
2.1.2.2 Consumerism

Children today are big business. Marketers’ interest in adolescents has grown exponentially, due to the fact that, on average, teens now have more money to spend for themselves, and they also have significant influence over their family purchases (Brown 37; Valkenburg 53). Therefore, media understandably seeks to position young people according to commercial interests (Livingstone, _Children and the Internet_ 11). The media has remade itself in the last decade to take advantage of this opportunity for profit. Through the magazine market, video games, youth television, pop music and globalized children’s culture, media actively helps corporations serve (or exploit) young people’s needs in “growing up” (Livingstone, _Children and the Internet_ 12). This encouragement of consumerism and materialism as a way for youth to find happiness has been highlighted as one of today’s social evils, and as detrimental to psychological health and well-being (Sweeting, Hunt, and Bhaskar 802).

Communications Professor Henry Giroux, in his work on cultural studies and pedagogy, asserts that the relentless expansion of the global market is analogous to declaring war upon youth, refusing to treat them as nothing more than markets or commodities. Their weapons are the various new media, such as the Internet, cell phones and other social networks that commercialize every aspect of children’s lives (“Shattered Bonds” 6). At the time of Giroux’s study, young people aged eight to eighteen were spending an average of eleven hours per day engaging with media content, such as smart phones, computers, television, and other electronic devices (“Shattered Bonds” 6). These various forms of media, he argues, have allowed corporations to directly inundate youth with their commercial values and desires, and at the same time avoid the mediating influence of parents (“Shattered Bonds” 6). In the novel _Feed_, this sort of inundation is evident as the author M.T. Anderson replicates the constant presence of media,
interrupting the plot constantly with commercials for consumer products, Feedcasts, pop songs, and news snippets. This positioning of the reader as adolescent prey to a constant consumerist presence is extremely frustrating. The text becomes disjointed and distracting, which is doubtless the point, as the reader must struggle to concentrate on returning to and understanding the narrative.

Youth have become less dependent on their parents when learning about consumerist values, because media messages are targeted at them specifically in terms of identity, lifestyle, and attitudes (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 10; Valkenburg 53). The blurring by the commercial media environment of the adult/adolescent boundary of knowledge shortens the period in which parents are the sole socializing influence in the lives of their children (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 10; Valkenburg 53). This leaves youth vulnerable to the persuasive influences of commercialism, because young people still lack the cognitive skills to deconstruct marketing messages (Valkenburg 52).

With the increase of the types of media devices that children are using, the world of media marketing has enabled greater access to the home, customarily a more private and non-commercial space. This has resulted in young children, not just adolescents, being immersed in consumer culture (Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* 7). In her research on children’s play, Education Professor Dr. Diane E. Levin of Wheelock College says that the marketing of toys has profoundly affected child development in the West. Traditionally, in natural play, children get to know themselves, explore the world around them, and develop imagination, language, social skills, and so on. However, today’s toys are often replicas of what children have seen on-screen, marketed to them through movies and television shows. These toys give the message that children are meant to replicate what they see on-screen, telling them how to play, and depriving
them of the active and exploratory learning experiences that encourage their development. By acting out the storyline and focusing on a narrow plot, they learn lessons from media more than without the replication of the toy narratives (Levin). This is especially disturbing in light of the marketing done for a blockbuster film like the first *Hunger Games* movie with its vast array of toys and other marketed products. With its extremely violent plot, it is most likely not the sort of thing parents want to see their children replicating in play, as evidenced from the outrage that occurred following the incident in the summer of 2013 at a camp in Tampa Bay, where several children were quoted spouting violent plans for the games the camp had organized (Child; Gartner).

While teenagers are well past the age of acting out roles they see on screen via play with toys, they are still affected by marketing, with many studies indicating that advertising aimed at young people has a strong negative impact on their beliefs, values, and moral judgements (Valkenburg 52). American research has also found relationships between consumerism and depression, anxiety and lower self-esteem (Sweeting, Hunt and Bhaskar 803). Studies in the UK and the Netherlands have found materialistic attitudes related to increased self-reported emotional and behavioural problems, as well as higher parent-child conflict (Sweeting, Hunt and Bhaskar 803). In *Feed*, the rampant consumerism is exemplified in the way the girls change fashions several times a week to keep up with the latest trends. While their feeds are disconnected, and the girls are unable to participate in this fashion rat race, Anderson creates a pervasive atmosphere of anxiety and self-doubt. The main character Titus in particular is constantly insecure about his social status. He expresses his exhaustion near the end of the narrative, saying that he just can’t seem to catch up with whatever “cool” is (Anderson 279), as Anderson summarizes the teenage angst associated with materialism, and closes the novel with
the assertion that material goods do not contribute to young people’s happiness (Sweeting, Hunt and Bhaskar 817).

2.1.2.3 Violence and Aggression

Another common fear about media influence on children and young adults is the belief that being exposed to media violence increases aggressive behaviour in young people. The debate seems to consider two alternatives; one is that media simply mirrors an increasingly violent society, while the other insists that media is actually changing the behaviour of the young population to become more aggressive and violent.

Results vary across the countless studies done in numerous disciplines on this topic. Giroux states that much of the publicity about the influence of media violence on youth is hype that misdirects more real concerns about the causes of violence among young people, such as poverty and gun control. In one of his many examples, he cites an article in Newsweek about “gangsta rap,” with stories about waves of arrests among prominent rappers. The theme of the article stated that young Black men are selling violence to a victimized mainstream public through music. The article reinforced the connection between media violence through rap and the “potential victims…a besieged White majority of male and female youth” without any “critical commentary on underlying causes that produce the representations of violence that saturate mass media” (“Youth and the Challenge of Pedagogy” 285).

Other studies have similar arguments. In their article “Youth and Screen Culture,” Josiane Jouët and Dominique Pasquier found that large amounts of screen time corresponded to feelings of opposition towards school and parents, rather than increased aggression (43). In the meta-analysis review, “The Public Health Risks of Media Violence” in 2009, clinical
psychologist CJ Ferguson affirmed that rather than media influence, higher risks for increased aggression in adolescent behaviour were poverty, genetics, personal self-control, and exposure to childhood physical abuse (762). His findings did not support the view that media violence led to aggressive behaviour and concluded that it was not a public health risk (760).

However, there has been accumulating research evidence since the 1960s that strongly suggests that exposure to violence in movies, television, and more recently in video games, mobile devices, and the Internet increases the risk of violent behaviour (Huesmann S6). Professor Craig A. Anderson, director of the Center for the Study of Violence at Iowa State University asserts that exposure to violent media content can cause aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and empathetic desensitization (151), whilst Paul Boxer, Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University insists that “…there currently can be very little doubt that exposure to violence in the media has a consistent and substantial impact on aggressive behavior” (424).

There has been recent and renewed attention to the potential dangers of media violence following the tragic Sandy Hook elementary school shooting in December 2012. Following this incident, President Obama called for more research to be done on the possible role that media violence may play in gun violence in the United States (Fikkers et al. 282). In response to this incident, a team at the Centre for Research on Children, Adolescents and the Media at the University of Amsterdam decided to investigate the effects of media violence within the context of the family environment. Looking at both media violence and domestic atmosphere, the resulting article, “Double Dose: High Family Conflict Enhances the Effects of Media Violence Exposure on Adolescents’ Aggression,” is the first study to show a correlation between media violence and family dynamics on adolescent aggression. In families with higher conflict, the
combination with high levels of media violence exposure (television and video games) was related to subsequent increased aggression (282). Another recent longitudinal study at the University of Otago, “Children and Adolescent Television Viewing and Antisocial Behaviour in Early Adulthood,” also found that there was a negative association with large amounts of violent television exposure. Associate Professor Robert Hancox and his team in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine found that young adults who spent significant amounts of time watching violent television programs and movies were more likely to have violent criminal convictions, and manifest antisocial personality disorder by young adulthood than those who had watched less television (442). This is the first longitudinal study “to demonstrate long-term associations between television viewing and a broad range of antisocial behavior, including psychopathology, criminal convictions, and personality traits” (443). Dr. Victor C. Strasburger, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, and Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine at the University of New Mexico, has authored over one hundred books and articles, many written in particular on media influence. In his article “Children, Adolescents, and the Media,” the section on media violence examines early research, naturalistic studies, correlational studies, longitudinal studies as well as meta-analysis. Strasburger states that it is beyond question that media violence contributes to increases in physical and verbal aggressive behaviour, desensitization, lack of empathy, and fear in children and young adults (57-63).

Clearly, the debate about the potential influence of media violence on young people is a chicken or egg dilemma. Although studies can be found to support both sides, the fact that there is such an abundance of research focused on this topic indicates that there is significant adult anxiety about the violence young people experience in various media on a regular basis.
2.1.2.4 (Un)Healthy Choices: Addiction, Health, and Body Image

2.1.2.4.1 Addiction and Risk Behaviour

Media addiction, also known as “unregulated media use,” “media dependence,” “problematic media use,” “compulsive media use,” and “excessive media use” (Khang et al. 2417) came to the forefront of public concern with the 2010 news story of a Korean couple who allowed their own baby to starve while they took care of their virtual baby (Tran). However, the notion of the ‘screen addict’ is nothing new in the debate about media influence on children (Livingstone, “Young People and the New Media” 67). In 2007 and 2008, a German nationwide survey of ninth graders determined that students who were characterized as being dependent on video games demonstrated increased levels of social and psychological stress. This manifested itself in lower grades, lack of sleep, limited other leisure activities, higher rates of truancy, and increased thoughts of suicide (Rehbein et al. 275). More recently, a 2012 study investigated how the use of online social networking sites, particularly Facebook, contributed to problematic internet use (Kittinger et al. 324). One in six students reported occasional or frequent problems in life because of their internet addiction, with Facebook primarily contributing to difficulties in academics, chiefly with time-management (Kittinger et al. 326).

Hyoungkoo Khang, associate professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Alabama, has done extensive research on addictive behaviour in conjunction with new communication technologies. His most recent study on the psychological and social impacts of media addiction selected subjects who were late teens and young adults, because he determined that this group tends to be vulnerable to addictions related to new technologies, and are more likely to use media to develop a sense of identity and establish social relationships (2419).
While examining levels of dependence on the Internet, mobile phones, and video games, he discovered that reasons given for the use of these three media were to kill time or have fun, to use them to create personal identities and make good impressions on others, to seek information, or to develop personal relationships (2421). Khang stated that due to social norms, individuals find it problematic to avoid spending substantial amounts of time using media, as there has been a paradigm shift in the 21st century wherein a person’s social interactions often depend on their knowledge and ability to use media technology (2422). Although individuals are mindful of the possible negative effects of a dependence on media, the risk of social exclusion makes it difficult to resist. Calling it a “pandemic phenomenon,” Khang argues that this reliance can result in numerous psychological, physical, and social concerns such as insomnia, anxiety, and disconnection from physical surroundings (2422).

Not only is there concern about addiction to media itself, there is also the worry that media influences potential addiction to other substances, such as alcohol and drugs. According to Dr. Strasburger, in American television programming there is a drinking scene shown every 22 minutes, one smoking scene every 57 minutes, and illicit drug use every 112 minutes. These instances are just as ubiquitous in music videos and in movies (71).

According to the theory of the “super-peer,” media influence is similar to social influence, in which models of attractive, older teenagers engaging in risky behaviours may influence attitudes toward use of illicit substances (Strasburger 72). Seeing young and attractive actors portrayed as smoking and drinking in media may increase adolescents’ desire to associate with similar behaviour (Strasburger 72).

Valerie Carson, Professor of Behaviour Medicine at Queen’s University, examined the influence of television, computer, and video game use as potential determinants of multiple risk
behaviours, including smoking, binge drinking, cannabis use, use of illicit drugs, non-use of seatbelts, as well as non-use of condoms (99). A key hypothesis in the study referenced the concept of observational learning in Bandura’s social cognitive theory (101), which suggests that individuals reinforce and learn behaviours through observation (Bandura 1181). Consequently, screen time exposure to similar risk behaviour could potentially encourage adolescent viewers to mimic what they see (Carson et al. 99).

Over 9,000 students in grades 6-10 across Canada participated in the study. High computer use was linked with a fifty percent increase in addictive and/or risk behaviours. High television use was only associated with a modest increase in addictive and/or risk behaviours, while video game use was not associated with addictive or multi-risk behaviour (Carson et al. 101). The researchers suggest that perhaps the computer screen time was most associated with high risk behaviour due to a lack of censorship in computer use that exists more stringently and commonly in television, movies, and in computer games through rating systems and parental warnings (101). Although parental controls can be placed on computers, a majority of youth are more tech-savvy than their parents, and can often get around them (101).

The observational learning of risk behaviour is evident in Feed, as Titus and his friends frequently comment on and mimic the behaviour of characters they watch on their feedcasts, particularly in episodes where the characters go “in mal,” short for causing their feeds to malfunction to produce the equivalent of being drunk or high.

2.1.2.4.2 Health

Another common adult concern about children and media is that excessive videogame, television, and computer time leads to obesity and poor health among children. Dr. Mark
Tremblay, Director of Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research (HALO) at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) in Ottawa, did a review of 232 studies on sedentary behaviour. One of his findings was that children who have more than two hours of screen time per day were more likely to have decreased fitness and unfavourable body composition (14).

The national organization Active Healthy Kids Canada, composed of doctors, health care professionals, academics, and policy makers, has a primary mandate of providing an annual report on the health and physical activity of children and youth across the country (2-3). In Canada’s most recent “report card,” the country has received a “D-” for physical activity, as only five percent of 5-17 year olds are meeting the recommended Canadian physical activity guidelines for children and youth (11). For Sedentary Behaviour, the country overall has an “F,” as only fifteen percent of Grade 6 to Grade 12 students meet the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour guidelines of two hours or less per day of screen-time (32). The document creates a clear link between lack of physical health, and the amount of media that children consume in the form of texting, emailing, video games, Internet, movies, and television (33). The number one recommendation in the Sedentary Behaviour section of the document suggests that parents should remove screens such as TVs, cellphones, and computers from their children’s bedrooms, as screen time during the evening is associated with lower physical activity levels, higher body weight, and fewer hours of recommended sleep (33).

According to Dr. Strasburger, pediatricians are increasingly concerned with the rise of obesity and type II diabetes in children and young adults, whose numbers have doubled in the last two decades (79). He states that some studies show that advertisements for unhealthy and fast food during child and adolescent programming are at least partially responsible, particularly during Saturday mornings (79). Several studies show that young children request more junk food
after viewing these commercials, as they create a “yummy” and “fun” atmosphere, while big corporations such as McDonald’s often tie in with recent motion pictures, and have toys linked with their products (80).

2.1.2.4.3 Body Image

Another similar, though seemingly opposite, concern regarding media influence is the impact that commercials, movies, television, and print media have on the female self-image (Strasburger 82). The picture of the “ideal woman” has become increasingly thinner over the last several decades. Twenty years ago, female models weighed 8% under the American average, while today that number is 23% under the American average (Strasburger 82), and on television shows popular with teenagers, 94% of the actors are also below average weight (Strasburger 83). Due to this depiction of the ideal woman becoming increasingly distorted, and given the super-peer and observational learning theories discussed earlier, Strasburger states that it is not surprising that incidences of eating disorders are on the rise (79), and that 60% of girls as young as sixth grade have tried to lose weight (82). With this increasing prevalence of unattainable body types in media, many researchers feel that the internalization of these beauty ideals may be resulting in girls’ increasing dissatisfaction with their bodies, which accounts for the rise in eating disorder statistics (82).

An additional new phenomenon pertaining to body image amongst adolescents and young adults is the constant creation and editing of self-image on social media. In a recent article in the Huffington Post, family and child psychologist Dr. Kristen Race gives advice to parents on how to manage the stress this posturing causes. She argues that teens feel pressure to define their social status, image, and personality by presenting the perfect “brand” of themselves in every
post on their Facebook account or latest picture on Instagram (Race). Not only is it stressful to consistently project this “perception of perfection,” maintaining this self-image 24 hours a day is problematic. If an individual is constantly on the alert for new messages, or worrying about how posts are received, the limbic system “fight or flight” response is constantly switched on, repeatedly washing the brain with cortisol, until a person’s system is continually flooded with stress hormones (Race).

While this social-media posturing affects all youth, young girls have been of particular interest, due to the fact that it is most often girls and women who experience objectification (de Vries and Peter 1483). Both traditional and new media have been perceived as mediums that focus on female appearance rather than female thoughts, character, or personality (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 869). Dr. Laura Vandenbosch and Dr. Steven Eggermont at the Leuven School for Mass Communication Research in Belgium investigated how exposure to the sexual objectification of women in traditional and social media related to self-objectification – the behaviour in which people view themselves as a body and focus on their physical appearance, instead of what they can do or how they feel. Evidence has accumulated that suggests self-objectification can have serious negative consequences for a person’s wellbeing, such as anxiety, body shame, and various physical and mental health issues (de Vries and Peter 1483).

Over 1,500 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 were selected to participate in Vandenbosch and Eggermont’s study “Understanding Sexual Objectification: A Comprehensive Approach toward Media Exposure and Girls’ Internalization of Beauty Ideals, Self-Objectification, and Body Surveillance” (875). Adolescent girls were selected, due to the belief that this population group needs more attention in objectification research, as young girls are very aware of their bodies and appearance, making them vulnerable to self-objectification (870).
The study found that exposure to sexually objectifying fashion magazines, television, and social networking sites was related to the internalization of beauty ideals, self-objectification, and body surveillance (882). They determined that body surveillance, to habitually monitor one’s own appearance (Stevens-Aubrey 366), was directly influenced by the amount of time the subjects spent on social-networking sites, potentially because this behaviour is triggered by visual attention directed towards one’s own body, through the posing for and tagging of pictures (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 883).

Professors Dian de Vries and Jochen Peter at the Amsterdam School of Communications Research in their study, “Women on Display: The Effect of Portraying the Self Online on Women’s Self-Objectification,” also examined the growing concern surrounding the online portrayal of the individual and its potential contribution to self-objectification (1484). It is one of the first studies to examine youth and media not only from a reception-oriented perspective (viewing objectifying material), but also from a creation-oriented perspective (generation and distributing content that may cause self-objectification) (1485).

Over two hundred young women from the Netherlands were asked to create an online profile for the study (1485). Again, only women were chosen as study subjects, not only because they experience objectification more often than men in person as well as in media, but also because evidence shows that these gender differences also surface on social-networking sites. Girls are often evaluated more harshly on their appearance than men, suggesting that girls pay more attention to the portrayal of a favourable image, as they expect to be evaluated on their appearance, and consequently, are more vulnerable to self-objectification (1484-1485).

The study found that portraying the self to an online audience increased self-objectification in young women, particularly if they were primed with sexually objectifying
media content beforehand (1487). Given that self-portrayal is one of the most popular online activities, especially among young girls (1484), this is significant in terms of the social media boom currently taking place.

Body image plays a significant role in the primary texts to be examined. Whilst there is not a focus on the health of the characters in regards to their media consumption and sedentary behaviour, there is extensive emphasis on the portrayal of oneself to an audience and subsequent body surveillance. The girls in *Feed* in particular constantly self-objectify in an effort to keep up with the trends that frequently change. Sometimes hairstyles will change as often as three or four times per day. Katniss is subjected to this as well in the *Hunger Games* trilogy. While she does not internalize these beauty ideals, she does acknowledge them with admiration whenever she is required to “perform” for her audience, whether in interviews or during the games themselves.

### 2.1.2.5 Literacy, Knowledge, and Intelligence

One of the most pervasive fears of adults is the worry that the knowledge and intelligence of today’s youth are deteriorating due to media influence. Particularly when it comes to reading, there is a fear that the increasing use of media during leisure time will directly correspond to high levels of illiteracy (Jabr; Johnsson-Smaragdi 113; Jouët and Pasquier 43). In their examination of children’s use of different communication media for the book, *Children and Their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study* (2001), a team from the Netherlands addressed the adult concern that children spend much more time with visual media instead of print, and that time spent reading is on the decline (Beentjes et al. 85). Although the findings suggest that children are required to read just as much, if not more, when using
computers and the internet, the majority of their discussion is spent in addressing this anxiety of the adult population, making it clear that this is a genuine concern (Beentjes et al. 110).

Despite the fact that the study determined that just as much reading is occurring onscreen, there is also concern about whether reading on computers and tablets is as beneficial as with a print text. In the article, “The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens,” Ferris Jabr discusses the differences in our brain’s interpretation of print and screen text. Some studies show that people read slower, less attentively, and less comprehensively onscreen, as our brains interpret letters as visual objects, and navigating a physical text in a tactile way is a more powerful reading experience (Jabr). More control is experienced with a physical text, as the individual can see more than one page at a time, easily visualize where they are in terms of length, flip back and forth, and scan ahead. A physical book also has more engagement with the senses, as there is the touch and feel of the paper, as well as the weight of the text and sound of the flipping pages, providing a concrete experience, and therefore more comprehension (Jabr). There is also the fact that screens are more tiring on the eyes than paper, due to the light and glare, as well as keeping track of text while scrolling. This subsequent eye strain and fatigue inhibit storing what has been read into long term memory (Jabr).

Dr. Mark Bauerlein of Emory University, the author of The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupifies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don’t Trust Anyone Under 30) (2009), argues that it is not only literacy that is impacted by media. While he does make similar assertions about the decline of literacy, he takes his argument several steps further. Bauerlein references several studies and government reports when discussing the amount of time that youth spend with media, stating that it is the equivalent of a full-time job, as on average it is over six hours per day (77). The premise of his book is to argue that these digital
diversions have distanced youth from history, literature, fine art, and civics (vii) and that his goal in the exploration of these issues is to “blunt the techno-zeal spreading through classrooms and libraries” (viii).

Bauerlein does not blame students alone for the amount of media consumption they receive, but also teachers, professors, and librarians who push for the use of media within the classroom and process of learning, as he says these “custodians of culture” have let young people down (161). Citing hundreds of articles, surveys and statistics, Bauerlein sets out to prove that not only literacy, but intelligence, critical thinking, test scores, and research skills have plummeted as a whole. He dismisses the belief that media, and specifically the internet, can be used as an intellectual tool to enhance education through the easy access to knowledge (108-109). This, he says, is the paradox of the “Dumbest Generation,” modern day youth have more opportunities for compiling knowledge, more accessible schooling, more technological advancements in terms of education than ever before, and yet there is no generation that has yielded so little mental progress despite these advantages (30-37). This has resulted in, he argues, the creation of a nation of vapid consumers as opposed to informed citizens. The greater spending power of young people has steered them towards devices and entertainment, and away from books and other academic pursuits. Video games, cell phones, and other such devices, according to Bauerlein, conspire against intellectual growth (36). He dismisses the case made by academics who believe the internet provides youth with an opportunity to engage with and produce material that fosters knowledgeable citizenship, stating that as little as seven percent of youth aged 18-29 access any political content online (74). Most young people, he argues, have not mastered the skills needed to negotiate an information heavy/communication-based society and economy. Therefore, they actively avoid resources and media that might enlighten them and
boost their understanding of the world around them, instead preferring distraction and entertainment, which he says, should dismay anyone who cares about the future health of democracy in the Western World (16). Bauerlein is not alone in this concern, as it is a rising subject of study among media and political science academics as well (Baumgartner and Morris; Coleman; Delli Carpini; Postman).

The idea that entertainment is a distraction that hampers the political participation of citizens is a theme prevalent in both *Feed* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. The characters in *Feed*, although they have access to an abundance of information, are crippled by their ignorance, and use their feeds only to consume products and be entertained, utterly ignorant of the political and environmental crises eating away at their world. The citizens of Panem in *The Hunger Games* trilogy are also discouraged from any sort of political engagement through the use of the games as distracting entertainment, and remain oblivious to the plight of what life is like in the subjugated districts.

### 2.1.3 Media Conclusions

When reflecting upon the polarity of the media and youth debate, and whether young people are pioneers leading us into the future or potential victims who should be protected from media influence, it is valuable to consider that media both shape and are shaped by the practices of young people (Livingstone, “Children and Their Changing Media Environment” 309).

When looking at the topic holistically, it is clear that media influence upon young people is made up of both opportunities and dangers. However, this balance is rarely evident in the literature about children and media influence, regardless of the discipline in which the research is situated.
In addressing these topics about children and media, my intention has been to highlight the fact that these hopes and anxieties exist in the adult population, and are reflected in the variety of research currently taking place. Most importantly, not only are these adult assumptions evident in the research, they are also evident in the writing of fiction for young people, which will be explored in the following section discussing the critical literature on dystopian writing for young adults.

### 2.2 Dystopia

As stated by May and Hearn in their work on new media technologies, throughout the 20th century, major developments, particularly ones that are likely to transform the conceptions of everyday existence, are often described in either utopian or dystopian terms (195). Given the inherently value-ridden nature of media, and particularly the negative perceptions discussed above, it is no surprise that many adults fear its impact upon children, and that this is, therefore, manifested in the frequent characterization in young adult fiction of media as a destructive influence (Dholakia and Zwick 3; May and Hearn 195).

The term “Dystopia” is relatively new in comparison to “Utopia,” a concept that originated in Greece. In 1516 Sir Thomas More’s discourse on government was titled *Utopia*, playing on the terms “outopia” meaning no place, and “eutopia” meaning good place. This book became the cornerstone for the conception of this genre (Abrams 328). According to Margaret Atwood in her article “Writing Utopia,” the term utopia, over time, has come to signify a type of fiction that represents an ideal, perfect society, i.e., a nonexistent political state and way of life (93). Consequently, this genre of writing, in turn inspired the beginning of the dystopian genre. Authors of both utopia and dystopia concern themselves with the design of civilizations: good
civilizations for utopias, and bad ones for dystopias (Atwood 93). The negative dystopian design resulted as a direct response to utopia, as the audience is meant to deduce what a good civilization is by seeing, in detail, what it isn’t (Atwood 93).

While utopias are usually satirical in nature, dystopias are more like omens of what will happen to humanity in the future, as “dark shadows cast by the present” (Atwood 94). In his book The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism (1994), Keith Booker defines dystopian literature as a critique of existing political or social conditions. In its infancy, dystopian literature often did this through a critical examination of the Utopian premises upon which those conditions were based (3). Now, however, what is most common in the 20th and 21st century dystopian fiction is an exaggeration of a present social condition or political situation to a nightmarish extreme in a future context (5).

This is the reason that dystopias are often associated with science fiction, as this genre also tends to imagine the possibilities of the future by looking at the present (Sullivan, “Extrapolation and the Young Adult Reader” i-ii). Science fiction writers also often try to impress upon readers the risks of continuing to live as we are (Sullivan, “American Young Adult Science Fiction Since 1947” 29). These dystopian warnings reveal a lack of confidence in the human species, which is increasing due to the historical events of the 20th and 21st centuries. While always prevalent in mainstream and science fiction, dystopian science fiction became more prevalent after the events of WWII (Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 249), increased in popularity during the 1960s with the looming threat of the cold war at its peak (Sullivan, “American Young Adult Science Fiction Since 1947” 29), and has recently dominated best-seller lists perhaps because of the trauma and shock from 9/11 and the subsequent domino effect of war in the Middle East (Springen 21). Regardless of the reasons behind this dystopian boom, it is
inarguable that dystopias have a higher readership than utopias (Hintz and Ostry 9). As Margaret Atwood states in her article, “It’s a sad commentary on our age that we find dystopias a lot easier to believe in than utopias: utopias we can only imagine; dystopias we’ve already had” (95).

The growing trend in the dystopia boom is primarily in fiction written for young adults. This sudden growth in popularity cannot be accounted for by the natural progression of the YA genre, as in the early 2000s there was not a gradual increase of these books on the shelves – but a sudden explosion, creating debate amongst scholars, parents, and other adults as to whether YA fiction is becoming “too dark” to read (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2). Dystopias are replacing the historical fiction settings that were so common only a few years ago, such as the French Revolution or WWII where children were forced to navigate and survive the upheaval of war. Now, these settings have been replaced with gloomy visions of the future world children are to inherit (Eccleshare; Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2), as the adult anxieties of authors begin to invade the realm of childhood fantasy (Tatar).

Academics and popular critics have speculated about what has recently made this genre so overwhelmingly popular (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2). Some say that the overprotection of teenage life in today’s “safe” world of hovering parents is less conducive to risk and adventure, and therefore the teens seek it out in dystopian fiction (Hintz and Ostry 9; Miller). Others say that this growing popularity is a result of the target audience being at a pivotal moment in their teenage lives, just as humanity is also at a pivotal moment in history (Morrissey 189). According to Professor Thomas Morrissey, chair of the English department at Plattsburgh State University, the terrorist attacks of the early 2000s, a decade of war, and the financial collapse of the late 2000s have created an environment of fear and uncertainty: we live in dystopian times, young people know it, and therefore are drawn to literature that reflects the concerns of the age (190).
Another reason for these young readers to be drawn to dystopia is that it can act as a powerful metaphor for adolescence (Hintz and Ostry 9). In the introduction to their work *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adult* (2003), Professor Carrie Hintz of Queens College and Professor Elaine Ostry of Plattsburgh State University discuss that adolescence often involves distressing personal, as well as social, awakening (9). Teenagers have many of the responsibilities of adults, and yet few of the privileges. They yearn for the right to have more power and control over their lives, and often question their limits of freedom, the extent to which they can rebel and/or conform (10). Hintz and Ostry argue that it is little wonder that books that feature young protagonists successfully protesting against an oppressive and corrupt adult society are popular (9-10).

In addition, dystopian fiction for adolescents is also often cast with young protagonists who “save” the world from destruction, reversing the hierarchal pattern wherein real children are often at the bottom (Hintz and Ostry 10). Adult authors may expect adolescents to improve the world conditions that they themselves cannot fix, and young people potentially enjoy the characterization of “vocal dissenter” and “saviour” of the world that adults have destroyed with their failed promises (Braithwaite 6).

Dystopia for young adults touch upon these complex and frightening issues in a manageable format, showing faith in young readers and inviting them to action. Authors simultaneously respect the audience and inspire them to become ethical agents of responsibility and social activism (Morrissey 200). Although dystopia has the capacity to be frightening with warnings about pressing global concerns, it does so with gripping plots and exciting adventures that invite the reader to become a rescuer (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 1). With first person narratives
that are full of action and gripping dialogue, it’s no wonder young readers are avid fans of
dystopian fiction (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 1).

There are many differences between dystopia for adults and young people, but perhaps
the most noticeable is the endings of most of these stories. While adult dystopias are often
pessimistic about the future and romanticize the past, dystopias for youth traditionally end on an
optimistic note of hope for a new beginning (Reid 200). In adult dystopias, the final defeat of the
hero in the unhappy ending is necessary to highlight the need that unless immediate change is
undertaken, there will be dire consequences for the future (Sambell, “Presenting the Case for
Social Change” 166). M.T. Anderson’s _Feed_ follows this narrative pattern. Violet’s failure and
ultimate death evoke shock, horror, pity and terror, clearly emphasizing the need for change if
our own future is not to look so grim. However, this is not the norm. As novelist Monica Hughes
says in her essay, “The Struggle between Utopia and Dystopia in Writing for Children and
Young Adults, ” “you may lead a child into the darkness, but you must never turn out the light”
(156). She emphasizes her belief that dystopias for young people must never end in nihilism or
misery (156). Lois Lowry, as well, in her interview with Hintz and Ostry, states that children
handle dystopia in their everyday lives, but that she could not imagine writing a book that didn’t
have a hopeful ending (199).

Clearly, the traditional dystopian ending is not the norm for young people, but the
question is why. In both her essays “Carnivalizing the Future: A New Approach to Theorizing
Childhood and Adulthood in Science Fiction for Young Readers,” and “Presenting the Case for
Social Change: The Creative Dilemma of Dystopian Writing for Children,” Professor Kay
Sambell of Northumbria University explores the difficulties that writers face when adapting
dystopia for a child audience. She states that few children’s authors risk using the classic
dystopian model. Instead, they compromise the dire warning at the end and replace it with hope (“Carnivalizing the Future” 252). The convention of the happy ending, where solutions are provided, normality is restored, and the heroic journey comes to a satisfactory conclusion is “so pervasive that it amounts to an unwritten law in children’s books,” and that novels that do not comply are often condemned (“Presenting the Case for Social Change” 165). Hintz and Ostry, in the introduction to their collection, also state they were struck by how many of the contributing authors focused their discussion on the balance of hope and despair in the endings of these stories (13).

Sambell comments that there is a fear among writers that children will feel a sense of hopelessness, and interpret a negative ending as inevitable (“Carnivalizing the Future” 251; “Presenting the Case for Social Change” 163). The goal of many children’s authors is to prompt their readers to employ their power to change the world before it is too late, and a typical dystopic ending may disempower the reader rather than inspire them (“Presenting the Case for Social Change” 164).

Children’s authors are often tasked with not only being entertaining, but also with being ethical and educational as well (“Presenting the Case for Social Change” 164). Therefore, children are often represented as a cure for adult corruption of the world, and symbolized as the future (Bullen and Parsons 127; Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 252). *The Hunger Games* trilogy certainly falls into this category. While Katniss and Peeta both experience horrific suffering, the reader cannot help but feel hopeful after reading the epilogue in which the couple make their way into the future together with their two small children. However, Monica Hughes points out that although many authors provide this “happily ever after” ending, it usually comes with the condition that the protagonists must continue to work together to prevent the dystopia
they have escaped from returning. They have learned from the past, and must lead the way into a utopian future (160).

This concept of learning from the past to create a better future taps into the didactic nature of young adult dystopia (Bailey and Sawyer 66). While adult dystopia merely warns its readers about the potential future unless we change our ways, young adult dystopia not only speculates about the future, but has become an acceptable method of teaching (Reid 201). Hintz and Ostry claim that since children’s literature often has an instructive tone with lessons to learn, the combination with dystopia makes it a powerful teaching tool (7). By depicting societies that are disturbing exaggerations of our own, authors teach by negative example, encouraging readers to question the authority of those in power to encourage good citizenship (Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 248; Hintz 263). In dystopias, authors write about social organization and governance, and propose to teach adolescent readers about the limits of freedom and the possibility of improving society (Hintz and Ostry 1). The fact that these texts are read relatively early in a young adult’s political education gives adolescents the perception that they have the potential to recreate society anew (Hintz 263).

One way that this encouragement is provided is through the creation of a protagonist with whom the reader identifies. Just as readers of these narratives are going through the process of becoming adults, so too are the protagonists, yet they are simultaneously moving towards adulthood in addition to developing political agency (Hintz 254). In Carrie Hintz’s paper on the young adult dystopias of Lois Lowry and Monica Hughes, she states that there is usually a focus on the independence of the protagonist (263). The young adult heroes/heroines must take matters into their own hands – often, they are the only ones who can act (260), and the only ones with any political engagement (263). This need for political action and speaking out for a democratic
society coincides with the tropes of Bildungsroman: transitioning from adolescence to adulthood through the exploration of personal autonomy, discovering how one fits into society, and finding one’s voice, all experiences with which the reader can connect (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7; Hintz 255).

The conditions of the typical dystopian world are often a catalyst for achieving adulthood, as young adult protagonists must grow up fast if they are to survive (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7; Braithwaite 7). In her paper “Post-Disaster Fiction for Young Adults: Some Trends and Variations,” Professor Elizabeth Braithwaite of Deakin University states that many controlling dystopian power structures in these narratives try to quell the young adult’s quest for maturity, as this growth often furthers the protagonist’s self-realization and subsequent dissent (Braithwaite 7).

This quest for survival is often characterized as exciting: the hero must be innovative, seek personal freedom, overcome dangerous obstacles and undertake life-threatening, yet essential missions. They are often in harsh situations and environments, where they must make unbearable choices with courage and determination. The stakes are often high, not only for their lives, but for the existence of the world as well (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7; Braithwaite 6; Hintz 256). The protagonist is also usually the saviour; they are in the very heart of the action, often bearing the responsibility for the reform and/or survival of the entire society on their own (Braithwaite 10; Hintz and Ostry 1). They are characters that are heroic in many ways, and ideal individuals for young readers to connect with.

However, the lives of these protagonists are also often marked by struggle and difficulty. Hintz states that, along with their heroic quest, the characters are also plagued with all the typical personal problems of adolescence. There is frequently shame, embarrassment, and romantic
turmoil which raise the dramatic tension of the narrative and make the protagonists’ journeys seem all the more heroic (Hintz 255-256).

The most common method of increasing the intrigue of a character’s narrative arc in dystopian texts is to incorporate the excitement of first love. In the introduction to their collection *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenager* (2013), Professors Carrie Hintz, Balaka Basu, and Katherine Broad (also of Queens College) argue that there is a strong connection between the plot and romance to capitalize on the teenage preoccupation with desire to compel their interest in the dystopian narrative (8). Indeed, it is hard to imagine a young adult dystopia that doesn’t include a romantic narrative, as the insecurities and excitement of new love create the “frontier setting” and “conditions for adventure” that are needed to propel the plot forward (8). This is done in several ways. First, romantic love often inspires the need for social change in the novel, as the romantic lovers often stand up to the dystopian forces as a team, in order to create a better world together (8), which is certainly true in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. The search for love can be seen as a metaphorical search for a utopian community to which the protagonists can belong (Braithwaite 7). Dystopias that end in romantic fulfillment often mark a utopian beginning, as a couple strikes out to create a new and better future for themselves (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 8; Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 252). Another common element of the romance plot focuses on how a love interest has the potential to inspire the protagonist to develop a new point of view, or embark on a new experience, often with political undertones (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 8). In *Feed*, this is evident in Violet’s project in resisting the feed, which Titus participates in as well. However, Violet ultimately fails in her endeavour, both politically and romantically, highlighting the tragedy of the dystopic ending of the novel.
An additional way in which authors cause their young protagonist to stand out in a narrative is to contrast them with the adult characters. In the majority of young adult dystopian fiction, the child protagonist is pitted against the harsh truths of the adult world (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7; Hintz and Ostry 8). The journey of self-realization for the young protagonist often leads to the discovery of how ruined the adult world is (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7). The adult generation is not to be trusted. Even though there may be one or two dependable adult characters, it is the older generation that is somehow responsible for the dystopian regime (Braithwaite 7). Rather than protecting children as adults ought to do, these characters, more often than not, let down the child protagonist, or even knowingly manipulate, exploit, or trap them (Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 251). This oppression more often than not leads to a confrontation between the adolescent characters and the corrupt system in a way that the adults cannot undertake on their own (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7).

There are various types of dystopias; however, in young adult fiction, they are most easily broken down into three main categories. The first is the “adventure/quest” text, the second is the “survivor” text, and the last is the “social order” text (Braithwaite 8). Though of course these may overlap with one another, and often intermix with various other genres, it is easiest to discuss them separately.

In the adventure/quest text, there is typically a scenario in which a voyage takes place within the narrative. Of course, the type of journey that takes place is dependent upon the type of disaster that has created the state of the dystopian world of the novel. However, the main distinguishing feature is that the focus is not necessarily upon the need to survive or negotiating with the dystopian power structures of the world, but rather dealing with the adventure task at hand (Braithwaite 14).
The survivor text is often set in a post-apocalyptic universe years after the known world has been all but destroyed. The term “survivor” is used because the setting is usually one in which the young adult protagonist struggles to stay alive in their day to day existence (Braithwaite 8). The reader is usually led to believe that the disaster which created their current state is something along the lines of a huge world-changing event, such as world war (often nuclear), plague, an asteroid crash, environmental disaster, or even zombies (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3). Often, it is only subtly stated and not overtly described, suggesting that a flaw in humanity is the real reason behind whatever has happened, and focusing on the current devastation, rather than the cause in the past (Braithwaite 8). Typically, small bands of survivors struggle to subsist in a bleak environment, and if there are any existing communities, they are usually infected with secrecy, fear, violence, and repression (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3).

The most common dystopia on the market for young people today is the social order text, commonly set many years after a disaster in which a new society has been established (Braithwaite 11). The young adult protagonist does not have any experience of any other type of social regime, and only hears about the past through descriptions from adults, or from historical facts given by the authorities in their present society (Braithwaite 12). The past is often characterized negatively, as the current authorities maintain their power over the population by presenting themselves as an improvement over the past (Braithwaite 12). Part of the protagonist’s journey is learning to question the cost versus the benefits of the post-disaster social regime (Braithwaite 12), and when they eventually are at odds with power structures of their world, they must decide whether they will conform to the social order, escape, or stay and rebel in order to change it for the better (Braithwaite 12).
The regimes of social order texts have many organizational structures that are focused on control (Braithwaite 12), and insist that since the population is free from the dilemmas of the pre-disaster generation, their citizens are obligated to be grateful and obedient (Braithwaite 13). This is apparent in Feed, when Titus discusses how cumbersome having computers outside of the body must have been, as well as being grateful that corporations have freed them from corrupt government influence of education. As well, in The Hunger Games, the Capitol continually discusses the games as a celebration of the war and crushed rebellion, and their role as a symbol of peace and freedom.

In general, social order texts address the tensions between the need for individual freedom and the needs of society. As these fictional totalitarian governments present their dogmatic propaganda, young readers have the opportunity to think critically about the nature of justice, democracy, and societal and individual rights (Hintz and Ostry 9).

Overall, one must remember that although these books are meant for young people, they are written by adults, and therefore reflect adult anxieties about the future. The nature of these social fears changes with the times (Braithwaite 8), and dystopias have covered topics that ranged from nuclear disaster, genetic engineering, disease pandemics, environmental disaster, imperialism, capitalism, war, technology, corporate power, media, and so on (Braithwaite 8; Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3; Bullen and Parsons 133; Harris 113; Hintz and Ostry 11-12; Guerra 280; Morrissey 192; Reid 170). Regardless of the disaster, the fears and concerns of adults are artistically crafted in a dystopian setting in order to caution young readers about the direction of human civilization (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3). This research study will, of course, be focusing on the adult anxieties about media use and influence on children and adolescents, and how this is
characterized in the young adult dystopias *Feed* by M.T. Anderson and the *Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins.

### 2.3 Relevant Articles about the Primary Texts:

Articles on M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* remain few and far between, with only a handful being written since its publication in 2002. Conversely, though there was very little scholarly research about the *Hunger Games* trilogy at the beginning of this research study, there are now plentiful publications about Collins’ works available, covering everything from ecocriticism to queer theory. To survey everything written on this trilogy would be beyond the scope of this research study, therefore for the purpose of this literature review I have chosen to examine articles that discuss issues of surveillance, power and resistance.

The scholarship about *Feed* tends to focus on its dystopian aspects. The articles “Teaching about Consumerism through Stories” by Kay Parks Haas and “Teaching Dystopian Literature to a Consumer Class” by Rachel Wilkinson center on strategies for teaching teenagers about consumerism through fiction, both using the novel *Feed* as an example. While Wilkinson focuses on the common motifs and themes of this genre, Haas emphasizes the importance of being a conscientious shopper, and not contributing to a dystopian consumerist society.

Dr. Elizabeth Bullen and Dr. Elizabeth Parsons, both of Deakin University published the article “Dystopian Visions of Global Capitalism: Phillip Reeve’s Mortal Engines and M.T. Anderson’s Feed,” which again, examines the consumerist aspects of the text, but through the lens of Ulrich Beck’s theories on risk society. The application of this philosophy provides interesting insight into Violet’s actions in particular, as the authors discuss resilience in an
environment of fear and uncertainty, and consider the significance of Violet’s unhappy end at the finale of the narrative.

Professor Thomas Henthorne of Pace University’s work *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy: A Literary and Cultural Analysis* was a good starting point, as he explores the trilogy through a variety of different lenses and disciplines. The book, *Of Bread, Blood and The Hunger Games*, edited by Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark is also be useful, particularly the essay “Perhaps I Am Watching You Now: Panem’s Panopticons” by Professor Kelley Wezner of Illinois University. She examines Collin’s portrayal of surveillance in the trilogy using the theories of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, particularly when looking at the settings of Panem. The article “Everything You Do: Young Adult Fiction and Surveillance in an Age of Security,” by Kerry Mallan, director of the Children and Youth Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology, explores the significance of today’s surveillance societies and the reflection of these concerns in young adult fiction. While she discusses three primary texts, including *Article 5* and *Little Brother*, her analysis of surveillance in the *Hunger Games* also utilizes theories of the Panopticon. Additionally, her discussion includes ideas about celebrity status, and widens the theories of surveillance to also incorporate consequences of reality entertainment, as the television audience also participates in a kind of surveillance on the tributes. Stefanie Fricke’s chapter “‘It’s All a Big Show’: Constructing Identity in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games Trilogy*” in the book *The Games People Play: Information and Media Literacies in the Hunger Games Trilogy* also explores similar themes. Fricke examines how identity is shaped by many factors, such as social and racial inequality, politics, violence, gender roles, but most importantly for the purposes of this research study, the media. Her discussion of Collins’ satirization of celebrity culture, and the implications of media surveillance when it comes to fame provides
insightful commentary on how the voyeuristic surveillance, and the knowledge that she is constantly watched and judged by her audience impacts Katniss’ identity formation.

When it comes to discussing power and resistance in these texts, there are three works that are especially valuable to this analysis. The first is University of Arkansas Professor Sean Connors’ text, *The Politics of Panem: Challenging Genres*. In particular, his chapter, “‘I WAS WATCHING YOU, MOCKINGJAY:’ Surveillance, Tactics, and the Limits of Panopticism” uses Gillespie, Foucault, and de Certeau to explore the disciplinary power of the faceless gaze of the Capitol, and the way Katniss manages to avoid this gaze by making herself more visible in her resistance. While the focus of Susan Shau Ming Tan’s article “Burn With Us: Sacrificing Childhood in the Hunger Games” is on child sacrifice, there are very useful discussions throughout her work on concepts such as the scapegoat, the objectification of children’s bodies, and Katniss’ subsequent empowerment. Finally, Florida State University Professor Don Latham and Jonathan Hollister’s article, "The Games People Play: Information and Media Literacies in the Hunger Games Trilogy" is specifically relevant to this research study, as they write about Katniss’ utilization of information and media literacies, even using Foucault and Trites when considering Katniss’ methods of rebelling against the Capitol.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The theoretical framework in this research study is informed by theories about power by Michel Foucault and Roberta Trites. Foucault’s text *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* follows the evolution of the modern penal system from the corporal to the carceral, analyzing how changing power relations affected the reform of punishment (23). In her work *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, Roberta Trites analyzes the dynamics of power in young adult novels, and how young protagonists can be simultaneously repressed and liberated by their own power, and the power of the social institutions that surround them (7). She defines social institutions as a mechanism of social control that governs the behaviour of a set of individuals. Such institutions regulate social power, and all take an active role in educating children in how to engage in the institutional power afforded to individuals (22). Foucault defines institutional power as that which represses, regulating and disciplining the population. The foundational concepts of his social philosophy that will be used in this research study are discipline, surveillance, and punishment. While Foucault touches on resistance, Trites examines the resistance of young adults against social institutions in much more detail, and therefore her work will also be incorporated in this section of the critical methodology.

3.1 Discipline

In the first half of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines how the method of punishment was revolutionized from the corporal punishment of the body, to the incarceration of
the body. In the chapter “The Gentle Way in Punishment,” he explains that rather than being tortured and killed, the body of the condemned is now distributed, controlled, and supervised (104-131). Although Foucault acknowledges that there was an authentic motivation for a gentler system of punishment, the method to achieve this reform also enabled a more effective means of control of society as well (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 205-216).

The concept of “discipline” is one that Foucault defines as a type of power comprising many different techniques, procedures, and levels of application (*Discipline and Punish* 215). He states that discipline “makes individuals” and regards them as objects and “instruments of its exercise” (*Discipline and Punish* 170). It is a subtle and suspicious method of control which functions as a permanent and calculated part of society (*Discipline and Punish* 170).

The system of disciplinary power that developed to be used in prisons originated in the army and in monasteries (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 137), but by the late eighteenth century, the disciplines, or methods of control of populations, went beyond prison, and were subtly implemented throughout society as general formulas of domination (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 137-139). This was due to the fact that “discipline” created what Foucault terms “docile bodies,” subjugated and benign subjects in disciplinary institutions, but willing participants in society in general (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135).

Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in terms of economic utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body…let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138)
This was ideal for the capitalist society that was emerging from the industrial age, as a way of creating citizens that were functional and beneficial to society in factories, schools, militaries, and in political participation/obedience (215).

To discipline a population, Foucault identifies four main techniques used by social institutions to create docile bodies. The first one is the “control of activities” (Discipline and Punish 149), where those activities that are useful to society are encouraged, and those that are counterproductive discouraged (Discipline and Punish 150 – 156). Foucault emphasizes the advent and use of the timetable, and how a fear of wasting time, and being productive with time, can be used to control activity (Discipline and Punish 149-150). This is apparent in the Hunger Games trilogy, with the constant need to be on time for media appearances, as well the citizens of District 13 having their schedule tattooed on their arms in the morning. It is also evident in Feed, where the citizens are continually assailed with advertisements and entertainment. They are encouraged to be part of the consumer driven culture, and discouraged from being politically engaged.

The second technique of producing docile bodies that applies to Feed is “the organization of geneses” (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 156.) Through various social institutions, there is an organization and training of individuals into discrete segments. School, and the control accomplished through the regulation of knowledge is particularly effective, as citizens are conditioned to fulfill certain roles in society (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 157-162). It is fortuitous that Foucault’s main example to explain the organization of geneses is through education and apprenticeship training, as this method of discipline is also most evident in the portrayal of educational institutions in the primary texts. In Feed, the corporate takeover of the school system merely teaches young people to be consumers, rather than knowledgeable citizens.
in their society. In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, school systems are tailored to the primary industry of their regions. The physical stratification of citizens into these geographical regions (called districts) is also evidence of organizational strategies to produce docile bodies, as certain districts are given more resources than others. Communication across these districts is also rigorously controlled by the government, severely limiting access to information.

The third technique of discipline is “the composition of forces” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 162). The interests of the individual are secondary to the good of the population, and the concept of individuality or eccentricity is considered highly dangerous (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 162 – 169). Foucault highlights that this stems from working together as a cohesive unit to be more efficient and productive, such as in the military (*Discipline and Punish* 164) or in a factory. Ideally, the state should function like a machine (*Discipline and Punish* 164-165). The idea of fitting in and being “normal” also entered the social consciousness (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 177) and being non-conforming is seen as punishable in order to be corrective (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 179). Eventually, these values become so ingrained and influential in the population that people start to discipline themselves and others around them, without the need of the institution (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 184). In *Feed*, Violet, with her refusal to fit in is mistrusted, and she is scorned by the majority of her peers in the novel. Katniss is also well aware that she does not assimilate well, and learns how to embrace what is expected of the role she is playing on camera so as to win favour with the Capitol and District audiences.

Finally, the “art of distributions” (or the spatial distribution of individuals) refers to the physical placement of citizens (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 141-149). This entails the organization of populations into distinct spaces, as in the architecture of buildings such as
prisons, factories, military barracks, schools, etc. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 141-142). In a society that functions like a machine, each individual has their own place, and each place it’s individual. The use of disciplinary space eliminates uncontrolled disappearances of individuals and can also prevent them from dangerously gathering together (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 143). Disciplinary space can monitor the presence and absences of individuals, allow citizens to be easily located, (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 143) and “transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 148). While this is physically obvious in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, it is evident in both primary texts. The use of media technologies such as covert listening devices, cameras, and the internet, makes it difficult for citizens to disappear or be unaccounted for. The “art of distributions” is about visibility, which overlaps with the concept of surveillance explored in the following section.

### 3.2 Surveillance

To create willing participants in society, institutions must be able to not only discipline populations; they must be able to continuously observe the docile bodies they are controlling (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 171). The stability of any highly disciplined society depends on careful monitoring of individuals (Trites 200), and, therefore, continuous surveillance has become an integral part of the system of discipline, and is an anonymous power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 175-176). Although there are many other disciplinary mechanisms, it is surveillance that ties the system together (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 175). This is because surveillance allows a disciplinary system to be discreet, as it functions under the radar in silence, and also indiscreet, as citizens also know that it is everywhere and ever watchful (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 177).
In the age of corporeal punishment, power was something that was demonstrated to the public eye. However, disciplinary power is now exercised through its invisibility, and it is the subjects of this power that must be seen, as the awareness that they are constantly visible ensures the control that is exercised over them (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 187). Citizens will more often than not give up negative social behaviour and remain a docile body because of the knowledge that one is constantly visible. This ensures that citizens will adhere to the expectations of the disciplinary system to which they are subjected for fear of the state’s reprisal (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 187). The threat inherent in a power that could not be seen, as well as the pressure to be a willing participant in society, made surveillance one of the great instruments of power in the age of disciplinary regimes (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 185).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses how this idea of visibility began to be implemented in the architecture of the modern world, where buildings are no longer built to be seen, but to render visible those who are inside it (172). Foucault references and describes the Panopticon, a building designed (but never built) by Jeremy Bentham that allows the easy observance of inmates. The building consists of a central tower, where a warden can observe the individuals in a ring of cells facing said tower (200). The supervisor can see constantly, reversing the idea of the dungeon. Instead of being enclosed in cages of darkness, the inmates are enclosed in light, in full sight of the supervisor. In short, “Visibility is a trap” (200). The Panopticon induces “in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (201).

The Panopticon can be used as a metaphor for the workings of surveillance in any society. It is an idea that can be understood as a model of visibility that has been used in our society today in hospitals, factories, schools, prisons, and many other architectural initiatives
It is not simply a dream building; it is “a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form… [that] makes it possible to perfect the exercise of power” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 205).

The perfection of this design of surveillance is that it is eventually superfluous. Bentham stated that when a subject knows he is visible, but is never able to confirm whether he is being watched at the moment, it ultimately leads to an acceptance of the power structure (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 201). The acceptance of surveillance as a condition of existing in society is what is known as a “contract-oppression schema” definition of institutional power, which is based on the belief that all individuals voluntarily relinquish a certain amount of power to exist under the rule of a government body (Foucault, *Society* 17).

The notion of the Panopticon is present in both *Feed* and the *Hunger Games* trilogy. The feed itself, implanted in the brains of citizens, allows for unlimited visibility by the corporate regime of the world. In *Hunger Games*, the arenas, the Capitol, the surveillance in the districts, and the use of media in general are all representative of Bentham’s design, and influence the lives and freedom of the novel’s characters.

### 3.3 Punishment

When surveillance and discipline fall short of keeping control in a disciplinary society, a different means of enforcing the rules must be utilized. According to Foucault, this is the power to punish, as a highly disciplined society depends on an effective means of enforcing rules by punishing those who break them (*Discipline and Punish* 7-9). The culture of punishment evolved drastically during the 18th and 19th centuries from being one of public spectacle, torture, and execution, to being a nearly invisible force (*Discipline and Punish* 7-9).
Before the reform of the incarceration system, prisons were often dungeons – places of darkness that were meant to enclose, deprive of light, and keep inmates concealed from the world (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200). And yet another side of this system was torture and execution as a spectacle in order for the secretive to be made public, as criminal investigations and confinement were often keep hidden. The tortured body was displayed and made to publicly confess his condemnation (43) in order to authenticate the tortures he had undergone by admitting the “blackness of his crimes” (66).

At the beginning of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault records the account of a public execution (3-5) and also explores the variety of tortures and death penalties that abounded before the 18th century (32-33). He analyzes torture and public execution as a process that cannot be understood simply as a judicial procedure, but as a political ritual. It belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested, and this power is invested in the sovereign. In the monarchial system, the crime not only affects its immediate victim, the crime also attacks the sovereign, as the law represents the will of the monarch (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 47).

The monarchy exhibits its power through ritual; for example, coronation, the entry of a king into a conquered city, the submission of rebellious subjects, etc. The ritual of public execution belongs to this bank of ceremonial procedures that affirm the superiority of monarchial power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 48). The subject who has dared to break the law, therefore, must be punished in a way that allows the all-powerful sovereign to display his strength, for the crime and injury has been done to his kingdom, but also, symbolically, to himself (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 48). Consequently, public torture and execution had to be spectacular – it was not meant to be a punishment that was equal to that of the crime; instead,
there was an excess of violence that was extreme, and would ideally make the condemned cry out in agony (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 34). The body of the condemned was beaten, broken, and displayed publicly to exhibit the supremacy of the sovereign, and to be an exercise in terror. The ceremony of public torture and execution had nothing to do with justice; it had everything to do with the demonstration of power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 49).

The role of the audience during this ritual was just as, if not more important than, that of the victim, as its presence was required for the performance. Punishment that took place behind closed doors had no meaning, since the purpose was to make an example of the victim. It was a warning that disobedience was an act of hostility, that the slightest offence could be punished, and that the spectators should be afraid (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 57-58).

The idea of punishment as spectacle is very evident in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, particularly in the first and second books. Districts are forced to pay a debt for war crimes committed long ago in an annual ritual, depicted as the ultimate theatrical performance on national television. Viewing is also mandatory, enforcing the participation of the districts as an audience as well. Although present from the first book, as the trilogy progresses, the use of torture becomes more ominous, and easily lends itself to in-depth analysis. Particularly as the methods of punishment begin to transition from that of public spectacle to a more hidden and secretive process.

The evolution of the system of punishment is Foucault’s focus in the first half of *Discipline and Punish*. The transition from the monarchial system to a method of punishment that was relatively invisible took place rather quickly, and by the beginning of the 19th century the great spectacle of punishment disappeared and the tortured body was avoided (14). One of the reasons for this transition is that the physical revenge of the monarch on the condemned was
eventually seen as distasteful. The horror of the scaffold enveloped not only the victim, but also the executioner, often filling him with shame as his sanctioned violence made him resemble the criminal (9). Theatrical sentences such as use of the pillory, the stocks, and flogging, began to disappear. Even chain gangs, the use of convicts in public works, were downgraded. The pain and humiliation of penal ceremony came to be seen as almost being linked with the crime, and the savagery of these punishments was suspected of exceeding the original offense (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 9).

Another reason behind the evolution of punishment was that there was a change in attitude towards the power of the sovereign. While the public spectacle of punishment made the monarch’s power manifest to the people, this power was arbitrary and full of “archaic arrogance” (80-81). The superpower of the monarch was unpredictable, uncontrolled, full of loopholes, and therefore ineffective. This attitude is also reflected in *The Hunger Games*, with presidents Snow and Coin cast as untrustworthy, and whose sense of justice is questionable at best. As the 18th century progressed, the reform movement sought to establish a new right to punish that was based on more equitable principles to assure better distribution (80-81).

In order for this to take place, the body of the condemned man needed to be the property of society, rather than of the sovereign. This was able to come about for many different reasons. One of them is that violent crimes began to decrease, just as crimes against property began to increase (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 75). This also coincided with the rise of the middle class and social reform throughout the 18th century (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 78-87). As industrialization progressed, the different interests of philosophers, parliamentarians, lawyers, and magistrates disgruntled with the system converged to create a new political economy of power and illegalities more appropriate to a capitalist culture (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 78-87).
Criminals began to be represented as threats to society rather than as threats to the monarch, and therefore the right to punish was no longer the monarch’s right to revenge, but was now the defense of society as a whole (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 88-90). Punishment needed to become restitution that the guilty made to their fellow citizens, for a crime that had wronged them all (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 109).

Once the body of the condemned belonged to society rather than the monarch, it was the responsibility of society to punish him. The disgrace felt by executioners and judges for doling out sentences helped foster the institution of punishment, in which the responsibility for distributing sentences did not fall on an individual, but on a bureaucracy of many (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 92). Punishment was no longer the power of certain individuals over others, it became an “autonomous administration that [was] isolated both from the social body and from the judicial power” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 130). This new system refined and regularized the art of punishment, and eventually gave birth to the faceless system of incarceration (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 89).

This institution of punishment, epitomized by the incarceration system, began to characterize the condemned differently. Rather than focusing on the crime that must be punished, the focus now was on the identity of an individual as a criminal. Criminality, rather than crime, became the object of penal intervention (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 99-102). Criminals were characterized as monsters, outsiders who violated social norms; they were different, and therefore, outcasts of society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 91). As such, if a criminal was an abnormal social outsider, rather than simply punishing him, he was physically removed from society and “fixed” before he could be reintegrated. This isolation created invisibility, as instead
of the prisoner being displayed for the masses, the prisoner was forced to turn inward as they were cut off from societal contact (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 122).

This modern system of punishment, one of invisibility, isolation, and incarceration, is evident in both selected primary texts, but particularly in *Feed*. Violet’s crime is one of defiance, as she refuses to submit to the rampant consumerism of her world. As this corporate-run society is one that values economic utility above all things, Violet becomes a social outcast, and her eventual punishment is entrapment in a metaphorical prison. She is isolated from the world, incarcerated in her own body, and victimized by a faceless bureaucratic institution.

### 3.4 Resistance

When looking historically at the nature of resistance and rebellion, according to Foucault, one need only look back to the monarchial period of punishment as spectacle. Due to the nature of public punishment during this time, revolt and rebellion could arise from the participatory role the audience often had. Spectators played an important part in executions, as they witnessed justice being served, and shared in the glory of the king’s power. The right to be a witness and take part was also vehemently claimed by the population (*Discipline and Punish* 58), and as the condemned man was displayed, the crowd was encouraged to contribute to the proceedings by shouting insults, throwing projectiles, and even partaking in momentary acts of violence against the condemned, as a way of showing allegiance to the sovereign (*Discipline and Punish* 59).

However, one of the many reasons that the nature of punishment changed from spectacle to something invisible was the unpredictability of mob mentality. There was a risk in providing a public space and opportunity for the populace to side with the criminal and resist the king. For a criminal with nothing more to lose could curse the law, judges, and the king to the cheers of the
crowd (*Discipline and Punish* 60). Particularly, if the crowd sided with the accused, believing him innocent or the sentence to be unjust, it was not uncommon for the execution to be prevented. Rescuing a condemned man from the scaffold, obtaining his pardon by force, abusing the executioner and the judges, and causing general uproar; these public displays could easily lead to the beginnings of riots and social resistance (*Discipline and Punish* 61). When there were feelings of solidarity as an audience identified with a suspect, they could become glorified heroes that inspired social unrest (*Discipline and Punish* 63), something that is very evident throughout the *Hunger Games* trilogy.

While Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* is an historical analysis of the evolution of power and punishment, he concentrates much more upon how power is either forcibly taken, or voluntarily relinquished to the influence of disciplinary power structures, rather than on how one can use their own individual power to successfully resist oppressive social institutions (11-12; Trites 5). In *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, Roberta Trites considers more than Foucault’s “focus on power as something that conspires against” a population (5). She uses several different theorists such as Judith Butler, Jacques Lacan, and Marilyn French to suggest that although people (particularly young adults) exist in a perpetual relationship with force created by institutions, and can be disempowered by social structures, they can also be empowered (6-7). She writes that power is not only a force that acts upon the protagonist, but within the protagonist in young adult literature, as teenagers are oppressed as well as liberated by their own power, and by the power of the social institutions that surround them (7).

Trites states that teenagers often wonder if they should, or if they are able, to affect or change the world that they live in. As such, she has titled her book with a reference to the
rhetorical question, “Do I dare disturb the universe?” reflecting the desire that many adolescents have to test the degree of power they possess (1). Therefore, much of the YA literature emphasizes how “out-of-control” teenagers can learn to exist within institutional structures, but also how they can question and challenge these structures, as without experiencing the gradations between power and powerlessness, a teenager cannot grow (x-7). Teenage protagonists do not reach maturity in a young adult novel “until they have reconciled themselves to the power entailed in the social institutions with which they must interact to survive” (Trites 20).

However, this research study is looking solely at dystopias, and many young adult dystopias force protagonists to question the cost vs. benefit of a typically corrupt social regime. This necessitates that they make a decision to either conform to, escape from, or rebel against these structures in order to possibly change them (Braithwaite 12). Considering that typical YA dystopias include protagonists that are represented as cures for adult corruption who “save” the world, it is no surprise that most narratives include a protagonist that revolts and attempts to overturn the social institutions that enable the dystopian power structures (Bullen and Parsons 127; Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 252; Hintz and Ostry 10). Whether or not they are successful is another question, as young adults may rebel, but rebellions come at a cost (Trites 24-25). Institutions are more powerful than individuals, and protagonists may or may not always change the shape of the institution. However, there is little doubt that resistance leads to individual empowerment, as a young person who recognizes his or her own capacity to influence change is a powerful person indeed (Trites 141).
3.5 Conclusion

Young people grow to maturity educated by social institutions. In her work, Trites discusses the influence of families, schools, religions, and identity and government politics on the socialization of adolescents, and yet does not discuss the potential impact of media on young people (22). Therefore, using the theories of both Trites and Foucault discussed above, I explore in the next two chapters how media is portrayed as social institution, and how it functions as an instrument of the dystopian regimes of both Feed and the Hunger Games trilogy. The first findings chapter, Chapter 4, about Discipline and Surveillance, explores the nature of control of the government, and the relationship between media and disempowerment. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, on Punishment and Resistance, the use of spectacle, incarceration, and rebellion are examined, particularly how the protagonists attempt to use media as a method of empowerment, and their varying levels of success in achieving agency through the very method that was originally used as an instrument of power against them.
Chapter 4: **Surveillance and Discipline**

George Orwell’s work is so renowned that the word “Orwellian,” used to describe totalitarian government tactics, has become an adjective that is a part of Western vernacular. His novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is often credited as the foundation of dystopian fiction, and its coining of the term “Big Brother” has become synonymous with mass surveillance and the abuse of power to control and manipulate populations. It continues to resonate with readers, and its cultural impact across time and space has been profound (Aaronovitch).

Part of Orwell’s enduring, and even growing popularity, is that he anticipated much of our current world, particularly how surveillance and disciplinary tactics are used by governments as a security measure to protect citizens, but in reality, as a means of regulating and controlling the behaviour of populations (Mallan 2).

Both *Feed* and *Hunger Games* illustrate dystopian versions of what we know today as surveillance society: societies that extensively record, collect, store, and analyze information about groups and individuals (Norris). This Orwellian characterization is not surprising, given the history of the past fifteen years. Since the attacks of 9/11 on New York, the surveillance culture that has developed is shocking in its scale and scope, which has been exposed since Edward Snowden leaked documents while working at the National Security Agency. In the words of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Barton Gellman, “Taken together, [Snowden’s] revelations have brought to light a global surveillance system that cast off many of its historical restraints after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Secret legal authorities empowered the NSA to sweep in the telephone, Internet and location records of whole populations” (Gellman).
Part of the reason that this issue has become such a prominent part of the public consciousness can be accounted for in Drotner’s definition of “media panic” as it is emotionally charged and highly polarized (“Dangerous Media” 596), and changes in technology and use of media are accelerating rapidly. The increasing trend of integrated security with street and subway cameras, internet activity monitoring, and cellphone and email tracking have enabled a level of voyeurism upon populations that is unprecedented (Pandey 118). The public awareness of the extent of these systems has created an erosion of trust between citizens and government systems, and therefore, it is no surprise that *Feed*, published in 2002 soon after 9/11, and the *Hunger Games*, inspired while channel surfing reality TV and coverage of the Iraq war (Blasingame 727), reflect these moral dilemmas and their consequences (Mallan 2-3).

According to Foucault, the web that holds the many disciplinary mechanisms of a highly controlled society together is surveillance, as it is the vigilant observation of groups and individuals that maintains government stability (*Discipline and Punish* 175). As discussed in the methodology chapter, Foucault references Jeremy Bentham’s building design of the Panopticon, a prison that uses visibility to entrap its subjects (*Discipline and Punish* 200). The model of the structure allows the supervisors to constantly observe the inmates, and therefore, the inmates reduce negative behaviour and conform to their expectations because they know it is always possible that they are being watched, and may be punished (*Discipline and Punish* 187). This theory is a fitting analogy for the workings of surveillance in any society, but particularly in *Feed* and the *Hunger Games* trilogy.

While surveillance is one of many means of control, and certainly the most inflammatory in terms of media attention, one cannot forget that surveillance is simply a part of the larger system of what Foucault calls “Discipline.” Disciplinary techniques to create an amenable
population are also certainly present in today’s society, but of course are not as obvious, as they are woven into the very fabric of society’s social institutions. The whole point is for disciplinary institutions to operate imperceptibly under the radar and not attract overt attention. However, when one looks closely at issues such as the restructuring of a health care system (Cohn), bullying (Sedghi), online advertising techniques (Connors 86), or tracking protesters via their cellphones (Merchant), it is clear that all of these concerns can be examined and analyzed under the auspice of Discipline.

Foucault’s concept of discipline is vast, as it is a type of power that functions utilizing various techniques and procedures. For the purpose of this chapter, discipline will be discussed as the subtle means in which societal control is maintained.

The main crux of Foucault’s theory is the institutional creation of “docile bodies,” and the mechanics of power that are implemented to create citizens that are easily manageable (Discipline and Punish 135). The term “docile bodies” refers to citizens who are obedient to the power structures and social institutions that exist in society. They are subjected to forces that transform and improve groups and individuals in order to make them useful within a given culture (Discipline and Punish 136-137).

This chapter will explore the four main methods of manipulation (or disciplines) which are used to create docile bodies in a society. They are the “art of distributions,” the “control of activities,” the “organization of geneses,” and the “composition of forces” (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 141-169).
4.1 Panoptic Probes and Docile Bodies in *Feed*

In M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*, the continuous monitoring of citizens is done through the technology for which the novel is named. This computer chip implanted in the brains of the characters “feeds” their consumerist desires, but the reader quickly realizes that Anderson is also evoking the suggestion that this technology allows those in control to also “feed” upon the population (Sambell 248). By being continually connected to the internet, this communication technology becomes a web of data-surveillance, as the citizens of this world are viewed as consuming subjects that are constantly scrutinized and evaluated (Dholakia and Zwick 3).

The feed is referenced at the beginning of the novel, but not explicitly discussed until after Titus and his friends have been hacked at a nightclub. In the hospital their feeds are shut off for maintenance, and Titus explains the origins of the feed to the reader.

I don’t know when they first had feeds. Like maybe, fifty or a hundred years ago. Before that, they had to use their hands and their eyes. Computers were all outside the body. They carried them around outside of them, in their hands, like if you carried your lungs in a briefcase and opened it to breathe. (47)

Titus’ opinion of what life must have been like without the feed creates a visceral reaction in the reader, as it alerts the audience to the reality of how seamlessly attached the characters are to this technology. In their article, “Mobile Technologies and Boundaryless Spaces: Slavish Lifestyles, Seductive Meanderings, or Creative Empowerment?” Professors Detlev Zwick and Nikhilesh Dholakia introduce mobile technology such as cellphones and laptops as prostheses that are “inserted into our everyday lives, helping our ‘inadequate’ bodies along in fulfilling practical tasks…support[ing] the subject’s sense of ontological completeness and security” (1). This ideal is clearly evident from the way Titus introduces the feed, and his incomprehension of how
anyone could rely on their other senses. The feed, in a sense, completes him, and while it is shut off, he is lost without it. Anderson’s early introduction of this dependency is ominous, as the feed begins to sound suspiciously like a panoptic probe.

Dholakia and Zwick go on to describe, “the potential for surveillance and monitoring that these technologies place in the hands of the powerful…” (1). This idea is clearly evident as Titus continues in his description of the functions and usefulness of the feed:

…[T]he braggest thing about the feed… it knows everything you want and hope for, sometimes before you even know what those things are. It can tell you how to get them, and help you make buying decisions that are hard. Everything we think and feel is taken in by corporations like Feedlink and OnFeed and American Feedware, and they make a special profile, one that’s keyed up just to you, and then they give it to their branch companies, or other companies buy them, and they can get to know what it is we need, so all you have to do is want something and there’s a chance it will be yours. (Anderson 48)

Though Titus is enthusiastic about all the benefits of the feed, and how it helps him function in society, the true nature of the feed instantly becomes clear to the reader. No longer does the supervisor need to view inmates’ actions from the outside, they are within the very brains of their prisoners, even able to spy on their thoughts and emotions. The feed is Bentham’s vision come to life, for according to Foucault:

Bentham dreamt of transforming into a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or in time…And in order to be exercised, this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain
invisible. It has to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a
field of perception… (Discipline and Punish 209-214)

Much of Titus’ understanding of the feed is familiar when looking at Foucault’s description of
Bentham’s ideal design for surveillance. First of all, the feed seems to be conscious, as it knows
their thoughts and desires, and everything the characters “think and feel is taken by
corporations,” the obvious “faceless gaze” in this world. From Titus’ description, it is clear that
corporate power, through the feed, is able to surveil citizens everywhere at all times, and the true
genius of the feed is that the population thinks of it as a service, rather than an invasion of
privacy. However, Titus does go on to acknowledge the potential negativity of the feed when he
states,

Of course, everyone is like, da da da, evil corporations, oh they’re so bad, we all say that, and we all know they control everything. I mean, it’s not great, because who knows what evil shit they’re up to. Everyone feels bad about that. But they’re the only way to get all this stuff, and it’s no good getting pissy about it, because they’re still going to control everything whether you like it or not. (Anderson 48-49)

Though Titus is superficially aware that this surveillance is not ideal, he doesn’t seem to
comprehend the gravity of these implications, and sees no point in whining or complaining about it. Instead, he condones it as a condition of the world that a citizen must accept if they are to function in society. Foucault would argue that Titus is employing a “contract-oppression schema” definition of institutional power, which is based on the belief that all individuals voluntarily relinquish a certain amount of power to exist under the rule of a government body (Society 17). In this world, the true “government body” is corporate power, as throughout the narrative it becomes clear that the actual government has little authority in comparison to
corporations. Titus denies his political power as an individual, and doesn’t see anything amiss with the invasion of his privacy this surveillance entails. His compliance is a consequence of his belief in the propaganda he receives daily from the feed. Titus, and his adolescent friends, willingly cede their power to their perceived dominators, and have been socialized into the consumer society of this world through the social institution of the internet.

This “contract-oppression schema” is also especially evident when one examines the policies of coercion utilized in the execution of disciplinary power. The corporate controlled government in *Feed* effectively disciplines its civilians to increase their economic utility, while at the same time, disassociating them from power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138). Titus and his friends are portrayed as submissive and politically unaware consumers.

The first method of discipline that Anderson utilizes to create docile bodies in *Feed* is the “art of distributions,” which refers to how the citizens of a population are organized and physically distributed in space (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 142). In *Feed*, suburbs are built on top of one another, with the wealthiest living in the highest levels, far away from the contaminated planet, while the poorer classes dwell at the bottom of these communities. Violet is clearly a member of the latter, as “Her neighborhood was down a long droptube” (Anderson 134). The earth is so contaminated that houses and yards exist within bubbles, with fake clouds and suns; however, Violet is clearly from a lower class version of this arrangement. According to Titus,

Creville Heights was all one big area, instead of each yard having its own bubble with its own sun and seasons. They must’ve had just one sun for the whole place. All the houses were really old and flat. The streets were blue and cracked, and they were streets, I mean,
like for when things went on the ground. Their sun was up and you could see the sky was peeling. (Anderson 134-135)

It is significant that Violet and her father, who do not adhere to the ideal values of the consumer culture, and instead value intelligence and political awareness, are distributed to an area without the same technological benefits that Titus enjoys. In the disciplinary use of space, each individual has their own place, and each place its individual (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 143). In this world, the place of those who do not fully embrace the predominant media technology is at the bottom, literally and symbolically. The art of distributions is also an extension of surveillance, as the exact placement of individuals allows governing bodies to keep track of citizens, and prevent disappearances or unwanted gatherings (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 144). In modern times, as well as in the novel, this is made much easier through media technologies such as the internet. Not only are corporations aware of civilian activity, with their tracking of feed activity, but characters can also track one another. As Titus arrives home one evening after a date with Violet, he listens to the feeds of his family members:

I could feel my family all around me. I could trace their feeds faintly, because they weren’t shielding them. Smell Factor was dreaming while a fun-site with talking giraffes sang him songs… My parents were upstairs going in mal, which they wouldn’t want me to know, but which I could tell, because they chose a really flashy, expensive malfunction site that was easy to trace… and the feed spoke to me real quiet about new trends… (Anderson 147)

The idea of privacy is a completely foreign concept to Titus, as the feed has created a society where corporations, and subsequently friends, family, and strangers, have access to an individual’s most personal inner thoughts and feelings. Clearly, the “art of distribution” is
effectively employed in this world, as people are easily traceable, and therefore it would be impossible for any of the citizens with a feed to disappear or be unnoticed.

The “control of activities” is also evident in Anderson’s narrative. Social institutions encourage activities that are useful to society, and discourage those that are counterproductive (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 150 – 156). For example, in *Feed*, citizens are continually assailed with advertisements and entertainment. When Titus explains the uses of the feed, he says:

It’s more now, it’s not so much about the educational stuff but more regarding the fact that everything that goes on, goes on on the feed. All of the feedcasts and the instant news, that’s on there, so there’s all the entertainment I was missing without a feed, like the girls were all missing their favourite feedcast, this show called Oh? Wow! Thing!, which has all these kids like us who do stuff but get all pouty, which is what the girls go crazy for, the poutiness. (Anderson 48)

The teenagers who populate the novel never engage with politically pertinent information in their dying world because it does not have the power to compete with the entertainment offered by television feedcasts, products to purchase, and chatting with friends. They willingly participate in society as consumers, thus increasing their economic utility, and remain easy to manage politically, increasing the domination of the corporate media control.

The third technique of producing docile bodies that applies to *Feed* is “the organization of geneses” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 156.) Social institutions organize the training of individuals into discrete segments through the control accomplished by the regulation of knowledge. Citizens are conditioned to fulfill certain roles in society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 157-162). Considering the powerful potential people could experience through their
connection to the internet, with information at their fingertips, it is perplexing that this is not taken advantage of by these characters - until Titus explains what has happened to the school system:

Now that School™ is run by the corporations, it’s pretty brag, because it teaches us how the world can be used, like mainly how to use our feeds. Also, it’s good because that way we know that the big corps are made up of real human beings, and not just jerks out for money, because taking care of children, they care about America’s future. It’s an investment in tomorrow…. now we do stuff in classes about how to work technology and how to find bargains and what’s the best way to get a job and how to decorate our bedroom. (Anderson 109-110)

Not only is the feed functioning as a media-entertainment-social institution by offering products and amusement for their citizens to consume, the feed has also permeated the school system. Titus’ report of the “benevolence” of the corporations taking over the school system for the benefit of children shows how brainwashed he really is. His choice of words and the cadence of his phrasing even sounds like a commercial. The concept of school as a social institution, indoctrinating young people to take their place in the status quo of the social order, is omnipresent in adolescent literature (Trites 32). The combination of the school and the feed working together socializes the adolescent characters into accepting the inevitable power these social institutions have over every aspect of their lives. It is clear that “School™” has become nothing more than a place where students learn how best to shop with their cyborg technology. In Titus’ words, “That’s one of the great things about the feed – that you can be supersmart now without ever working… You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battles of the Civil War George Washington fought in and shit” (Anderson
47). His error highlights the irony that the feed was originally an attempt at improvement and was seen as an opportunity for enhancing children’s education. This echoes Bauerlein’s argument about the “dumbest generation” and how the internet, rather than being used to enlighten and educate youth, is more often merely used for distraction and entertainment (16). Although having a feed could potentially be a source of power, the regulation of knowledge by these educational and corporate institutions quells the adolescent’s self-realization of the power they could wield. Instead, they become controlled and dependent docile bodies, unable to think for themselves, and conditioned to become solely consumers in a consumerist society.

The last technique of discipline that applies to Feed is “the composition of forces” through which only what is beneficial for the majority of society is encouraged, while eccentricity, or individual interests, are considered undesirable or even dangerous, and therefore discouraged (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 162 – 169). Individuality and uniqueness are embodied in the character of Violet, and because she does not conform, she is scorned and mistrusted by the majority of the adolescents in the novel. She is Titus’ “weird” girlfriend for a large part of the novel.

Titus and his friends are constantly pursuing the next fad, hairstyle, or product so that they keep up with the latest “cool” image. Titus explains, “It was like I kept buying these things to be cool, but cool was always flying just ahead of me, and I could never exactly catch up to it” (Anderson 279). Violet is a very different individual. She does not go to a trademarked school; she is educated at home by her father. As a result, she has not been indoctrinated by the corporate-controlled school system that encourages consumerism. Instead, she is intelligent, and her use of language and exploration of ideas intimidates the other teenagers, and consequently she is frequently bullied and ridiculed. One instance of this occurs when she asks Titus’ friend
Calista what “incited a riot” (Anderson 164). Calista and the other girls start using language that is purposefully difficult, mocking Violet, saying, “Oh, sorry, I thought it was good to use stupid, long words that no one can understand” (Anderson 164). Titus refuses to defend her, instead continuing the bullying as they leave the party, saying, “Well maybe you shouldn’t show off like that…. Using weird words… saying weird shit….it’s kind of scary for people sometimes. It feels… It sometimes feels like you’re watching us, instead of being us” (Anderson 167-168). Violet’s difference marks her as dangerous, and because of her eccentricity, she is socially chastened to conform to a more normal state of being.

4.2 Panoptic Spaces and Performative Discipline in The Hunger Games Trilogy

Throughout all three novels, one of the Capitol’s main strategies to maintain control over the districts is a sophisticated system of surveillance. Whereas the observation of citizens in Feed takes place within the actual minds of the characters, the physical world of the Hunger Games trilogy can be considered a representation of the Panopticon.

The very landscape and design of Panem seems a more literal, rather than metaphorical, construction of Bentham’s prison, but on a much larger scale. Even its name, “Panem,” sounds similar to the word “Panopticon.” In the opening book of the trilogy, The Hunger Games, Collins first describes this world through her narrator Katniss, who states, “The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts…” (Hunger Games 18). One can interpret the Capitol as the watchtower that observes its inmates: the districts (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 200). The Capitol is described as having “glistening buildings…that tower into the air…” (Hunger
Games 59) with the characters living at its centre, called the “City Circle” (Hunger Games 71) in a “Training Center [that] has a tower designed exclusively for the tributes and their teams” (Hunger Games 73). The emphasis on circularity and height in these descriptions are, again, reminiscent of a “watchtower” (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 200). The Capitol is also “built in a place once called the Rockies” (Hunger Games 41), elevating it over the other districts, again, mirroring the watchtower (Wezner 149). When the narrative focuses on District 13, Collins describes its restrictive nature as a series of tunnels in a facility “exclusively underground” (Mockingjay 17), the centerpiece of which is, “Command, the high-tech meeting/war council room complete with computerized talking walls, electronic maps showing the troop movements in various districts, and a giant rectangular table with control panels…” (Mockingjay 20). While this description makes it obvious that District 13 has just as many eyes and ears to observe its population as the Capitol, it is the production design from the film version that truly communicates an ominous atmosphere. In the film, although District 13 is underground, there is a central circular elevator shaft that rises in the center of the set, and the circular walls surrounding the entire room are covered with windows facing towards it (Messina). This set design has many similarities with the various blueprints and photographs of the Panopticon and prisons based upon Bentham’s design (Bentham 172). Again, the setting echoes the height and circularity of the descriptions of the Capitol, foreshadowing the similar dictatorial nature of this District. Messina’s set alerts the audience to the fact that Katniss is still in a dangerous place, and watched on all sides.

The citizens of the districts, like the inmates in the cells surrounding the watchtower, are under constant observation. The inmates can see the watchtower, just as the districts are aware of the Capitol’s methods of surveillance, and know they can be seen at any moment (Foucault,
Before Katniss even leaves for the Games, she is aware of the risk of being spied upon. As early as page six of the first book, she mutters sarcastically about District 12 as she heads toward the fence to hunt, “glanc[ing] quickly over [her] shoulder. Even here, even in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you” (*Hunger Games*).

She goes on to describe learning to hold her tongue about her thoughts on the government, as “Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble” (*Hunger Games* 6). Katniss accepts this power structure and does not criticize the regime aloud, as she recognizes that the surveillance system renders her vulnerable. The normalizing gaze of the Capitol is even more evident when she reflects on Gale’s anger about the injustice they suffer. She thinks,

> His rages seem pointless to me, although I never say so. It’s not that I don’t agree…But what good is yelling about the Capitol in the middle of the woods? It doesn’t change anything. It doesn’t make things fair. It doesn’t fill our stomachs… I let him yell though.

Better he does it in the woods than in the district. (*Hunger Games* 14)

Katniss’ dismissal of Gale’s rants demonstrates how she has been effectively conditioned into a docile body. Her acceptance of the conditions of what it takes to safely function in society, and her thoughts on the futility of complaining about it, reveal the “contract-oppression schema” of institutional power (*Foucault, Society* 17). She is glad that Gale gets his resistance out of his system beyond the district fence, because as a willing participant in this society, she knows the danger of expressing this anger within the eyes and ears of the Capitol within the District 12 fence. Not only is surveillance a risk in the Districts, both Katniss and Peeta fear being overheard in the Capitol as well, once they are tributes. When Peeta asks for an explanation about their Avox, he suggests they go to see the view on the roof. Katniss correctly interprets his invitation as, “‘No one will overhear us talking…’ You do have the sense that we might be under
surveillance here” (*Hunger Games* 80). Even residents of the Capitol express a similar
cognizance of being observed. After Effie expresses her dissatisfaction that the Gamemakers
were not paying sufficient attention to Katniss, her nervousness is apparent: “Then her eyes dart
around as if she’s said something totally outrageous. ‘I’m sorry, but that’s what I think,’ she says
to no one in particular” (*Hunger Games* 187). The “no one in particular” can be interpreted as the
guards in the watchtower, as the tower needs only be visible to make the threat of observation
felt. The guards themselves are an unknowable, as the inmates must never know when they are
being watched at any given moment (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 201).

After Katniss’ first Games are over, her paranoia increases, and with good reason.
*Catching Fire* opens with a visit from President Snow, who reveals that he is aware of Katniss’
hunting beyond the District fence, and her relationship with Gale (*Catching Fire* 24-29). Katniss
contemplates how Snow has this information: “Surely they haven’t been tracking us in there. Or
have they? Could we have been followed? That seems impossible. At least by a person.
Cameras? That never crossed my mind until this moment” (*Catching Fire* 24). As her awareness
of the various mediums used by the Capitol for surveillance grows, she becomes extremely
cautious whenever communicating topics she deems risky. When she tells Haymitch about
Snow, she urges him off the train, “‘The train’s so stuffy,’ I say…. It’s a harmless phrase, but I
see Haymitch’s eyes narrow in understanding” (*Catching Fire* 43) in order to confide in him
without being overheard. When she wants to communicate her plans to start an uprising to Peeta,
she does not feel she can do so over the phone, “‘I wanted to talk to – to both of you.’ I don’t
dare add more, here on my phone, which is surely tapped” (*Catching Fire* 126). Finally, after she
injures herself returning from the woods, she must lie to her family about how she sustained the
injury, “‘I slipped and fell,’ I say. Four pairs of eyes look at me with disbelief. ‘On some ice.’
But we all know the house must be bugged and it’s not safe to talk openly” (*Catching Fire* 158). These, and numerous other instances as the narrative develops, reveal Katniss’ growing awareness of the media technologies utilized by the Capitol to survey the population as a means of social control, but particularly herself, as she has become a threat to the regime.

Of course, the most prominent use of surveillance in this society is in the Hunger Games themselves. The arenas, again, are reminiscent of the Panopticon, a microcosm of Panem. The equivalent of the watchtower is the control room, where Gamemakers watch and manipulate the action of the tributes. While in the narrative, Katniss and the other tributes, and therefore the reader, never see this control room, the movie versions provide the audience insight into this space. The circular room inhabited by Gamemakers in white coats, all facing a holographic screen in the centre that gives them unlimited visibility into the arena, eerily echoes Bentham’s vision (Messina; Bentham). In particular, the second arena in *Catching Fire* is nearly an exact replica of Bentham’s design. Katniss first describes it when climbing a tree to get her bearings, “…I can see the shape of the whole arena for the first time. A perfect circle. With a perfect wheel in the middle” (*Catching Fire* 286). The cornucopia, representing the power of the Gamemakers, is in the center of a circular formation, surrounded by twelve evenly portioned segments. Furthermore, as Katniss decodes Wiress’ mumblings, she realizes the significance of the arena’s shape and design: “A clock. I can almost see the hands ticking around the twelve-sectioned face of the arena” (*Catching Fire* 326). This design is significant not only due to its similarity to the Panopticon, but also because Plutarch Heavensbee’s clue to Katniss suggests another layer of meaning. When they meet for the first time, he gives her a clue as to what the arena will look like by showing her his pocket watch, “He turns the watch so I can see the face. ‘It starts at midnight...’” Plutarch has run his thumb across the crystal face of the watch and for just a
moment an image appears…It’s another mockingjay” (*Catching Fire* 82-83). The word “watch” comes from the old English word “wæcce,” used when speaking of “keeping watch” or “watchman” (“watch” def.3). This, of course, brings to mind Bentham’s watchtower, and the idea of a continued act of guarding and observing. Even Collins’ plot and diction choices are steeped in meanings that convey an impression of constant surveillance.

Within the arenas themselves, there are many ways in which the tributes are under constant surveillance, such as bugs, the jabberjays, implanted tracking devices in their arms, etc. However, the most substantial means of observation is done with cameras placed all around the arena. The omniscient viewpoint created by this surveillance not only subjects the tributes to the gaze of the Gamemakers, but the citizens of the Capitol and the Districts as well. Katniss consistently shows her awareness of the cameras throughout her time in the arena, “I’m glad for the solitude, even though it’s an illusion, because I’m probably on-screen right now (*Hunger Games* 152). What Katniss does with this knowledge is impressive, as she begins to consciously plot out her actions and reactions in front of the cameras:

While I’ve been concealed by darkness and the sleeping bag and the willow branches, it has probably been difficult for the cameras to get a good shot of me. I know they must be tracking me now though. The minute I hit the ground, I’m guaranteed a close-up.

The audience will have been beside themselves, knowing I was in the tree, that I overheard the Careers talking, that I discovered Peeta was with them. Until I work out exactly how I want to play that, I’d better at least act on top of things. Not perplexed. Certainly not confused or frightened.

No, I need to look one step ahead of the game.
So as I slide out of the foliage and into the dawn light, I pause a second, giving the cameras time to lock on me. Then I cock my head slightly to the side and give a knowing smile. There! Let them figure out what that means! (Hunger Games 163-164)

Rather than viewing herself as a victim of surveillance, Katniss uses the camera to her advantage in order to survive. Though she has been taken aback by Peeta’s actions, she refuses to reveal her true feelings on the matter, and takes the opportunity to manipulate the Gamemakers and Capitol citizens’ interpretation of her situation. She enjoys causing confusion and speculation, and by looking “one step ahead of the game,” she may gain monetary sponsors who will assist her with crucial assistance in the games. She does this again in Catching Fire just after Peeta has been shocked by the force field, and Finnick asks her how she knew it was there.

I hesitate. To reveal that I know Beetee and Wiress’s trick of recognizing a force field could be dangerous…One way or the other, I have a very valuable piece of information. And if they know I have it, they might do something to alter the force field so I can’t see the aberration anymore. So I lie. “I don’t know. It’s almost as if I could hear it…”

I decide to play this for all it’s worth. “That’s weird,” I say. I turn my head from side to side as if puzzled. “I can only hear it out of my left ear…”

Perfect. Now all the attention will be turn to the surgeons who fixed my deaf ear after the Games last year, and they’ll have to explain why I can hear like a bat. (Catching Fire 284)

Katniss is clearly aware of her vulnerability as a tribute in the games. The Gamemakers’ surveillance and the constant scrutiny of the audience put her at risk, particularly in this situation, as it is possible that she knows too much. Though she and the other tributes are disempowered by the Gamemakers’ menacing gaze, Katniss resists her role as a docile body, and does what she can to redirect attention away from herself and towards the doctors in the Capitol. Her subtle
influence of the audience demonstrates her ability to capitalize on her knowledge of the surveillance techniques of the Capitol, and turn them to her advantage.

Collins also provides commentary on the topic of media attention, as the *Hunger Games* trilogy clearly satirizes celebrity culture (Fricke 22). The tributes’ fame begins the minute that their names are drawn, and Katniss finds herself in a whirlwind of consequences of being in the spotlight, from makeovers, to stylists, to interviews and so on (Fricke 23). While Katniss finds many of these things mildly irritating, it is not until the second book, *Catching Fire*, that the cost of her fame profoundly affects her. When she begs Haymitch to help her get through her victory tour, and to convince President Snow that she is in love with Peeta, in order to suppress the districts, he replies,

No, Katniss, it’s not just this trip….Even if you pull it off, they’ll be back in another few months to take us all to the Games. You and Peeta, you’ll be mentors now, every year from here on out. And every year they’ll revisit the romance and broadcast the details of your private life, and you’ll never, ever be able to do anything but live happily ever after with that boy. (*Catching Fire* 44)

Katniss realizes that with her survival and resulting stardom, more of her freedom has been taken from her. If she wants to live, and keep her family and friends safe from President Snow, her future has been decided for her. Thus, the constant visual scrutiny she has suffered is not merely an inconvenience, but a restraining force upon her life (Mallan 8). This reality becomes even more detrimental after she has been rescued from the 75th *Hunger Games*.

“We had to save you because you’re the mockingjay Katniss,” says Plutarch. “While you live, the revolution lives.”
The bird, the pin, the song, the berries, the watch, the cracker, the dress that burst into flames. I am the mockingjay. The one that survived despite the Capitol’s plans. The symbol of the rebellion. (*Catching Fire* 386-387)

Not only have the citizens of the Capitol responded enthusiastically to Katniss’ public persona, but also the citizens of the districts. As Plutarch explains the reason behind her rescue, Katniss finally comprehends the true repercussion of her status as a public figure: she has now become a symbol. As the third book opens, Katniss understands that they want her to “…become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. The person who the districts – most of which are now openly at war with the Capitol – can count on…” (*Mockingjay* 10). Her television popularity, while keeping her alive, is now propelling her down a path of further violence and conflict, in which she will be forced to take on a leadership role. The price of her idolized celebrity persona is now not just her romantic future, but potentially her very life. Media surveillance, and the consequential audience engagement and expectations, imprison Katniss and her future just like the bars of a cage.

Though surveillance is the one of the primary methods of discipline in Panem, other techniques identified by Foucault are also prevalent in the Capitol’s techniques of control over the population. One of these methods of discipline is the “composition of forces” (*Discipline and Punish* 162). Suppressing one’s own difference and uniqueness to conform to the expectations of a given society is something that Katniss continually struggles with throughout the course of the narrative. Her coping mechanisms for blending in within the society of District 12 are to be private and closed off from the majority of the people around her. She learned to “hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school. Make only polite small talk in the public market”
Katniss also shares this fact about herself when reflecting on her time in school and her companionship with Madge, “She just keeps to herself. Like me. Since neither of us really has a group of friends, we seem to end up together a lot at school... We rarely talk, which suits us both just fine” (Hunger Games 12). Katniss is not like other girls in her District. Whereas the character Violet flaunts her atypical opinions and values to her peers, Katniss hides her personal life, as she knows the Capitol views individuality or eccentricity as undesirable (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 163). However, once thrown into the spotlight, this method of disguising her differences is no longer sufficient, as she must determine how to assimilate into the Capitol’s propaganda machine. It begins with her makeover, as her well-meaning yet idiotic prep team continually say insulting things about her appearance. Yet as she knows she must adapt to her surroundings, she “…force[s] my lips into a smile to show how grateful I am” (Hunger Games 62), masking her aversion and trying to be cooperative. Her preparation for her interview is even more painful as Haymitch practices potential questions and answers with her:

The next hours are agonizing. At once, it’s clear I cannot gush. We try me playing cocky, but I just don’t have the arrogance. Apparently, I’m too “vulnerable” for ferocity. I’m not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious.

By the end of the session, I am no one at all. Haymitch started drinking somewhere around witty, and a nasty edge has crept into his voice. “I give up, sweetheart. Just answer the questions and try not to let the audience see how openly you despise them.” (Hunger Games 118)

Katniss is a genuine person, and therefore finds it difficult to be insincere. It is easier for her to be withdrawn and hide her true feelings when they are not in line with the expectations around
her, but she no longer has that option in the media-driven world of the Capitol. She must learn to perform, and craft a persona that is suitable for the cameras.

She manages to do this for the interview but is thrown off balance when Peeta declares his love for her before the studio audience. Afterwards, she expresses her anger at the deception, until Haymitch clarifies the effect it will have:

The words are sinking in. My anger fading, I’m torn now between thinking I’ve been used and thinking I’ve been given an edge. Haymitch is right. I survived my interview, but what was I really? A silly girl spinning in a sparkling dress. Giggling... Silly and sparkly and forgettable...

But now Peeta has made me an object of love. Not just his. To hear him tell it I have many admirers. And if the audience really thinks we’re in love... I remember how strongly they responded to his confession. Star-crossed lovers. Haymitch is right, they eat that stuff up in the Capitol. Suddenly I’m worried that I didn’t react properly. (Hunger Games 136)

Katniss is a teenage girl who rejects the notions of romance and marriage. In order to prevent losing any more people that she loves, she expresses early on having no interest in a family when she declares to Gale, “I never want to have kids” (Hunger Games 9). Though a careful reader can detect her growing affection for both Gale and Peeta, her entire sense of self and understanding of her own personality come into conflict when drawn into the potential “star-crossed lovers” plot that Peeta introduces into the Games. Understandably, she reacts angrily and becomes upset, afraid she has been made to look a “fool” and “weak” (Hunger Games 135), because in her eyes, anyone who succumbs to these typical teenage girl fantasies is foolish. However, after Haymitch convinces her that this helps her present a persona as desirable, and drives home how this perception of her will “get you more sponsors” (Hunger Games 135), Katniss slowly becomes
willing to compromise her self-image to conform to normal societal expectations. Being able to pretend and imitate this typical teenage romance fantasy may help her succeed in the Games. After this point, Katniss finds it less of a struggle to present the kind of personality her audience wishes her to be, but at the same time, maintaining her values and opinions quietly inside herself. This technique of assimilation can be characterized as the “practices of the self” that Foucault states are strategies that allow one to effect, by their own means, ways of managing and adapting oneself to “achieve a certain kind of existence” (“Sexuality and Solitude” 10; Mallan 9). Nevertheless, the Capitol has succeeded in training its citizens to make their own interests and personalities subordinate to the good of the community. Katniss’ true personality is eccentric, and therefore dangerous, and so she must compose herself to fit into the efficient media machine of the Capitol (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 164).

The “art of distributions” and the “organization of geneses” are two other disciplinary methods identified by Foucault that overlap in this narrative. The Capitol not only physically stratifies citizens into separate geographical regions (districts), but also uses various social institutions to organize these citizens into discrete segments to produce a docile population (*Discipline and Punish* 142, 156).

The physical placement of citizens in the novel is organized into distinct districts that surround the Capitol (*Hunger Games* 18), or, the “watchtower” (Foucault 200). When District 12 is first described, Katniss states:

…enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain-link fence topped with barbed-wire loops. In theory, it’s supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods…But since we’re lucky to get two or three hours of electricity in the evenings, it’s usually safe to touch. (*Hunger Games* 4-5)
While Katniss phrases this description of the chain link fence as there for citizens’ protection, it becomes clear within a paragraph that this is not the case when she discusses the risks that she takes to hunt for her family “[e]ven though trespassing in the woods is illegal and poaching carries the severest of penalties…” (5). This description of the fence around District 12 is similar to that of District 11, which Katniss observes on her Victory tour, “[t]owering at least thirty-five feet in the air and topped with wicked coils of barbed wire…I see the watchtowers, placed evenly apart, manned with armed guards” (Catching Fire 55). In his discussion of spatial distribution, Foucault states that disciplinary space helps regimes to monitor the presence and absence of individuals, and eliminate uncontrolled disappearances (Discipline and Punish 143). Clearly, the fences surrounding various districts throughout Panem are not there to protect citizens from what is outside the district, but are meant to keep them penned into their designated spaces like animals in cages. The Capitol has constructed disciplinary space, again similar to the Panopticon, to keep its districts visible, and make it difficult to be unaccounted for.

The districts are also placed far apart and isolated from one another, with little to no communication between them. When Rue and Katniss discuss the differences between District 11 and 12, Katniss ponders:

It’s interesting, hearing about her life. We have so little communication with anyone outside our district. In fact, I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking our conversation, because even though the information seems harmless, they don’t want people in different districts to know about one another. (Hunger Games 283)

Just like inmates in the Panopticon, the districts can be seen by the watchtower (or in this case, the Capitol) but the
side walls prevent [them] from coming into contact with [their] companions. [They] are seen, but [they] do not see; [they] are the object of information, never a subject of communication. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200)

According to Foucault, this lack of communication is a guarantee of order, as there is no danger of citizens across districts being able to collectively plan to rebel (*Discipline and Punish* 200). This disciplinary space allows the watchtower/Capitol to carefully supervise their inmates/districts and “transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities” (*Discipline and Punish* 148).

The “organization of geneses” is evident in how social institutions impose certain tasks of a particular nature on the population of the Panem. At the opening ceremonies of both her *Hunger Games*, Katniss explains how she knows who is from what district: “For the opening ceremonies, you’re supposed to wear something that suggests your district’s principal industry. District 11, agriculture. District 4, fishing. District 3, factories…District 1 makes luxury items for the Capitol…” (*Hunger Games* 66-69). We learn more in the second novel about different districts: “…textiles…District 8…livestock keepers from District 10…District 7. Lumber and paper…” (*Catching Fire* 213-214). While the Capitol controls communication between districts, they do not hesitate to publicly illustrate the role of each district within the country. By dehumanizing individuals as only the embodied economic commodities of their respective districts, the Capitol asserts its ownership over the districts, and the individuals within them (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 157).

The economic subordination of the districts is also explained as Katniss describes her education:
Somehow it all comes back to coal at school. Besides basic reading and math most of our instruction is coal-related. Except for the weekly lecture on the history of Panem. It’s mostly a lot of blather about what we owe the Capitol. *(Hunger Games 41-42)*

It is easy to see how the population of the districts are conditioned to fulfill their expected positions in the Capitol framework. As discussed earlier, school is often characterized as an indoctrinating and oppressing social institution in young adult literature, teaching students to accept their role in society’s status quo *(Trites 32)*. In the Capitol’s state-sanctioned curriculum, it is clear that the young people of Panem learn only educational basics, propaganda, and information about their district’s primary industry. They are expected only to be productive members of their district for the economic profit of the regime *(Foucault, Discipline and Punish 160)*. The social institution of education regulates the knowledge available to its citizens, and teaches them to accept that the Capitol has power over every aspect of their lives.

The “control of activity,” is the encouraging of those activities that are useful to society and discouraging to those considered counterproductive *(Foucault, Discipline and Punish 149)*. The idea of control can be applied to any number of activities in the dystopian world of Panem, but primarily, the participation and viewing of the Hunger Games is one that serves the purposes of entertainment, distraction, and control *(Thomas 215)*.

The beginning of the first novel opens on “reaping day” *(Hunger Games 3)* with Katniss explains the founding of the country Panem, rising up out of the remains of a North America wracked by environmental disaster and war *(Hunger Games 18)*. She goes on to explain the origin of the totalitarian regime that followed, as well as the Hunger Games.

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.

The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the
twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The
twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything
from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the
competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins. (Hunger Games 18)

This participation of the population in the Hunger Games is the ultimate example of docile
bodies created by a disciplinary system (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 135). The citizens of
this world are subjugated to the point where their actual bodies are the target for the mechanisms
of power, as they are forced to make payment to the regime; payment that consist of actual
human beings (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 155). Resistance is discouraged with threats, as
Katniss’s explanation of the reaping makes it clear that “Attendance is mandatory” and if
officials find you at home, then “you’ll be imprisoned” (Hunger Games 16). The description of
the children attending the reaping also emphasizes the degree to which they are oppressed by the
state. “People file in silently and sign in… Twelve – through eighteen-year-olds are herded into
roped areas marked off by ages…” (Hunger Games 16) This imagery suggests that the children
are symbolic cattle, as they are “herded” to where they need to be, making it obvious that this
technique of power regards these individuals as both objects and instruments of its exercise
(Foucault, Discipline and Punish 170).

Although dystopian literature is a critique of existing political or social conditions, given
the barbarity behind the idea of the Hunger Games, a modern audience may wonder whether
Collins’ satirization of contemporary culture’s obsession with reality television is a plausible
dystopian future (Booker 5; Henthorne 95). However, Collins cleverly connects her fictional totalitarian future to the ancient past. When Plutarch is explaining the name of the country to Katniss, he says,

“It’s a saying from thousands of years ago, written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome,” he explains. “Panem et Circenses translates into ‘Bread and Circuses.’ The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power.”

I think about the Capitol. The excess of food. And the ultimate entertainment. The Hunger Games. “So that’s what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses.”

“Yes. And as long as that kept rolling in, the Capitol could control its little empire.”

(*Mockingjay* 223-224)

This reference to the past enhances the validity of Collins’ vision, as it has a historical precedent. The population of the Capitol, the only citizens who would really have any semblance of power in this world, are bodies that are manipulated by authority (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 155). The analogy to ancient Rome through the allusion to Juvenal characterizes the means of media control by the Capitol primarily as distraction. The majority of Capitol citizens do not participate in politics and neglect their civic responsibility to their fellow human beings, because their immediate needs are met with an abundance of food and other physical comforts, and their attention is diverted by the culture of entertainment that surrounds the Hunger Games. The Capitol encourages this self-indulgent and frivolous use of time, as it is a useful means to ensure that their citizens comply with the behavioural expectations of docile ignorance, thus making them easier to manage politically, and increases the control of the population through media manipulation (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 154)
While the government encourages the consumption of this media programming in the Capitol for entertainment and distraction from political engagement, in the districts the viewership of the Hunger Games and the hype surrounding it is consumed only because they have no other choice. The words “required viewing” (Hunger Games 362) and “mandatory viewing” (Catching Fire 145, 169) are used continually by Katniss when discussing her various interviews, press appearances, and of course, her participation in the games themselves. Of course, the majority of the population in the districts would not receive enjoyment or satisfaction from watching their fellow countrymen paraded around in an arena to die. After she first describes the Hunger Games, Katniss goes on to say, “To make it humiliating as well as tortuous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others” (Hunger Games 19). This mockery of their pain and suffering portrays the true sinister nature of the Capitol. Its use of media can be interpreted as an instrument of torture and intimidation. As Katniss states:

Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol’s way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you.” (Hunger Games 18-19)

The Capitol’s efficiency is rooted in its enforcement of discipline through the media. These scare tactics are effective in their means of discouraging “activities that are considered counterproductive” to the regime, as the population is threatened with destruction if it does not cooperate (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 149). Through the Hunger Games, the Capitol
coerces the population into acknowledging that rebellion would be futile, as it would only bring more death, not just to their children, but to everyone (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 151-153).
Chapter 5: Punishment and Resistance

The utilization of social media in armed conflict has become a reality that the world has come to grips with in the last five years. For example, similar to the Arab Spring discussed in the Literature Review, during the Israeli-Gaza conflict of 2012, Hamas, the Israeli Defence Force, and regular civilians flooded social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with video clips, articles, and images, actively engaging in political debate and discussion as events unfolded in real time. This influenced public opinion to the degree that the mainstream media were forced to abandon a traditional approach, and to consult social media and reference it in their reporting to provide a fuller picture of what was happening on the ground (Peled).

Beginning in 2014, ISIS (or ISIL) began releasing videos of beheadings on social media, receiving widespread international media attention. Numerous justifications have been given for ISIS’s posting of the videos for public viewing, such as attempting to force governmental policy change, retaliation against captured citizens of countries participating in military action against the group, and intimidating locals into obedience (al-Marashi). On January 21st, 2014, thousands of Ukrainian citizens who had been in the area of a protest received a text from the government, warning them that they had been registered as a participant in a mass disturbance, on the same day that a law had been passed to make the right of public assembly illegal (Merchant). Just as had occurred in Egypt during the Arab Spring, social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, began playing a prominent role in the mobilization of activists and protestors in Ukraine (Barberá and Metzger). Later, as this protest turned into a full-fledged revolution, the YouTube video, “I am a Ukrainian,” created by 24-year-old Yulia Marushevska, went viral, educating the
public about what was happening, and urging people to share the video and show support for the Ukrainian people (Collins).

These are a select number of examples of how social media has been employed by governments, rebel groups, and ordinary citizens on either side of any given conflict. It is critical to note, however, that each of these examples illustrates how, in our modern era, media has given people the ability to circulate messages of punishment as well as resistance.

Punishment, “the infliction of a penalty or sanction in retribution for an offence or transgression” (“Punishment” def.1) according to Foucault, is the primary method used by disciplined societies to enforce rules and laws when citizens are disobedient (Discipline and Punish 7-9). Procedures of punishment have changed considerably over the last several hundred years, and Foucault evaluates the two main stages of this evolution: the monarchial system and the penal system, both of which are evident in the Hunger Games and Feed (Discipline and Punish 7-9).

Prior to the 19th century, the culture of punishment in the monarchial system was one of public condemnation and ritual. The power of the monarch was manifested in these spectacles of political power, demonstrating their superiority with extravagant displays of torturous violence. This exercise of terror was not about justice, but rather concerned revenge for defying the sovereign, and intimidation to prevent further defiance (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 47-49). Although this type of punishment is relegated to history in most nations, it remains relevant today, particularly as ISIS has clearly utilized these practices over the last several years. Indeed, the Hunger Games trilogy could be considered a foreshadowing of these events, as Collins explores the use of ritual and spectacle to punish throughout her narrative. The forced payment
for past war crimes by the districts in the form of the Hunger Games, as well as various other
types of theatrical punishment will be analyzed throughout this chapter.

Foucault’s further discussion focuses on how the reformation of this system of
punishment was rooted in the desire to create a method of enforcing laws that was more in line
with a democratic and capitalist culture (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 81). As such, the body
of the condemned became the property of society, rather than of the sovereign (Foucault,
*Discipline and Punish* 75). Punishment, therefore, became the responsibility not of one person,
but of a bureaucratic system of many to punish individuals for the defense of society as a whole
(Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 88-92). This new system eventually gave birth to the faceless
system of incarceration (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 89), where criminals are removed and
isolated from society in order to be disciplined into obedience (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
122). Similarly to the threatening text to the Ukrainian people, resulting from the bureaucratic
cooperation of their government and cell phone corporations, Violet Durn in *Feed* is penalized
by those in power for her defiance of her world’s societal expectations. Her characterization as a
social outcast, and her eventual isolation and metaphorical entrapment will be explored
throughout this chapter.

When examining punishment, the antithetical consideration is how individuals challenge
and disobey the rules and laws of civilization. According to Professor Roberta Trites: while
people exist in a perpetual relationship of force created by societal expectations (6-7),
individuals, and particularly young people, must test the degree of power that they possess, as
without experiencing the gradations between power and powerlessness, an individual can never
be self-actualized (1-7). She argues that much of YA literature therefore explores how teenagers
learn to navigate the social institutions of their world, and whether they should obey, question, or
challenge these structures (5). This is true of both *Feed* and the *Hunger Games* trilogy. While the characters in both narratives are marginalized by media in their respective worlds, Katniss and Violet also demonstrate agency by embracing the very communication technologies that are used against them in order to resist the tyrannical hegemonic power structures that exist around them.

### 5.1 Spectacle and Revolution in *The Hunger Games* trilogy

In her *Hunger Games* trilogy, Suzanne Collins has created a culture of punishment in which total control is exercised through the collective fear of retribution (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 7-9). Although a futuristic world, dystopian government structures often regress to more savage and primitive models (Braithwaite 12), as in Collins’ depiction of the Capitol with clear allusions to ancient Rome’s use of the Colosseum and the payment of Athenian children to the hegemonic Crete in the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur (Collins, “Interview” 732). Through these references to ancient history and mythology, as well as the common practices of torture and public execution in the 17th and 18th centuries, Collins creates a “spectacle of the scaffold” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 32) through her construction of the Hunger Games, the Capitol’s most vivid display of power: a frightening and effective use of media where televised games to the death are compulsory viewing across the nation (Latham and Hollister 45).

The first component of the monarchial system of punishment that is important to understand is that it is not simply a judicial procedure, it is a political ritual that demonstrates the power of the state and the sovereign (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 47). In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, this is the Capitol, embodied in President Snow. Though not a monarchy, this is a dictatorship that exhibits its power through public ceremony (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*...
For example, immediately after the tributes arrive at the Capitol, they are put on display for the “opening ceremonies” (*Hunger Games* 66), a celebration to mark the start of the Games that is remarkably similar to the opening ceremonies of the Olympics. The tributes wear “costumes” (*Hunger Games* 66) to represent where they come from, are paraded around in “chariots pulled by teams of four horses” to “music…blasted around the Capitol” in front of “crowd-lined streets…” (*Hunger Games* 68-69). The film versions also do a remarkable job of representing this manifestation of power. In *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, through a combination of close-up, medium, and aerial shots, the chariots are filmed rolling along streets lined with timpani drummers before adoring crowds towards President Snow, aloft on a high podium looking down upon the tributes in front of hundreds of banners with the Capitol symbol. The entire scene resembles a cross between a Nazi rally and a Roman triumph, highlighting the absolute power of President Snow and the Capitol, and the ultimate subjugation of the tributes (Mallan 9; Messina).

Another ritual that requires the tributes to perform is the set of interviews before the Games. Katniss becomes nervous before her first interview, as it is an elaborate exhibition:

> Although evening is falling, the City Circle is brighter than a summer’s day. An elevated seating unit has been set up for prestigious guests, with the stylists commanding the front row…A large balcony off a building to the right has been reserved for the Gamemakers. Television crews have claimed most of the other balconies. But the City Circle and the avenues that feed into it are completely packed with people. Standing room only. At homes and community halls around the country, every television set it turned on. Every citizen of Panem is tuned in. (*Hunger Games* 124)

Not only are the tributes required to participate in these deadly Games, they must continually entertain citizens of the Capitol. Once their names are drawn in the reaping, the children’s bodies
are no longer their own; rather, they become objects that belong to the Capitol. These elaborate rituals preceding the Games - of costume, dressing up, processions, and interviews - are part of the process to illuminate the power of the Capitol, as later, these “objects” will become nothing more than a source of bloody spectacle in the arena (Shau Ming Tan 60-61). While these interviews will be aired across the entire country, it is the sheer numbers of Capitol citizens in the audience the tributes must win over in order to gain sponsors as they dance like puppets on a string in an elaborate ceremonial occasion that emphasizes their serfdom to this dominating Capitol.

Of course, all of these rituals are pre-emptive for the ultimate display of tyrannical power: the Hunger Games themselves. When Katniss first describes the games and what they entail, she says,

The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins. (Hunger Games 18)

In a monarchial government system, both justice and punishment are directly invested in the head of state. In this case, that power resides with President Snow. Consequently, in the monarchial system, the crime not only affects its immediate victim, but also attacks the sovereign, as the law represents the will of the monarch (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 47). Therefore, the Hunger Games are an elaborate system of torture and public execution for crimes committed by the districts long ago, and affirm the superiority of the Capitol and President Snow
(Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 48). Katniss goes on to describe what she believes is the purpose of the Games:

Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol’s way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you.” (*Hunger Games* 18-19)

The primary purpose behind torture and public execution is intimidation. In the monarchial system, a citizen who has dared to break the law must be punished in a way that enables the ruler to exhibit their strength, for the crime and injury has been done to their kingdom, and also symbolically, to themselves (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 48). By creating a spectacle with the Hunger Games, the Capitol communicates to its citizens that even the slightest challenge to the regime will be subject to punishment (Connors 92). The idea of murdering children as a punishment is horrifying, and the all-powerful dictator who is capable of sacrificing innocent children is one to be feared. Even after the Games are over for the year, they are never out of sight, out of mind for the citizens of Panem. At the very beginning of the second book, *Catching Fire*, Katniss is about to embark on a “Victory Tour”, as she explains,

Strategically placed almost midway between the annual Games, it is the Capitol’s way of keeping the horror fresh and immediate. Not only are we in the districts forced to remember the iron grip of the Capitol’s power each year, we are forced to celebrate it. (4)

The constant reminder of what is to come for the citizens of the districts is a type of torture in itself. An obvious and yet effective scare tactic, the Hunger Games enable the Capitol and
President Snow to effectively keep control of Panem. This hovering threat serves to keep Panem subdued, and in President Snow’s eyes, aids in preventing another uprising.

The suppression of the citizens of Panem through public punishment, however, is not sufficient. In order to justify these practices, the condemned must publicly confess their condemnation (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 43). For example, at the beginning of the Hunger Games during the reaping ceremony,

...the mayor steps up to the podium and begins to read. It’s the same story every year. ...

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. (*Hunger Games* 18)

This authority figure, as a representative of the citizens of District 12, is forced to “willingly” participate in this ritual of domination. Particularly poignant and painful is the mayor’s final line before the reaping proceedings: “‘It is both a time for repentance and a time for thanks,’ intones the mayor” (*Hunger Games* 19). By acknowledging the collective guilt of the nation on behalf of his people, and even worse, encouraging remorse, he lends legitimacy to these proceedings, and seemingly justifies the brutality that is inflicted upon his district (Braithwaite 13). Even the tributes are forced to participate in this charade. During the Victory Tour that Katniss and Peeta must undertake in the second novel, they are required to make a speech to each district. When they first visit District 11, Katniss describes their role: “Peeta and I will be introduced, the mayor of 11 will read a speech in our honor, and we’ll respond with a scripted thank-you provided by the Capitol” (*Catching Fire* 56-57). Katniss and Peeta, the tortured bodies, are put on display and
must publicly thank the Capitol for the atrocities that have been imposed upon them, which authenticates the tortures that they have undergone (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 66).

In order for the act of public execution and torture to be effective, it must be spectacular (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 34). This is evident throughout the entire series, and most obviously in the Hunger Games themselves. When Gale and Katniss are first discussing her chances of survival before she leaves for the Capitol, he urges her to get a bow, and if not, then to make one. When she replies that she doesn’t know if there will be wood, he responds, “There’s almost always some wood...Since [the] year half of them died of cold. Not much entertainment in that” (*Hunger Games* 39). Although the tributes of these particular Games did die, for public torture to achieve its true purpose, it must be extravagant and maim the victim, either by the scar it leaves, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, marking the victim with infamy (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 34). There is nothing triumphant for the Capitol in witnessing children slowly freezing to death while huddled in the darkness, and therefore it is considered ineffective and anti-climactic (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 34). Consequently, the Gamemaker’s attempt to construct future Games to be experienced as theatrically as possible. After the Gamemakers have used fire to force Katniss out into the open from her hiding spot in the woods, she says,

The attack is now over. The Gamemakers don’t want me dead. Not yet anyway. Everyone knows they could destroy us all within seconds of the opening gong. The real sport of the Hunger Games is watching the tributes kill one another. Every so often, they do kill a tribute just to remind the players that they can. But mostly, they manipulate us into confronting one another face-to-face. Which means, if I am no longer being fired at, there is at least one other tribute close at hand. (*Hunger Games* 177)
This design to flush out the tributes and drive them together demonstrates how public execution is more than an act of justice; it is the manifestation of the force of the sovereign displayed for all to witness (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 50). While the Gamemakers could easily kill the children during the Games, it is much more complex to force them to lose their innocence by manipulating them to kill one another. It is a more effective display of the Gamemakers’, and by extension, of President Snow’s power. The entire Hunger Games is a metaphor for what is happening in the real world of Panem. Katniss and the rest of the tributes know that if the Gamemakers want to kill them, they can, just as the citizens of Panem know that President Snow and the Capitol could do the same to them. It is a subtle and subconscious reminder of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 49).

Public torture and execution was not intended to be a punishment equal to that of the crime. It was meant to be an extreme excess of ferocity, a ruthless spectacle of physical violence (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 34). This is best portrayed in the series with the death of the tribute Cato. Near the end of the first games, the Gamemakers have released twenty-one werewolf mutations of the former tributes, and Cato falls into their grasp. Katniss describes,

> The next hours are the worst in my life, which if you think about it, is saying something. The cold would be torture enough, but the real nightmare is listening to Cato, moaning, begging, and finally just whimpering as the mutts work away at him. After a very short time, I don’t care who he is or what he’s done, all I want is for his suffering to end.

> “Why don’t they just kill him?” I ask Peeta.

> “You know why,” he says, and pulls me closer to him.

> And I do. No viewer could turn away from the show now. From the Gamemakers’ point of view, this is the final word in entertainment. (*Hunger Games* 339)
This description of Cato slowly being chewed to death is precisely what Foucault means when he says that to be spectacular, torture and execution should ideally make the condemned cry out in agony. Particularly since Cato is a child, it seems all the more horrific, as it is the body of a child which has become the sight of government power and control (Shau Ming Tan 60). Cato’s mutilated body is publically displayed as an exercise in terror to demonstrate the supremacy of the Capitol (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 49). Clearly, the Hunger Games are not simply a punishment for a rebellion that took place in the distant past. The Hunger Games have nothing to do with justice for this past “crime;” the Hunger Games, by contrast, are about the demonstration of power and an instrument of control.

The role of the audience in this spectacle of punishment is also of vital importance. Katniss is constantly aware of the audience during the Games, and often thinks of her family during difficult moments. As she suffers from dehydration and wonders if she will survive, she thinks, “My thoughts turn to Prim. It’s likely she won’t be watching me live, but they’ll show updates at the school during lunch. For her sake, I try to look as least desperate as I can” (*Hunger Games* 169). Viewing the spectacle is of such importance in Panem that as well as its mandatory viewing on television, it is also broadcast to students on breaks during the school day. This diligence in ensuring that all citizens, even children, view the Games illustrates the significance the regime puts on the role of the audience. This is also the case the night before Katniss receives medicine for Peeta, as she thinks:

I try not to, but I can’t help thinking of my mother and Prim, wondering if they’ll sleep a wink tonight. At this late stage in the Games, with an important event like the feast, school will probably be canceled. My family can either watch on that static-filled old clunker of a
television at home or join the crowds in the square to watch on the big, clear screens.

They’ll have privacy at home but support in the square. (Hunger Games 279-280)

According to Foucault, during the ceremony of public execution, the main character is always the audience, never the condemned, as its viewership is required for the performance. The audience must witness the execution to be made afraid (Discipline and Punish 57). This is evident in Katniss’ concerns about how her mother and sister will react, as it is the audience that suffers most when watching their loved ones being terrorized and tortured. In this system, unseen punishment has no meaning, as the purpose is to make an example of the victim (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 58). The fact that the victims are innocent young people makes this all the more brutal, as they are scapegoats for something that is not their fault.

It is significant to note that watching the Hunger Games in Panem is not necessarily a solitary activity. As Katniss states, people have the option to gather in the central square together as a community focused on the “big, clear screens.” This bears remarkable resemblance to how public executions would have been witnessed in the 17th and 18th centuries, when people were summoned as spectators of the gallows (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 58). This is also, however, one of the very reasons that the monarchial system eventually evolved into the penal system, as crowd mentality during such displays was unpredictable. While a beloved ruler could expect crowd support as mobs would insult the condemned and express their allegiance, paradoxically a crowd could side with the criminal and resist the monarch (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 59-60). This is precisely what happens in Catching Fire, and the consequences are the focus of much of the book. For example, just before Katniss departs on the Victory Tour,
President Snow comes to her house to threaten her into good behaviour so that she does not incite a revolution. When he tells her how the country reacted to the end of her Games, he states:

“This, 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?” he says. “What is to prevent, say, an uprising?” (Catching Fire 21)

When discussing audience participation in Discipline and Punish, Foucault states that if there were feelings of solidarity between the crowd and the condemned, they could become glorified heroes that potentially inspire social unrest (63). As Katniss learns for the first time, this is clearly what has happened with her. While historically speaking, these incidents were often contained and rarely spread beyond a town (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 62), in Katniss’ case, the Capitol’s use of media to punish and intimidate has backfired. Rather than intimidating and scaring the country into submission, as this incident has been viewed by the entire nation, the whole of Panem could possibly feel camaraderie with Katniss, resulting in social unrest across the country.

Another cause of solidarity with the victim among the crowd could also be caused by universal dislike of the monarch. One other reason that the monarchal system of justice evolved was that the physical revenge of the monarch came to be seen as distasteful, as violent punishment came to be seen as almost worse than the original crime (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 9). This often resulted in a change of attitude towards the sovereign, as the public manifestation of the sovereign’s power often made them appear to be full of archaic arrogance (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 80). This attitude is also reflected in the Hunger Games, as
President Snow is clearly cast as the main antagonist, ruthlessly murdering children and threatening those Katniss loves. This sensation is also subtly suggested when Katniss and Peeta are on their press tour, and as instructed by President Snow, are trying to suppress social unrest by appearing as though they are madly in love.

Some crowds have the weary-cattle feel that I know District 12 usually projects at the victors’ ceremonies. But in others – particularly 8, 4, and 3 – there is genuine elation in the faces of the people at the sight of us, and under the elation, fury. When they chant my name, it is more of a cry for vengeance than a cheer. When the Peacekeepers move in to quiet an unruly crowd, it presses back instead of retreating. (Catching Fire 71)

The Victory Tour is equivalent to a modern-day press tour, and obviously, for the most part, it does not go well. Rather than promote the Games and intimidate the Districts into good behaviour, Katniss and Peeta’s presence seems to cause general uproar. The use of the words “fury” and “vengeance” suggest that although they crowds do identify with Katniss and Peeta, their behaviour is born out of a desire for retribution against a man and a regime that has abused them too long. Plainly, the outcome of the audience’s role in the Hunger Games is the instigation of riots and, in Catching Fire, of social resistance (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 61).

This social unrest comes to fruition at the end of the Victory Tour when Katniss and Peeta return to the Capitol, and are engaged in front of the cameras to placate the districts. When Katniss meets Bonnie and Twill in the forests of District 12, they tell her of the import of this event. She says,

The night of my engagement…in front of the cameras in the Capitol, was the night the uprising began. It was an ideal cover. Our Victory Tour interview with Caesar Flickerman was mandatory viewing. It gave the people of District 8 a reason to be out on the streets
after dark, gathering either in the square or in various community centers around the city to watch. Ordinarily such activity would have been too suspicious. Instead everyone was in place by the appointed hour, eight o’clock, when the masks went on and all hell broke loose. *(Catching Fire 144-145)*

According to Foucault, there is always a risk in providing a public space and opportunity for the populace to view public executions, as exemplified in this incident in *Catching Fire* (*Discipline and Punish* 60). The necessity of the community coming together to witness the mandatory viewing of Capitol propaganda provides the opportunity to coordinate the first instance of organized resistance. The sheer numbers of people on the street allow District 8 to temporarily overpower Capitol forces, and they gain agency and advantage ironically using the very media employed to suppress them.

Katniss inspires this resistance during her time in both the 74th and 75th Hunger Games. In her first Hunger Games, up until Rue’s death, Katniss has voluntarily relinquished a certain amount of power to survive and exist under the rule of the Capitol (*Foucault, Society* 17). It is not until she is faced with the reality of saying goodbye to Rue that she takes her first steps of defiance:

To hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It’s the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us.

Gale’s voice in my head. His ravings against the Capitol no longer pointless, no longer to be ignored. Rue’s death has forced me to confront my own fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us. *(Hunger Games 236)*

The beginning of Katniss’ resistance starts with this realization. She finally understands what Gale has been ranting about while they have been hunting. She finally understands what Peeta
meant when he told her that he wants to “maintain his identity. His purity of self” (*Hunger Games* 142), to which she had so flippantly replied, “Only…no offense, but who cares, Peeta?” (*Hunger Games* 142), as she states that she only cares “about staying alive” (*Hunger Games* 142). Instead of, once again, accepting these rules and conditions controlling her world, she wants to:

… do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can’t own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I. (*Hunger Games* 236-237)

As Foucault states, power is both repressive and enabling, as it is from experiencing powerlessness that people rebel and discover their own power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 195-228). At this point, Katniss is a primary example of a docile body: a willing and voluntary participant in the Hunger Games, whose very life is subjugated as a sacrifice to enable a tyrannical regime to terrorize a nation by displaying her suffering on television (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135). However, it is at this nadir, as Katniss loses her ally, who reminds her so much of the younger sister that she tried to save, that she decides to act out and show that she is more than a piece in a game. She “decorate[s] her body with flowers” (*Hunger Games* 237) expressing that Rue is a human being worthy of dignity and respect. Katniss knows it is taboo to show humanity towards the dead in the Games, and thinks:

They’ll have to show it. Or, even if they choose to turn the cameras elsewhere at this moment, they’ll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then and know I did it. (*Hunger Games* 237)
The irony of the Hunger Games is that although the tributes are continuously broadcast to a large audience, the regime’s media effectively silence the contestants. The tributes do not have the freedom to truly express what they think and feel, despite existing within a media platform in which they could convey a message (Trites 21). Nonetheless, Katniss discovers how to express her defiance in a way that the Capitol cannot avoid. The media must show the pickup of Rue’s body, and it is inevitable that the audience will see what Katniss has done, and hopefully understand her message. The success of her gesture is evident when she receives bread from District 11 following Rue’s burial. Katniss understands its significance, realizing that it “is a first. A district gift to a tribute who’s not your own” (Hunger Games 239).

Her defiance continues as she refuses to accept the injustice of the Gamemakers’ lies when they revoke their decision to allow two winners of the Hunger Games. When Peeta argues that she should let him die, stating, “We both know they have to have a victor” (Hunger Games 343-344), Katniss is struck with inspiration:

Yes, they have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol. Might possibly even be executed, slowly and painfully while the cameras broadcast it to every screen in the country. (Hunger Games 344)

Katniss realizes that this punishment as spectacle requires one of them to survive. Katniss defies the Capitol’s disciplinary technique of “control of activities,” (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 150-156) and refuses to adhere to the expectation that she will follow the new edict that has been announced. Her understanding of media performance gives her agency, as she takes a gamble that permanently alters the history of Panem:
I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonfuls of berries into his palm. Then I fill my own. “On the count of three?”…

We stand, our backs pressed together, our empty hands locked tight.

“Oh hold them out. I want everyone to see,” he says. (*Hunger Games* 344)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault asserts that resistance is rarely due to an inherent criminal nature; rather, it is due to degradation and desperation (275-276). Although Katniss thinks that the Capitol will relent to save face, she still takes the risk of potentially committing suicide rather than submitting to an unjust decision, and creates “the most dramatic showdown in history” (*Hunger Games* 242). This is the mark of a truly desperate situation; although it would be easier to let Peeta die and herself live, Katniss resists her instinct to survive, and disobeys the Gamemakers’ commands. Rather than remaining a docile body and submitting to the supremacy of the Capitol, Katniss offers her body as a sacrifice (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 49). She makes herself vulnerable to death on her own terms, and consequently inspires her world to take action (Shau Ming Tan 63).

Katniss’ stunt with the berries has inspired unrest in the districts, and in *Catching Fire*, her status as the Mockingjay, a symbol of rebellion, threatens stability throughout Panem (*Catching Fire* 387). Consequently, the Capitol decides to eliminate her in the 75th annual Hunger Games, as it is a Quarter Quell, and “every twenty-five years the anniversary would be…a glorified version of the Games to make fresh the memory of those killed by the districts’ rebellion” (*Catching Fire* 171). The announcement states that this year, the “male and female tributes will be reaped from their existing pool of victors” (*Catching Fire* 172). Katniss realizes that this is a ploy to do away with her, as “It’s just too perfect an answer for the troubles that face the Capitol today. Getting rid of me and subduing the districts all in one neat little package”
Consequently, the other victors are affected by this decision, and they resist in turn. During the interviews before the Games begin, the tributes express defiance, and Katniss notes that, “But they are so smart, so wonderfully smart about how they play it, because it all comes back to reflect on the government and President Snow in particular” (Catching Fire 250). Just like Katniss in her first Hunger Games, the contestants take advantage of the fact that these interviews are mandatory viewing across Panem. Rather than simply adhering to the norms and expectations of this ritual, they instead contribute to a building momentum of defiance. Katniss and Peeta play their part in this as well, with Katniss’ wedding dress turning into a Mockingjay costume through the deft hands of Cinna (Catching Fire 253), and Peeta’s lie that they are secretly married and that Katniss is pregnant (Catching Fire 255-256). Both interviews successfully manipulate the crowd in the Capitol, creating chaos in the audience. When thinking about the possibility of being pregnant, and reflecting that this is how every parent in Panem must feel about the Games, Katniss is moved, and:

I turn spontaneously to Chaff and offer my hand. I feel my fingers close around the stump that now completes his arm and hold fast.

And then it happens. Up and down the row, the victors begin to join hands. Some right away, like the morphlings, or Wireess and Beetee, Others unsure but caught up in the demands of those around them, like Brutus and Enobaria. By the time the anthem plays its final strains, all twenty-four of us stand in one unbroken line in what must be the first public show of unity among the districts since the Dark Days. You can see the realization of this as the screens begin to pop into blackness. It’s too late, though. In the confusion they didn’t cut us off in time. Everyone has seen. (Catching Fire 257-258)
Katniss’ spontaneous action results in the biggest display of dissent in decades. Although she did not act with a preconceived plan to defy the Capitol in this way, the result is the same, and afterwards she feels “empowered” (Catching Fire 258). Again, Katniss uses the tools of the Capitol against them and together, the tributes project an image of unity and “stage [their] own uprising” (Catching Fire 259).

Katniss’ final act of defiance in this novel is that which sparks the revolution. At the end of her time in the arena when everything is in chaos, Katniss is about to kill as many people as she can so that Peeta has a better chance to survive. However, “Haymitch’s last words of advice” (Catching Fire 378) occur to her, and she remembers that her enemies are not her fellow tributes. “I have always known who the enemy is. Who starves and tortures and kills us in the arena…. My bow drops as his meaning registers. Yes, I know who the enemy is” (Catching Fire 378). This revelation is similar to her final moments in the previous Games, but this time, rather than being armed with berries, she is armed with a weapon and the knowledge of how to truly rebel against the Capitol.

I rise, turning to the force field, fully revealing myself but no longer caring. Only caring about where I should direct my tip…My bow tilts up at the wavering square, the flaw, the…what did he call it that day? The chink in the armor. I let the arrow fly, see it hit its mark and vanish, pulling the thread of gold behind it… A flash of white runs up the wire, and for just a moment, the dome bursts into a dazzling blue light. (Catching Fire 378-379)

Katniss realizes that her true enemy is the Capitol. According to Foucault, political institutions work because people give the ruler power (Discipline and Punish 202). This turning point is when Katniss refuses to give the Capitol power any longer. The chink in the armour here is not simply a weakness in the force field, rather, it is a metaphorical weakness in the structure of the
regime, and their enforcement of discipline through the media. On camera, to a nation-wide audience, instead of firing at her fellow tributes, Katniss fires a symbolic shot right at President Snow. She uses the Capitol’s own mechanisms of power against it, displaying her defiance to every citizen in Panem and starting an outright rebellion.

The entirety of the Mockingjay plot is about the revolution that sweeps across Panem. At the beginning, Katniss is in District 13 where a team of people are trying to convince her to become a symbol of the revolution, “The Mockingjay… the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. The person who the districts…can count on to blaze the path to victory” (Mockingjay 10). Katniss refuses to decide at first, as she wonders, “To become the Mockingjay…could any good I do possibly outweigh the damage?” (Mockingjay 13). Given that many people close to her have been killed, and her entire district destroyed as a result of her actions, Katniss lacks confidence in her ability to do anything positive for the rebellion. Even when she finally takes on this role, she remains fearful that Peeta might be punished as a traitor; it is her sister Prim who reminds her, saying,

“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.”

I guess I’m important. They went to a lot of trouble to rescue me. They took me to 12.

“You mean… I could demand that they give Peeta immunity? And they’d have to agree to it? (Mockingjay 34)

Throughout Disturbing the Universe, Trites discusses how young adults negotiate with their society, and the ways in which their power is simultaneously engaged and disengaged (20). The negotiation for Katniss to become the Mockingjay in return for the lives of Peeta and the other abandoned tributes, as well as a dozen other issues, is considered contentious by President Coin,
the main authority figure in *Mockingjay*. After the announcement that Katniss will be the Mockingjay, she thinks of Coin: “Another force to contend with. Another power player who has decided to use me as a piece in her games…She has been the first to publicly brand me as a threat” (*Mockingjay* 59). Throughout the narrative, Katniss’ power is continuously acknowledged and denied in all of her interactions with the President (Trites 20). However, despite her lack of confidence and combative relations with Coin, Katniss discovers her true potential as a leader for the first time while in District 8 making a Propo, “which is short for ‘propaganda spots’” to be launched in an “Airtime Assault…broadcast to the entire population of Panem” (*Mockingjay* 44). As she visits the sick and wounded in a make-shift hospital, she thinks,

I begin to fully understand the lengths to which people have gone to protect me. What I mean to the rebels. My ongoing struggle against the Capitol, which has so often felt like a solitary journey, has not been undertaken alone. I have had thousands upon thousands of people from the districts at my side. I was their Mockingjay long before I accepted the role. A new sensation begins to germinate inside me. But it takes until I am standing on a table, waving my final goodbyes to the hoarse chanting of my name, to define it. Power. I have a kind of power I never knew I possessed. Snow knew it, as soon as I held out those berries. Plutarch knew when he rescued me from the arena. And Coin knows now. So much so that she must publicly remind her people that I am not in control. (*Mockingjay* 91)

The districts’ perception of Katniss helps her to construct a positive image of herself in the Mockingjay role that has been forced upon her. Finally, in a media situation where she is on camera, Katniss feels as though she has some agency, and some measure of control over her actions (Trites 7). As an active subject, she assumes responsibility for her leadership role in the
revolution, and engages her power not only to enable herself, but on behalf of all the people who have suffered in the Districts at the hands of the Capitol (Trites 7).

By recognizing her own importance, Katniss begins to acknowledge that she has influence. This is evident just after her visit to the hospital, when Capitol bombers destroy it, killing everyone she has just spoken to. At the end of the skirmish, the director of the propo tells Katniss that “President Snow just had them air the bombing live. Then he made an appearance to say that this was his way of sending a message to the rebels” (Mockingjay 99). When asked to respond on camera, Katniss says:

“President Snow says he’s sending us a message? Well, I have one for him. You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but do you see that?” One of the cameras follows as I point to the planes burning on the roof of the warehouse across from us. The Capitol seal on a wing glows clearly through the flames. “Fire is catching!” I am shouting now, determined that he will not miss a word. “And if we burn, you burn with us!” (Mockingjay 99-100)

This is the first time that Katniss has ever spoken words of defiance to President Snow, which will later be projected on television for all of Panem to see. This is a significant turning point in Katniss’ growth. Up until this visit to District 8, power has usually been something that has been repressive, and enacted upon Katniss. Now, however, Katniss turns the tables. What she felt in the hospital she now fully embraces, and she accepts her role as the voice of the revolution. She has been repressed by the media institutions of this world, but is now also liberated by them (Trites 7, 24).

After Katniss watches her performance onscreen, the reality of the situation hits her, as she realizes, “An anti-Capitol statement. There’s never been anything like it on television. Not in
my lifetime, anyway” (Mockingjay 106). Trites states that young adult fiction that focuses on
government often concentrates on how governments utilize language to control and shape
individuals through the construction of ideology (23). Panem does this through the control of
information. Katniss, by contrast, has now provided an alternative public narrative about the
Capitol for the first time ever, effectively using media as a tool of resistance. Katniss is not alone
in this act, as she notices while watching the video that the voiceover introducing her appearance
is that of Claudius Templesmith, the Hunger Games announcer. When she asks Plutarch if
Templesmith is a rebel, Plutarch answers, “Only his voice. But that’s ours for the taking. We
didn’t even have to do any special editing. He said that actual line in your first Games”
(Mockingjay 107). Although as Trites says, “institutions are more powerful than individuals,”
individuals who engage their own power can affect the shape of the institution (Trites 24). In
Panem, the government’s power has depended on its ability to impose punishment and enforce
obedience through the airing of the Hunger Games (Latham and Hollister 35). However, Katniss
and her team have taken aspects of her previous Games, and manipulated them to serve a new
purpose that defies the Capitol, thus affecting the shape of media in Panem.

As the revolution progresses, District 13 continues to star Katniss in propos in order to
add fuel to the rebellion and unite the districts against the Capitol. To get them on the air, Beetee
exploits the government’s television network and uses their own tools as weapons against them.

Bam! Without warning, I’m suddenly on television, standing in the rubble of the
bakery….

The room’s buzzing with reaction when Peeta’s back, distracted. He has seen me on the
monitor. He tries to pick up his speech…and then the whole thing breaks down into a
broadcast battle, as the Capitol tech masters try to fend off Beetee’s attack…We watch the official presentation deteriorate as it’s peppered with choice shots from the propos….

The Capitol seal’s back up, accompanied by a flat audio tone. This lasts about twenty seconds before Snow and Peeta return. The set is in turmoil. (Mockingjay 132-133)

Hacking into Panem’s computer system and utilizing their own technological infrastructure against them is the ultimate example of subverting the power structures that this tyrannical government uses to control its citizens (Connors 99-100). However, in response to District 13’s propos, the Capitol uses Peeta as a propaganda tool in turn. While President Snow uses Peeta as a mouthpiece to urge a “ceasefire” (Mockingjay 26), it is also clear that he has been tortured, as he is described as “fifteen pounds” lighter, has a “nervous tremor in his hands” and overall “is a person badly damaged” (Mockingjay 112). This propaganda message that displays Peeta’s broken body is meant to assert the Capitol’s supremacy and spread fear amongst the rebels (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 49; Latham and Hollister 44). Even in this state, Peeta manages to fight back:

At the mention of my name, Peeta’s face contorts in effort. “Katniss…how do you think this will end? What will be left? No one is safe. Not in the Capitol. Not in the districts. And you…in Thirteen…” He inhales sharply, as if fighting for air; his eyes look insane. “Dead by morning!” (Mockingjay 133)

Even though he is in pain, even though he is punished for it, Peeta resists his tormentors and warns Katniss of the impending attack. He revolts against the Capitol’s use of him as a tool for social control, and instead turns his media appearance into an act of defiance. Although this heroic act saves Katniss, Snow’s use of Peeta still impacts her, especially since it ends with, “The scuffle of boots. The impact of the blow that’s inseparable from Peeta’s cry of pain. And
his blood as it splatters the tiles” (*Mockingjay* 134). When President Coin wants Katniss to film a propo on the surface of District 13, stating that “Thirteen’s military unit remains not only functional but dominant, and most important, that the Mockingjay is still alive” (*Mockingjay* 157-158), despite numerous starts, Katniss cannot get the words out, as she “visibly shakes…can’t catch [her] breath…and…sweat trickles down [her] face” (*Mockingjay* 161). These symptoms are clearly the beginnings of a panic attack, and as she is put on the spot one last time, she completely breaks down:

> Saliva’s filling my mouth at a ridiculous rate and I feel vomit at the back of my throat. I swallow hard and open my lips so I can get the stupid line out and go hide in the woods and – that’s when I start crying.

> It’s impossible to be the Mockingjay. Impossible to complete even this one sentence.

> Because now I know that everything I say will be directly taken out on Peeta. (*Mockingjay* 162)

Snow is using Peeta on television to manipulate Katniss by inflicting torture on him for every propo Katniss makes. By parading Peeta’s disintegration on the air, Snow effectively causes Katniss enough guilt-ridden anguish to render her dysfunctional as the Mockingjay, successfully curtailing the rebels’ propaganda campaign. While this use of Peeta initially weakens Katniss’ resolve, once Peeta is being rescued, Katniss has one of her strongest moments on air yet. They decide to film the “postbombing footage of 13” and to “air it leading up to the rescue, and maybe keep the Capitol’s attention elsewhere” (*Mockingjay* 167). In order to make her propo as riveting as possible, Katniss finally “open[s] up” and tells the story of how Peeta saved her life when she was eleven years old. She ends her video discussing how she is dealing with her separation from Peeta and the importance of not giving up:
“I know at any moment Snow could kill him. Especially since he warned Thirteen about the bombing. It’s a terrible thing to live with,” I say. “But because of what they’re putting him through, I don’t have any reservations anymore. About doing whatever it takes to destroy the Capitol. I’m finally free…President Snow once admitted to me that the Capitol was fragile. At the time, I didn’t know what he meant. It was hard to see clearly because I was so afraid. Now I’m not. The Capitol’s fragile because it depends on the districts for everything. Food, energy, even the Peacekeepers that police us. If we declare our freedom, the Capitol collapses. President Snow, thanks to you, I’m officially declaring mine today.”

(Mockingjay 169)

Snow’s manipulation of Katniss has made her feel helpless, but the opportunity to go on air and defy him in a way that may help rescue Peeta gives her the strength to persevere and reassert her own power (Trites 6). Growth of the protagonist in the adolescent novel is demonstrated by what that young person has learned about power (Trites x) and Katniss certainly shows this in her deconstruction of how the Capitol suppresses the districts. Katniss pulls back the veil of how citizens’ power is forcibly taken and voluntarily relinquished to the disciplinary power of Panem (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 11-12). By declaring her freedom on air, Katniss uses her voice to resist the oppressive mechanisms of the Capitol, and leads by example to urge others to do the same (Trites 5).

In many young adult dystopias, the central message is to fear the government, fear their institutions, and trust that resistance leads to empowerment (Bullen and Parsons 127; Hintz and Ostry 10, Sambell, “Carnivalizing the Future” 252; Trites 24). However, while teenagers may rebel against institutions, that very rebellion will often come at a cost (Trites 25). This is certainly the case in the Hunger Games trilogy. When the war is over and the Capitol has been
defeated, Katniss has lost her sister Prim and is physically and emotionally scarred. While Katniss has always been suspicious of President Coin, she learns the truth of her sister’s death in her final conversation with President Snow:

Well, you really didn’t think I gave the order did you?... I must concede it was a masterful move on Coin’s part. The idea that I was bombing our own helpless children instantly snapped whatever frail allegiance my people still felt to me. There was no real resistance after that. Did you know it aired live? (Mockingjay 356-357)

Katniss discovers that President Coin is just as ruthless as President Snow. She, too, has authorized the use of spectacle on television to intimidate her enemies and prevent further resistance (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 47-49). Not only has she murdered innocent children in the final battle of the war, she also suggests “that in lieu of eliminating the entire Capitol population, we have a final, symbolic Hunger Games, using the children directly related to those who held the most power” (Mockingjay 369). In the end, after all of Katniss’ struggles and her efforts put towards the rebellion, this new government looks disturbingly similar to the government that they have replaced (Latham and Hollister 44). Even President Snow’s execution is reminiscent of a monarchial system of punishment, as it takes place in front of a large audience (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 58), outside and onscreen, “The City Circle runs over, spills people down the side streets. The others take their places outside, Guards. Officials. Rebel leaders. Victors” (Mockingjay 371). Katniss is given the task of executing President Snow, a job that she has repeatedly asked for (Latham and Hollister 44). However, at the last second, “The point of my arrow shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead” (Mockingjay 372). The “symbolic…last shot of the war” (Mockingjay 366) finds its true target, as Katniss’ final act of rebellion is to, again,
resist being ruled by another tyrant. She refuses to exchange one oppressor for another, and in shooting Coin, she later learns that President Snow died as well, either choking “to death while laughing or [being] crushed by the crowd” (Mockingjay 378). With both of these deaths, Katniss destroys “not one, but two opposing power structures” (Latham and Hollister 45), ending the public spectacle of using children’s bodies as targets for law and punishment (Shau Ming Tan 64).

5.2 Insubordination and Incarceration in Feed

In the previous chapter, the discussion of how discipline is used to create docile bodies explores how media is used in both narratives to disempower citizens. However, the one character who refuses to be a docile body in M.T. Anderson’s Feed is Violet Durn. After she suffers from the attack by the hacker on the moon, she becomes passionate about assuming responsibility for her position in society, and that she has a choice as to whether she will allow media corporations to simply take advantage of her as a citizen, or whether she can use that very medium to enable herself, and embrace her own power (Trites 7).

The first method of discipline that Violet defies is the “art of distributions,” which refers to how governments physically organize and distribute their individuals in space (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 142). In this novel, media institutions constantly survey citizens’ feed activity, keeping track of everything they do and where they are at all times. Rather than accepting this subjugation like the other characters in the novel, Violet plans a way to manipulate the media corporations to resist being pigeonholed. When she and Titus are in the mall, she tells him how the corporations are “watching us right now” (Anderson 97) and how they market to citizens:
…it’s all streamlining our personalities so we’re easier to sell to…They try to figure out who you are, and to make you conform to one of their types for easy marketing. It’s like a spiral: they keep making everything more basic so it will appeal to everyone. And gradually, everyone gets used to everything being basic, so we get less and less varied as people, more simple…What I’m doing, what I’ve been doing over the feed for the last two days, is trying to create a customer profile that’s so screwed, no one can market to it. I’m not going to let them catalog to me. I’m going to become invisible (Anderson 97–98).

Violet resists being simplified into a statistic and slotted into a personality category. She directly rebels against the “art of distribution,” which operates to prevent citizens from disappearing, by trying to become invisible (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 144). She and Titus go to the mall in the next few pages, requesting ludicrous items in her campaign of indiscriminate shopping. Despite finding her plan amusing at times, and joining in to humour her as she vents about the influence of the feed, Titus thinks to himself, “…it might be true, but it’s also boring…” (Anderson 97). Her mode of resistance seems more profound when contrasted with Titus’ “so what?” attitude, highlighting the difference between blind acceptance, and how citizens could potentially use the very tool that marginalizes them as a means of empowerment (Kellner 9). Violet successfully tailors her resistance to the capitalist evils of her world, and effectively confuses the statistics of her customer profile. Nonetheless, the reader cannot celebrate her triumph of resisting the feed for long. Just before Titus and Violet break up, she tells him that she’s failed in her rebellion,

“I caved in. The other day, Nina said she’d noticed all of the requiem masses I’d been listening to. She suggested some others. Here’s the hideous thing.”

“What?”
“I liked them. She figured it out. I’ve been sketched demographically. They can still predict things I like.” She sighed. “They’re really close to winning. I’m trying to resist, but they’re close to winning.”

“Just…keep…” I didn’t know what to say. I said, “Doing…”

I looked at her, and she was smiling like she was broken. (Anderson 262-263).

Though many young adult dystopias end on a hopeful note, with their young protagonists ultimately successful in their rebellion (Hughes 156; Reid 200; Lowry 199), Violet’s failure to “disappear” foreshadows an unhappy end. Titus’ poignant simile in his final observation of her in this chapter also contributes to Anderson’s somber tone. In reality, institutions are more powerful than individuals, and people, despite valiant resistance, may not always have the power to change the shape of a social institution (Trites 141).

Violet also does not adhere to the “control of activities,” where social institutions discourage any actions that are counterproductive to society, and only encourage those that are deemed useful (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 150-156). Throughout Anderson’s novel, the majority of the characters use the feed only for entertainment purposes. They shop, watch TV shows, and chat with friends, rather than access anything important about the world. However, Violet is an exception to this rule. As Titus reflects on Violet’s superior intelligence, he thinks, Like she was always reading things about how everything was dying and there was less air and everything was getting toxic. She told me about how things were getting really bad with some things in South America, but she couldn’t really tell exactly how bad, because the news had been asked to be a little more positive. She said that it made her frightened to read all this kind of thing about how people hated us for what we did. So one time I said to
her to her that she should stop reading it, because it was just depressing, so she was like,

*But I want to know what’s going on*… (Anderson 110-111)

The contrast between the two characters here is striking, as Violet actively researches knowledge about the world around her, eager to inquire about what is happening. She even has the literacy skills to think critically about the information she is given to detect bias. Titus, on the other hand, advises that she avoid such topics because they are “depressing,” meaning that it is not the usual petty entertainment that distracts him from what is really going on in the world. However, Titus’ apathy goes beyond mere indifference, as he thinks to himself,

I hated it when she got like this, because then she wasn’t like herself, I mean, she wasn’t like this playful person who drags me around the mall doing crazy shit…suddenly I couldn’t stand to be having this whole conversation. (Anderson 111-112)

The feed, and the media corporations in this world that control them, have conspired against intellectual growth. Unlike Violet, Titus does not have the skills to navigate any information beyond idle amusement, and therefore actively avoids and dislikes any information, or person, that might enlighten him about the world around him (Bauerlein 16). The extent of Titus’ brainwashing and Violet’s defiance of this aversion demonstrate her perseverance to resist “controlling her activities” by the hegemonic power structures of this world.

The “control of activities” overlaps with the “organization of geneuses,” as through the regulation of knowledge, citizens are conditioned to fulfill certain roles in society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 156). This is primarily exemplified through School™, as Titus explains how school is run by corporations, and that they learn the use of their feeds, chiefly for shopping (Anderson 191-110). Violet, however, is not subject to this system of discipline, since she is homeschooled. Whereas Titus’ ability to read, write, and think for himself has been obliterated
by the feed, Violet is intelligent. Anderson first reveals this stark difference between the two characters when they are in the hospital and Violet writes something down. Titus is “completely in awe” as he realizes that she “write[s] all the time” (66). Whenever Titus mentions Violet learning at home rather than at School™, he thinks about her “at home, being smart” (Anderson 110). One morning when the two are chatting while he is in school, and she is at home studying, the disparity between their respective activities highlights that Violet is not being conditioned to fulfill a role in this inane culture. While Titus is watching his friends Link and Marty, “skipping rope with some coaxial cable,” (Anderson 185) and then doing “the limbo…except [they’re] bending forward instead of backward, so it isn’t as hard” (Anderson 186), Violet is “reading ancient Mayan spells….to preserve dying cultures” (Anderson 187). In Disturbing the Universe, Trites discusses how school as a social institution indoctrinates students to fulfill their roles in the status quo of the social order (32). Violet is not subjected to the potent combination of school, media corporations, and the feed, and therefore, she is not socialized into accepting a subservient role as a consumer in this society. At the end of their morning conversation, when Titus says he has to go because there are morning announcements, Violet jokes that,

I make my own announcements. Into the garbage can, so it echoes.

Lonely.

I tell myself to come to the office.

Yeah.

Then I pace in circles, waiting for me to show up. I wait and I wait, you know. I wait and I wait in the office, she said, but me never comes. (Anderson 188)

Though Violet is safe from becoming a mindless, brainwashed pawn of this regime, as Titus points out, she is also lonely. Schools may prepare students to fulfill their role in the social order,
but they also help students learn how to interact with others and manage social conflict (Trites 32). The symbolism Anderson uses when stating that Violet paces in circles suggests that although Violet may despises this “nation of…ignorant, self-centered idiots” (Anderson 113), she also yearns to be accepted by her peers. However, as she is not familiar enough with cultural norms, her efforts to integrate into Titus’ friend group seem pointless, and so she paces in circles, and this acceptance never comes to fruition.

This brings us to the “composition of forces,” where eccentricity and individual interests are considered undesirable and dangerous, and only conformity, and what is beneficial for the majority of society, is encouraged (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 162 – 169). A part of Violet does want to fit in, as she tells Titus in the hospital following the attack on the moon, “You go try to have fun like a normal person, a normal person with a real life – just for one night you want to live…” (Anderson 53). However, as discussed above, Violet is just too different from her peer group, and she is considered eccentric by everyone around her. Near the end of the novel, she is at a party with Titus playing a game of spin the bottle when the character Quendy arrives, who has paid for plastic surgery to look like she has lesions all over her body. Given the gravity of what is happening in the world, the sheep-like mentality of Titus’ friends and the stupidity of the party, Violet finally rants at her fellow teenagers:

Violet was completely white. She was shaking. Her head, I mean, it was bobbing. She suddenly was yelling, “Can I tell you what I see? Can I tell you? We are hovering in the air while people are starving. This is obvious! Obvious! We’re playing games, and our skin is falling off. We’re losing it, and we’re making out. And you’re talking – you’re starting to talk in a fucking sestina!…Stop it! Fuck you! We’ve got to all stop it!..”
Violet was screaming, “*Look at us! You don’t have the feed! You are feed! You’re feed! You’re being eaten! You’re raised for food! Look at what you’ve made yourselves!*” She pointed at Quendy, and went, “*She’s a monster! A monster! Covered with cuts! She’s a creature!*”

And now I was going, “Violet – Don’t. Violet! She’s not a – she’s not a goddamn monster.” (Anderson 201-202)

No matter how hard she tries, Violet simply cannot assimilate with her peer group. She is too aware of how their world is falling apart, and that their civilization is at the tipping point of collapse, to be distracted by music, games, and fashion. She chastises the people at the party for their ignorance, and identifies the hypocrisy of one of the many insane fashion trends of making it appear that one has lesions to be “cool” when their skin is beginning to fall off. Rather than being alarmed by this development, Titus’ friends are so brainwashed and unable to think for themselves that they accept the corporate portrayal of lesions as “cool” without questioning their own well-being and personal health. Violet is right: they are all “feed” for corporate media, and Quendy truly does resemble a monster, as the social institutions of media have become omnipotent in their regulation and training of teenagers in this novel (Trites 22). Despite this, it is not Quendy but Violet, with her violent and accusatory freak out, who comes across as monstrous to Titus’ friends. Violet’s final interaction with Titus ends with her becoming a permanent outcast from the group. During their breakup Titus reproaches her, saying,

…to you, I was the normal guy, I was magic Mr. Normal Dumbass, with my dumbass normal friends, and…you wanted to mingle with the common people. Just latch on to this one dumbass, and make fun of his friends for being stupid, while all the time, having this
little wish that you could be like us, without thinking about what we’re like, or what our
problems are… (Anderson 271)

Violet’s difference from Titus, and the majority of teenagers in her world, sets her up for this
rejection. Ultimately, her resistance to conforming to societal expectations results in being
ostracized by the one person she cares for most.

Violet’s isolation and abandonment is society’s way of chastising her for her non-
compliance, and Anderson depicts what Foucault would label a modern-day penal system style
to symbolically punish Violet for her offences against the corporate media institutions of her
world.

Due to the hacker on the moon, Violet’s feed has been permanently damaged. Since she
received her feed late in childhood, she is unable to naturally recover, and suffers damage to her
“limbic system, motor cortex…[and] the hippocampus” (Anderson 171). As her feed’s warranty
has expired, she and her father “petition FeedTech for free repairs” thinking that they will
acquiesce to their request, since it is “about the life of a girl” (Anderson 219). However, this is
not the answer that they receive.

Nina said, I’m here to inform you that FeedTech Corp has decided to turn down your
petition for complimentary feed repair and/or replacement…We tried our best to interest a
variety of possible corporate sponsors, but we regret to tell you that you were turned
down. (Anderson 246-247)

First of all, the modern penal system views condemned citizens as the property of society
(Foucault, Discipline and Punish 75), and therefore, large bureaucratic systems, rather than an
individual (such as a monarch, or executioner) became responsible for distributing sentences
(Foucault, Discipline and Punish 92). Nina, the employee from “FeedTech Customer
“Assistance” delivering this message to Violet, is not even a person, but an “automated intelligence” (Anderson 154), demonstrating the media institutions’ neglect to have an actual human being deliver Violet her death sentence. As well, Nina’s vague report of trying to interest a “variety of possible corporate sponsors” does not name any single individual to whom Violet could direct an inquiry about this decision, or even a single corporation to whom she could speak, exemplifying how this judicial power is a faceless system of punishment (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 89).

As modern institutions of punishment began to characterize the condemned differently, rather than punishing a particular crime, individuals were characterized with a criminal identity. Criminality, and the threat this posed to society, became the focus of penal intervention (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 99-102). As discussed earlier, Violet’s resistance to conformity has resulted in her being labelled as a monster by her peers. As an outsider who has violated social norms, she becomes an outcast of society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 91). After her episode at the party, Titus slowly starts to pull away from her prior to their breakup. When she sends him a wish list of the things she wants before she dies, one of them is not to remember him pulling away,

*I won’t remember watching you stand by my bed when I can’t move, watching you staring down; I won’t remember you apologizing for not coming sooner; I won’t remember you standing there bored by my bedside as I slur words, standing there waiting to feel like you’ve stayed long enough so that you’re a good person and you’re allowed to leave.*

*(Anderson 232-233)*

As she lies there trapped in the hospital bed, Violet’s anxiety as she senses something wrong is palpable as she attempts to express her worries, fears, and wishes. Her increasing desperation is
obvious as she communicates with Titus and receives no response. Her isolation and alienation are expressed in the only words on page 236: “Hey, she chatted. What’s doing? I wish I was with you today. I always wish I was with you...Oh, did you get my list? Titus? ... Titus? (Anderson) In a modern-day penal system, social outsiders are not simply punished, but physically removed from society, isolated, and cut off from social contact, the beginnings of which are obvious here, as Titus is Violet’s only friend (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 122).

The purpose of the penal system is two-fold. The first is to defend society from the threat of criminality (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 88-90). When Violet asks why the corporate sponsors are unwilling to help her, Nina responds,

> We’re sorry, Violet Durn. Unfortunately, FeedTech and other investors reviewed your purchasing history, and we don’t feel that you would be a reliable investment at this time. No one could get a “handle” on your shopping habits, like for example you asking for information about all those wow and brag products and then never buying anything. We have to inform you that our corporate investors were like, “What’s doing with this?” Sorry – I’m afraid you’ll just have to work with your feed the way it is. (Anderson 247)

The inherent irony of Violet’s admirable resistance to the social institutions of her world is that this is ultimately what kills her. Due to her consumer activism, her dismissal of societal values, and her refusal to be disciplined into a docile body, her request for assistance is denied (Bullen and Parsons 113). In this system, punishment is retribution that the guilty make to their fellow citizens, and the corporate neglect of Violet is due to her consumer disobedience -- a crime that has wronged them all. She is a threat, for she may influence other young people around her to also be unprofitable social subjects (Foucault, Discipline and Punish 109). The second purpose of the penal system is to “fix” the condemned. After being physically removed from society, if a
criminal’s ways are repaired, they can be reintegrated back into the regular world (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 122). This option is given to Violet when Nina says,

*Maybe, Violet, if we check out some of the great bargains available to you through the feednet over the next six months, we might be able to create a consumer portrait of you that would interest our investment team. How ‘bout it, Violet Durn? Just us, you and me – girls together! Shop till you stop and drop!* (Anderson 247)

Violet is given the chance to remedy her ways, to conform and be a docile body, and then perhaps she will receive corporate assistance. However, this is a penance that Violet can never repay, as she will die long before six months. It is bitter retribution, and highlights the tragic and dystopian end of the novel. On Titus’ final visit to Violet when she is comatose, her father describes what she has gone through, saying,

The worst stage was when one could tell she was still awake and almost alert, but she knew that nothing worked. Imprisoned. She was imprisoned. In a statue like the Sphinx. Looking out from the eyes. Her own mind, at that point, was as small and bewildered as a little fly. Behind great battlements. (Anderson 287)

Violet becomes incarcerated in her own body, and this metaphorical prison is one that kills her. In *Disturbing the Universe*, Trites discusses how death in the narrative resolutions of adolescent literature can be threatening, as they reveal our powerlessness (Trites 117-118). Violet challenged and questioned her world, and yet her resistance came to nothing, and as a result of her actions, she is subjected to a slow and terrible death (Bullen and Parsons 134). Violet’s powerlessness over her death mirrors her powerlessness over the media corporations she tried so hard to resist (Trites 120). It is a shock to read a young adult dystopia in which the young protagonists do not “save the world” from destruction, as this is the norm in this genre.
(Braithwaite 6; Hintz and Ostry 10; Reid 200; Sambell “Carnivalizing the Future” 251). Instead, the novel’s close appears to offer no hope for the future. Violet’s tragic defeat is meant to highlight that immediate change needs to happen with the way we consume and interact with media, or there will be dire consequences for the future (Sambel, “Presenting the Case for Social Change” 166).
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Discussion

Overall, the focus of my study crossed several subjects and required me to incorporate research from many disciplines. Through the lens of power theory, this research project has examined the primary texts Feed by M.T. Anderson and the Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins to investigate how media is characterized as a social institution. In this final chapter, I return to my original research questions, discuss the limitations of my study, and suggest other related areas for further research.

6.1 Discussion of Research Questions

The answers to my first two research questions overlap due to the fact that media, characterized as a social institution, is the primary tool that is wielded by the respective governing authorities of these narratives, in order to disempower their citizens. As such, the questions and conclusions will be addressed together. The final question, about resistance and rebellion, will be dealt with separately.

6.1.1 Social Institutions and Disempowerment

1) In what ways do the primary texts construct media as a social institution? How does media function as an instrument of the governing authority?

2) How is the relationship between media and disempowerment constructed in these narratives?

In both of these texts, media encompasses numerous complex forms, and fulfills many different disciplinary mechanisms of control to govern the behaviour of the citizens of these
respective worlds (Miller). First of all, both narratives present surveillance societies (Norris), as they use vigilant observation of their citizens to maintain stability (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 175). The Panopticon design is evident in both texts, particularly in *Feed*, as the governing corporate powers have direct insight into every thought and feeling of their citizens (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200). The internet connection in the characters’ brains tracks all of their activity, rendering privacy a foreign concept. By entrapping citizens in their commercialized web, the power of media in this story coerces the majority of the characters to deny their political power. In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, there are cameras everywhere, causing citizens, and especially Katniss, to adhere to societal expectations for fear of punishment (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 187). In the Hunger Games themselves, as well as in the aftermath of her subsequent fame, Katniss is constantly in the spotlight on camera, which affects her freedom, as she must monitor how she behaves in front of her audience and create an acceptable public persona that helps her to survive in the media-driven propaganda machine of the Capitol.

Media is used as a tool of both dystopian regimes in a continual process of repression over their populations (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 90). There are many subtle disciplinary techniques, procedures, and levels of application that govern the behaviour of citizens which are apparent in both primary texts (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 215; Trites 22). For example, the “organization of geneses” trains individuals to fulfill their places in society through the regulation of knowledge (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 156). In *Feed*, internet corporations have taken over the school system, and now only teach information about how to shop and effectively use their feeds for entertainment. Students are disempowered through their education, as the majority of young people are now ignorant, indoctrinated to take their place in the social
order as mere consumers, and are socialized to accept the media power structures that surround them (Trites 32). In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, Panem regulates knowledge through the strict control of information that is communicated through the media (Trites 23). By not broadcasting information on television about the other Districts, the Capitol utilizes the techniques of the Panopticon, so that the inmates (the other districts) can be seen by the Capitol, but not by each other, guaranteeing order as citizens across the nation are prevented from collaborating with one another to rebel (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200).

The activities of citizens are also controlled, and only activities that are useful to society are encouraged, and those that are not beneficial are discouraged (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 150-156). The feed, in M.T. Anderson’s narrative, constantly bombards its citizens with advertisements and entertainment to distract the population with useless information, and to encourage them to contribute to the economy, rather than engage with any political information. This use of media prevents the population from questioning their corporate-run governments, as the entertainment on the feed distracts them from engaging with the dire situations in their world. Just as in *Feed*, the citizens of the Capitol are distracted by the entertainment of the Hunger Games. Since the Games are presented as something similar to the Olympics, the attention of the Capitol citizens is diverted by this culture of entertainment, and instead of protesting or speaking out against the mistreatment of people in the Districts, they are encouraged to live a self-indulgent and frivolous lifestyle, negating any of their potential political power. Media creates docile and ignorant Capitol citizens so that they are easier to manage politically.

For the people in the districts, however, the Games serve another purpose entirely. In this instance, media functions as a means to regulate social power through intimidation (Trites 22). The Hunger Games are a violent televised spectacle in which innocent children are tortured and
murdered, and is used by President Snow and his government as a vivid display of power to “punish” citizens of the districts for crimes committed in rebellion long ago (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 32). Obviously, though this is the justification used by the Capitol, the Hunger Games are not a punishment, rather, they are simply meant to affirm the superiority of the Capitol (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 48). This frightening excess of violence is meant to prevent civilian unrest (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 47). The activity of viewing the Hunger Games is mandatory in the districts, as the audience must witness this horror to be made afraid (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 57). This requirement to watch media that portrays children being killed on television is an inherent threat, meant to discourage activities that would be considered counterproductive in the districts, such as resistance or rebellion against the Capitol regime, effectively disempowering the citizens of Panem by ensuring that they remain docile bodies (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 149).

In addition, the use of media enforces the “composition of forces” in these regimes, suppressing any unique character traits or individual interest that do not benefit society, and only encouraging those that do (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 162-169). Katniss, once in the Hunger Games and the surrounding media hype, suppresses her differences to blend in to the Capitol propaganda machine. She creates a persona to successfully assimilate into Capitol expectations, such as pretending to be interested in fashion and clothes, and performing a “young girl in love” routine with Peeta so that she is cast as a desirable tribute on television that people may be willing to sponsor so that she can survive. In *Feed*, the teenagers, and particularly Titus, are always trying their best to conform to or acquire the latest fashion or the newest product. The teenagers in this world consider the media they receive through the feed as simple entertainment, and a service to provide them with things they need. Very few of them realize that the very
media they see as a tool is also using them to make a profit. Through the feed and the constant assault of ads and depictions of what is “cool,” the corporate internet power of this world succeeds in training its citizens to subordinate their own interests to what is good for the consumer culture.

Media, in these worlds, fulfill the social purpose of creating and enforcing rules that govern cooperative human behaviour (Miller). Both governing authorities utilize media as an instrument to regulate and control their populations, rendering them to become docile bodies that are functional and beneficial to society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138). Clearly, through this wide array of disciplinary techniques, people are disempowered by media, as they are obedient and subjugated citizens of tyrannical regimes.

### 6.1.2 Resistance Through Media

3) In both narratives, the adolescents revolt against the hegemonic power structure. How do the protagonists use media to empower themselves? In what ways are they successful or unsuccessful in gaining agency through the very media used as an instrument of power against them?

According to Foucault, power is both repressing and enabling, as it is by experiencing powerlessness that inspires people to rebel and discover their own power (*Discipline and Punish* 195-228). Katniss, as a contestant in the Hunger Games, undergoes this feeling of being completely powerless, and it is that which inspires her to begin to resist, and use the very media that suppresses her to fight back against the Capitol. Near the beginning of the series, all of her resistance is quite clever, as she rebels subtly when she knows that the cameras trained on her will not be able to turn away, as in her burial of Rue, eating the berries, interviews, and shooting
the arena at the end of *Catching Fire*. In the final book of the series, Katniss officially becomes the “Mockingjay,” the symbol of the rebellion against the Capitol. While fulfilling this role and making propo videos to combat the Capitol, she discovers her own power and agency, taking assertive control for the first time while she is in front of the cameras, and developing the ability to be genuine and say what she truly thinks. These videos also take elements from her previous media appearances, and are broadcast to Panem on the Capitol’s own television network. Again, Katniss is utilizing the very media that the Capitol has used against her, and turns the media into a weapon of resistance for the revolution. Through these videos Katniss is also able to directly confront and challenge President Snow, encouraging the Districts to rebel and take up arms against the Capitol. By the end of the trilogy, though Katniss has suffered the horrors of war, she is ultimately successful in bringing down not one, but two oppressive regimes. Although Katniss has been oppressed by the media institutions of this world, she is ultimately liberated by them (Trites 24), as her use of media becomes the instrument of power that allows her to be victorious against the Capitol.

Violet also refuses to be a docile body (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138), and uses the feed to resist the corporate power of her world. For example, the school system socializes students to think the primary use of their feeds is only for shopping and entertainment. Violet, however, often uses her feed to do things that are not deemed “useful” to society, such as research about politics and current events (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 150-156; Trites 32), resisting the regulation of knowledge that is so stringently emphasized by corporations such as Feedlink, OnFeed, and American Feedware. This knowledge is also what contributes to Violet’s inspiration to resist being categorized by these same feed companies. Unlike the other teenagers in her world, Violet understands that their feed activity is constantly tracked by corporations so
that they are easier to market to as consumers, and Violet begins a campaign to confuse the statistics of her consumer profile through indiscriminate shopping. She uses the feed itself to empower herself, and combat being simplified into a statistic. For a short time, she gains agency and is successful in her resistance to the media influences of her world.

However, as Roberta Trites comments in *Disturbing the Universe*, teenagers may revolt against institutions, but these revolutions may come at a cost (25). Unfortunately for Violet, that cost is defeat, and death. Unlike Katniss, Violet ultimately fails in her rebellion, and is rejected by her peers and by the corporate internet feed companies as a direct result of her actions. First of all, the Feed companies eventually determine her intent, and are able to advertise things that she likes. Secondly, because Violet is not willing to compromise her self-image, she is abandoned by Titus and his friends for being eccentric and not conforming to societal expectations, leaving her isolated at her most vulnerable. Finally, when her feed is damaged, and she needs assistance in getting it repaired, she is rebuffed by the FeedTech corporation, ironically, for the very resistance that gave her agency in the first place. They will not fund the repair of her feed, as she is an unreliable investment, given her consumer profile and difficulty to market to. Therefore, Violet dies as an outcast due to corporate neglect in response to her consumer disobedience. Our final image of Violet is of her comatose, imprisoned in her own body, and powerless over the media corporations of her world.

In both of these narratives, Katniss and Violet resist the social institutions of media by using the very means that are meant to disempower them as a tool to rebel. However, institutions are more powerful than individuals (Trites 141), and while Katniss is successful in overturning the hegemonic power structure of her world, this is most likely due to the fact that she and many other citizens of her world also participate in the revolution. Violet, acting alone, does not have
the power to change the shape of media as a social institution, and is therefore unsuccessful,
defeated by the social power of media deployed against her (Trites 2).

6.2 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study, with one of the most noteworthy being that I have only looked at two authors. Perhaps with a wider array of primary texts, my findings may have been broader and encompassed more viewpoints on media and young people.

In addition, I have only looked at American dystopias, which considerably narrows the perspectives presented on how authors may characterize the effects of media on young people. Had my study been more international, and included authors from other regions in the world, it may have provided less biased findings.

I did not focus on gender in my study. It is worthy of note that the two characters I examine as the sight of government power and control are female (Shau Ming Tan 60). An exploration of the topic of gender and dystopia may have brought some light to the significance of women being a more common target of the powers of media than men (de Vries and Peter 1483; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 869).

Finally, media in all of its forms is constantly changing (D’Haenens 54; Robinson). At the outset of this study, Snapchat, Instagram, Yik Yak, and countless other communication mediums did not exist yet. Due to this rapid evolution, research findings, and YA fiction about this topic can also be considered out of date in a relatively short period of time. Perhaps some of the topics and issues discussed here may already be considered outdated.
Recommendations for Further Research

Given the transient nature of media discussed above, it would be interesting for a study similar to this one to be done in five, ten, or fifteen years in the future, with new dystopian texts that place media at their center. It would be thought-provoking to see if the nature of adult concerns about media and youth remain the same, or whether there is a completely new set of adult anxieties reflected in YA fiction given the evolution of media over time.

As I have previously mentioned, though the primary texts are meant for young people, they are written by adults, and therefore, they reflect adult anxieties about media and dystopian futures (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3; Braithwaite 8). As Trites states in *Disturbing the Universe*, there is a paradox of authority in adolescent literature as it is adult authors (Trites 54) and researchers who are responsible for literary texts and scholarship around dystopia, media, and youth. It would be intriguing to read a study on these, or similar texts, that embraces a more child-centered approach, and hears directly from adolescents readers as to their opinions, ideas, and interpretations of the effect media has on them, and whether or not they find the themes presented on media in fiction align with their own beliefs (Trites 55).

Finally, there is a disconcerting irony about the *Hunger Games* trilogy being adapted to the screen. Collins’ narrative seems to condemn many aspects of media and consumerism, and yet the film and its actors (and even Collins herself having co-written the first screenplay), are now caught up in the media hype surrounding the films, mirroring that of the Capitol’s excitement for the Hunger Games. A close study of the books, films, movie trailers, interviews, and magazines would provide a fascinating study of this paradox, as though the trilogy critiques this aspect of our society, the film franchise only seems to heighten the objectification of celebrity culture.
Works Cited

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


---. “Difference and Diversity: Trends in Young Danes’ Media Uses.” Media Culture and Society

---. “Global Media Through Youthful Eyes.” Children and Their Changing Media
Environment: A European Comparative Study. Comp. and ed. Sonia Livingstone and

Eccleshare, Julia. “Are Children's Books Darker Than They Used To Be?” The Guardian

Eltantawy, Nahed, and Julie B. Wiest. “Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering

Ferguson, Christopher J., and John Kilburn. “The Public Health Risks of Media Violence: A
Web. 18 July 2013.

Fikkers, Karin M., Jessica Taylor Piotrowski, Wouter D. Weeda, Helen G.M. Vossen and Patti
M. Valkenburg. “Double Dose: High Family Conflict Enhances the Effects of Media


Merchant, Brian. “Maybe the Most Orwellian Text Message a Government’s Ever Sent.”


Miller, Laura. “Fresh Hell: What’s Behind the Boom in Dystopian Fiction for Young Readers?”


Nikhilesh, Dholakia, and Detley Zwick. "Mobile Technologies and Boundaryless Spaces:

Slavish Lifestyles, Seductive Meanderings, or Creative Empowerment?" *University of Rhode Island College of Business Administration Faculty Publications* (2003): 1-15.


Works Consulted


