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What components allure young adult readers to dystopian fiction?

> *"Dystopian literature refers to the genre of books about unpleasant or repressed societies, often propagandized as being utopian. This wildly popular young adult genre may feature some common elements."*[1]

Young adults appear to read dystopian fiction for several reasons. Therefore, to determine why this genre is popular with young adults several questions need to be asked and answered. For instance, "What are the elements in the compositional structure of dystopian fiction that attract young adult readers?" "Are young adult readers drawn to dystopian fiction because they relate to the teenage identity developmental crises the protagonists experience in these stories?" "Do young adult readers believe the governmental economic, educational and political policies that support social divisions among groups in dystopian fiction reflect current conditions in their own societies?" "How does the use of modern technology and virtual tools in dystopian literature draw young adult readers to this genre?"

1. The elements in the compositional structure of dystopian fiction that may attract young adult readers

[1] Yoshida-Ehrmann, E. (2014). Dystopian Fiction: A Literary Outlet for Teen Angst. Retrieved from: http://giftededucationcommunicator.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Dystopian-Literature-Article-Yoshida-Ehrmann.pdf

A compositional tool that authors Susan Collins and Veronica Roth use in their dystopian fiction trilogies *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*[2] is having the major protagonists speak in the first person-present narrative. This compositional structure gives the appearance of the action in these novels occurring in the present or "*now*."

The effectiveness of using the first person-present tense for drawing young adult readers to dystopian fiction may find support in David Burstein's "*Fast future: How the millennial generation is shaping our world,"*[3] where he underscores the millennial generations' (born between 1980-2000) belief they do not have to wait for the future to change attitudes and behaviors towards environmental, political and social issues. This generation feels that it has the power to shape all facets of their lives "*now*,**"** because of the "*pragmatic idealism*" they developed through experiences with the rapid growth in technology, the internet, witnessing the impeachment of a President, 9/11 and the collapse of the economy.

Burstein is not alone in hypothesizing that his generation has the power "*now*" to change problems created by previous generations. An ongoing NPR Morning Edition series focusing on millennials called "*the new boom*," cites several studies that show this generation has the financial and political power to cause changes to occur in all areas of society. For example, Mark Zuckerberg and other millennials who have made millions and billions through technological innovations in the past two decades, use financial resources to influence political leaders to effect

[2] Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games*, New York: Scholastic (2008). Print. *Catching Fire*. New York: Scholastic, 2009. Print. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic, 2010. Print. Veronica Roth. *Divergent*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. Print. *Insurgent*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012. Print. *Allegiant*. New York: HarperCollins, 2013. Print.
[3] Burstein, D.D. (2013). *Fast future: How the millennial generation is shaping our world*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1).

changes in laws that benefit educational, environmental and social issues they support (Simmons-Duffin, 2014, October).[4]

Billionaires are not the only millennials focusing on social issues, the actress, Emma Watson, recently spoke before the UN on gender equality and was given a standing ovation after that speech. Watson, along with other millennials truly believe that they have the power to eliminate gender inequality in their lifetime (Watson, 2014)[5].

Given the current research on millennials and their cognitive beliefs that they can affect major changes in educational, environmental, political and social issues "now," Collins and Roth's decisions to have the protagonist's in these stories use the first person-present narrative may have been a well thought-out and important compositional decision designed to draw young adult readers to their dystopian fiction

2. Are young adult readers drawn to dystopian fiction because they relate to the teenage identity developmental crises the protagonists experience in these stories?

Erin Yoshida-Ehrmann posits that young adults read dystopian fiction like *Animal Farm*, the *Divergent* series, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Giver* series, *The Hunger Game*s series and *Lord of the Files* because these gifted readers possess five social-emotional traits that cause them to seek out this genre. They are: divergent thinking ability—a preference for unusual, original, or creative aspects of any topic; excitability—high energy and emotional reactivity; sensitivity—

[4] Simmons-Duffin, S. (2014, October). Why you start taking millennials seriously: NPR. Available from: http://www.npr.org/2014/10/06/352613333/why-you-should-start-taking-millennials-seriously

[5]Watson, E. (2014, September). UN speech on gender equality. YouTube video. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/21/emma-watson-gender-equality_n_5858206.html

compassion for people and social causes; perceptiveness—intuition, insight, and a need for truth and entelechy—inner strength and a need for self-determination, (Lovecky, 1992)[6].

The above traits combined with other general characteristics of teenagers like identity-seeking, adventurousness, and risk-taking, cause these young adults not only to identify with the protagonists in these stories, but to also find it therapeutic to vicariously "walk in the shoes" of the protagonists in these stories, because of the agency and control they develop during the arduous process of seeking solutions to the problems that plague them throughout most the of the stories.

Yoshida-Ehrmann also hypothesizes that the unpleasant and repressed societies in these stories often portrayed as utopian, feature these common elements:

- Propaganda is used to control the citizens
- The societies are an illusion or caricature of a perfect world
- Strict rules of conformity are imposed upon the citizens
- Constant surveillance
- Fear of the outside world
- Certain gifted young adults who challenge the status quo
- An uprising

In her journal article on dystopian fiction, [7] Balaka Basu poses two questions that she believes all heroes of young adult fiction are asked to consider during adolescence: *"Who am I?*

[6] Lovecky, D.V. (1992). "Exploring Social and Emotional Aspects of Giftedness in Children." *Roeper Review*, 15(1), 18-25.

[7] Basu, B. *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults. Brave New Teenagers*. Routledge. New York and London. (Eds. Blaka Basu, Katherine R. Broad, and Carrie Hintz). 2013. Chapter One, "What faction are you in? The pleasure of being sorted in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*." Pp. 19-49

And who do I want to be when I grow up?" She posits that most of the stories written for young adults focus upon the classical quest for an identity by the heroes and heroines that ultimately lead them into a collective relationship with a particular group of their peers. The lack of adult experiences cause the heroes and heroines to refashion themselves into an *extant* (still existing) type of self. Basu underscores this belief by focusing upon Veronica Roth's *Divergent* as an example of this classical quest that culminates in the main characters not seeking independence and a break from their social networks, but instead become enmeshed and socially connected to the very faction system they seek to escape.

Basu appears to believe that Roth's dystopian fiction does not help young readers discover their identities, but only perpetuates an identity crises because the "high concept," dystopian totalitarian society she has created in the novel is divided into factions—each dedicated to cultivating a single virtue.

Basu further states, that Roth created a heroine, Beatrice Prior (Tris), in this dystopian fiction who is engaged in a sixteen year olds' quest for identity, but finding her true identity is not an easy task because Beatrice is divergent, and her temperament fits three of the five faction categories: **Abnegation** (Government), Candor (Law), **Erudite** (Education and Invention), Amity (Caretakers and Social Services) and **Dauntless** (Defense and Security). Roth's giving Beatrice more than one temperament may have been a means of showing young adult readers that they do not have to embrace the social norms of joining only one group in High School, but to explore other groups.

In the Introduction to his Master's thesis, "Identity Formation in the Dystopias of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent"*[8] J.J.A.M. Blokker defines the differences between utopia and dystopia. Utopia—defined as '*no place'* (coined by Thomas More) describes an imaginary, non-existent world, while eutopia—is defined as a '*good place*.' He brings forward these differences because people often confuse utopia with eutopia, especially in dystopian fictions like Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, where the five-fractioned society she created is an *imagined and idealized place*" and not a "*good place*."

Blokker presents intriguing hypotheses about how the two female protagonists in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent series* deal with the difficulties related to female gender identity development.[9] He first addresses Katniss Everdeen's female identity crisis in Section 2 of his thesis "Real or Not Real? Katniss's Gender Performances and the Deception of Appearances in *The Hunger Games.*"

In that section, Blokker postulates that Katniss defies the traditional gender norm of the "contemporary female protagonist" because she, like Tris, does not have a singular female gender identity. He presents examples of Katniss' diversity when he describes her gender identity role as more masculine than feminine in the first book of the trilogy, *The Hunger Games*, while living in District 12 before becoming a tribute. The masculine role of family provider and protector was forced upon her at an early age because her father in a coal mining accident and her mother regressed into a semi-catatonic state as a coping mechanism.

[8] Blokker, J.J.A.M. (2014). Identity Formation in the Dystopias of the Hunger Games and Divergent. Master thesis Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden.

[9] Blokker, J.J.A.M. (2014). Identity Formation in the Dystopias of the Hunger Games and Divergent. Master thesis Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden. Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games*, New York: Scholastic (2008). Print. *Catching Fire*. New York: Scholastic, 2009. Print. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic, 2010. Print. Veronica Roth. *Divergent*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. Print. *Insurgent*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012. Print. *Allegiant*. New York: HarperCollins, 2013. Print.

After Katniss replaces Prim as tribute for the hunger games and is sent to the Capitol as a tribute, she is forced to split her gender identity between the masculine role of protector of both Peeta and herself—using the skills she learned while growing up in District 12—for survival and to also take on a more feminine persona to receive life-saving favors while in the hunger games arena.

These dual masculine and feminine personas continue throughout most of *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* and most of *Mockingjay.* Katniss does not appear to achieve a gender balance until she gains agency and control over her life in the Epilogue of '*Mockingjay*.' It is at that time, as Blokker points out that *"Much like the current 'Facebook generation,' which uses social media to 'brand' themselves, Katniss has taken control of her image and performance"* (46). These changes occur because of her decision to become the mockingjay—"*a gender-less symbol of the rebellion and a creature which is not supposed to exist at all*" (30), kill President Coin instead of President Snow, and is consequently sent back to District 12 because the Panem society does not know how to deal with someone who has such a diverse gender identity. It is in the Epilogue of *Mockingjay* that Katniss finally completes the process of female gender development when she agrees to marry Peeta Mellark and have two children (389-390).[10]

To explain Beatrice Prior's female gender development in the *Divergent* series, J.J.A.M. Blokker compares her gender identity struggle with the three stages of teenage identity development. In *Divergent*, Beatrice Prior engages in the first stage of identity development—"*individual survival*"—when she enters the Dauntless faction and has to survive the initiation and simulation attacks. It is during that stage that Beatrice changes her name to Tris, and begins

[10] Suzanne Collins. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic, (2010). Print.

to develop the agency needed to initiate changes in her physical appearance, to outwardly exhibit emotional responses to interactions with others, and to begin relying upon her own cognitive processes to solve problems.

In *Insurgent*, Tris goes through the second stage of identity development—"*the attempt to meet the needs of others*"—when she must confront emotional responses to the self-sacrifices her parents made so that she could live. These emotions cause Tris to initiate risky and dangerous behaviors as an attempt to emulate their actions. And finally, it is in *Allegiant* that Tris goes through the third identity development stage of "*nonviolence*" when she learns the true meaning of self-sacrifice through love without being self-destructive, when she replaces Caleb in the death chamber to stop enforced memory erase of the inhabitants in the city of Chicago (62).

3. "Do young adult readers believe the governmental economic, educational and political policies that support social divisions among groups in dystopian fiction as reflecting current conditions in their own societies?

J.J.A. M. Blokker brings forward several examples in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* trilogies of the oppressive power governmental leaders use to create the economic, political and social divisions between factions and groups, and the concerted efforts to limit social connectedness by using surveillance, fences, serums that force strict codes of conduct, and other forms of governmental controls are exhibited in both trilogies.

The twelve districts focused upon in Collin's first two books, *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, are separated economically, politically and socially by location. The further out the districts are located from the Capitol the more economically depressed and isolated the citizens. Katniss Everdeen lives in the coal mining District 12, which is the most remote and

least controlled district, and therefore restrictions upon the dress code and conduct receive very little policing. This has allowed Katniss to develop the skills and gender identity she needs to survive not only in District 12 but later in the hunger games.

As Blokker further explains, individuals who live in the five factions of Chicago are not only segregated by location (except in the school that children attend until they are sixteen), but are also differentiated from one another through serums that impose personality traits unique to each faction, to insure complete conformity to rules, dress code and loyalty. Those who do not conform to the norms required by leaders of the five factions are classified as "factionless" and isolated in conditions of poverty that often contribute to their deaths.[11]

Although the oppressive power of social division is overtly more present in *The Hunger Games* than *Divergent,* this does not mean that there is no social division in *Divergent*. The social division in Roth's trilogy is more covert than overt because the five factions appear to represent the best qualities of a society: Abnegation represents Selflessness; Amity represents kindness; Candor represents honesty; Dauntless represents courage and Erudite represents intelligence. But the city of Chicago is not a *eutopian* society (a good society), but a *utopian* society (an imagined society that is not necessarily representative of a good society).

Blokker compares the physical separation of the five factions in the city of Chicago and the Bureau's ability to monitor their activity, to Jeremy Bentham's 18th century panopticon—an example of the ideal prison where a warden could, theoretically, watch all inmates simultaneously without their knowledge from his watchtower (14).

[11] 3. 'Faction before blood': Tris's Journey towards Individuality in the *Divergent*-trilogy. (51-66)

The surveillance and other techniques used to control individuals within the factions also may not be as overt in *Divergent* as they are in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, but they do become more apparent in *Insurgent* and *Allegiant*. Blokker cites examples of how leaders of the five factions control and manipulate populations in *Allegiant* when Johanna, Four's mother, and Tris discuss the differences between the behaviors in the five factions.

> *"Every faction has a serum," Johanna says. The Dauntless serum gives hallucinated realities, Candor's gives the truth, Amity's gives peace, Erudite's gives death"—at this, Tris visibly shudders, but Johanna continues as if it didn't happen. "And Abnegation resets memory."*
> (*Allegiant* 99-100)

Mark Fisher addresses the oppressive power of governmental controls that limit social connectedness in groups in his journal article on dark and futuristic dystopian books and films, like *The Hunger Games*, for young adults.[12]

On the first page of the article, Fisher points out that *The Hunger Games* was published in 2008, *"at the very moment that the financial crisis was pitching the world into panic and confusion."* He then goes on to state that the book's popularity with young adults may relate to their feelings of betrayal and resentment of the possibility that their generation, in the future, may not have the same quality of life as their parents. Fisher further adds that while *The Hunger Games* is perceived as a successor to *Twilight* and *Harry Potter*,[13] it is much more "affective,"

[12] Fisher, M. "Precarious Dystopias: The Hunger Games, In Time, and Never Let Me Go." *Film Quarterly* (ISSN 0015-1386), University of California Press. 2012, pp. 27-33.
[13] P. 27

rather than "explicit," in presenting the brutality of teenagers killing each other in a gladiator-type environment.

Fisher explains that the inspiration for Susan Collin's writing *The Hunger Games* came from channel-surfing one evening and discovering a group of young people competing for money in a game show on one channel, and on another channel she came across a similar aged group of young men and women fighting in a war. In a hypnogogic state, Collins created a story about a *cyberfeudal* dystopian society that combines modern twenty-first century technology with a feudal social system from the nineteenth century steeped in images from the Roman Empire—*Panem et Circenses* (Bread and Circus) and the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur,[14] to create a teenage love story that includes a triangle—two heroes competing for the attentions of the heroine. But, *The Hunger Games* couples this teenage love story with "*the first stirrings of revolutionary consciousness*."

As Fisher states, what is evident from reading *The Hunger Games* is that there is no upward mobility for people living in the rural twelve Districts because of the feudal system of government set up by President Snow—a sort of dictator. Only the individuals living in the urban Capitol of Panem—who are part of the dominant class—are allowed the luxury of "leisure." Even the children who survive the gladiator-type hunger games as victors are still "enslaved" by their celebrity and are forced to continue performing for the citizens of Panem in one form or another throughout their lives.

The two heroes, Gale and Peeta, and heroine, Katniss, in *The Hunger Games* trilogy begin the novel as solitary figures who make individual choices for themselves based on a need

[14] Everett, S.M. "A Conversation. Susan Collins, Author of *The Hunger Games*." severett@scholastic.com (no date)

for survival. Although, District 12—where they live—appears to be a community, there is no real social network or community that comes together as a group. The feudal society that President Snow has set up is like spokes on a wheel, with each district separated from each other coming together in Panem. This set-up keeps the districts destabilized so they can never unify into a collaborative group. The set-up works until Katniss and Peeta attempt suicide in the arena of the hunger games and successfully show the Districts that there is a way to win the hunger games without death. Their act brings the Districts together towards a common goal—that of saving their children's lives—which is enough to bring forward a type of loose "solidarity" between the Districts that is played out on several levels.

The isolation prior to Katniss and Peeta entering the hunger games, promoted a hermetic type lifestyle. As stated earlier, Katniss, the sole provider of the family, cannot see a future for herself beyond the mere survival of daily hunting in the woods to get game to feed her family, and to barter in the local black market for other necessities. The woods are symbolic of her escaping back to nature and freedom. It a freedom Katniss shares with Gale, her hunting partner and potential love interest, before entering the hunger games where her freedom and existing way of life will be threatened by new challenges and experiences with a different hunting partner, Peeta—a baker who exhibits feminine and artistic sensitivity towards nature.

Gale is the strong and handsome "hunter and forager" symbolic male figure in the novel who shares with Katniss a love of nature and hunting. But Gale is forever doomed to go down to the coal mines and quite possibly succumb to the same fate of Katniss's father.

If you observe the qualities of Katniss, Peeta and Gale then you can understand why Collins chose these three individuals to bring "social solidarity" to the twelve Districts. Katniss and Gale go hunting and are a constant reminder of the importance of preserving our natural

resources, while Peeta has the sensitive and feminine qualities of an artist coupled with the future-thinking imagination of a designer, which gives him the ability to be honest and true to what is good and right—something Katniss and Gale are willing to ignore and focus upon "the end justifying the means."

Fisher paints an extremely bleak picture of the *neoliberal dystopian* society of Panem throughout the article, but provides hope in the final paragraph by pointing to Peeta and Katniss's ability to win the hunger games by making a stand together by choosing their own fate by winning "*The struggle to break out of the arena* [which] *entails the throwing off of this imposed dog-eat-dog Hobbesianism*, [and] *the reinvention of solidarity*."

4. How does the use of modern technology and virtual tools in dystopian literature, and media and movies focused upon these literature draw young adult readers to this genre?

The above question is difficult to answer without first explaining the impact that modern technology and virtual tools have had upon young adult readers (and millennials born from 1980-2000).

In her article about *affinity spaces*—"[virtual] *sites* [on the internet] *of informal learning where "newbies and masters and everyone else" interact around a "common endeavor,"* "[15] Jen Scott Curwood cites studies that suggest young adults (94%, 2011), who live in member countries are able to spend time in virtual spaces because they have at least one computer in their

[15] Curwood, J.S. (2013). The Hunger Games: Literature, literacy, and online affinity spaces. *Language Arts*, 90(6), 417-427. [PDF]

homes (44). These affinity spaces include face-to-face meetings through virtual spaces like skype; messages boards; blogs and web pages.

To support the above supposition, Curwood points to empirical studies that suggest young adults who increasingly socially interact in virtual spaces outside of the classroom on home computers increase their literacy, become better writers, and increase social interaction skills.[16]

Curwood's extensive research on young adults who use "*affinity spaces* "*to deepen their understanding of the narrative structures and themes in dystopian literature,"* has also found that young adults use affinity spaces to write "*Harry Potter*-based and *Hunger Games*-inspired stories, create art, produce videos, compose music and to design role-playing games (81).[17]

Curwood additionally points out that "*according to the Cooperative Children's Book Center*," there has been an increase in the number of novels published for young adults that focus on the science fiction and fantasy game genre (82). The setting and plots of the novels are often set in the future, in a parallel world, or a historical past. The characters may include wizards, mutants, robots or genetically engineered humans. The compositional structures of the stories are designed around novel scientific principles, technological advances, political systems and social cultures (82).

Additional studies Curwood cites to support the above notions are: Angela Thomas' study "*Youth Online: Identity and Literacy in the Digital Age*," which shows that young adults

[16] Lammers, J.C., Curwood, J.S., & Magnifico, A.M. (2012). Toward an affinity space methodology: Considerations for literacy research. English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 11(2), 44-58. [PDF]

[17] Curwood, J.S. (2013). Fan fiction, remix culture, and The Potter Games. In V.E. Frankel (Ed.), Teaching with Harry Potter (pp. 81-92). Jefferson, NC: McFarland. [PDF]

use online affinity spaces to promote collaborative writing and role-playing across a range of real-life and virtual spaces, and Rebecca W. Black's "*Adolescents and Online Fan Fiction*," located on the website Fanfiction.net, that centers upon English learners who write anime-based stories and post them, receive critiques from a global audience from several different countries who respond in common English language (83). The online collaborations in virtual spaces cited above help researchers like Curwood understand the progression of adolescent literacy in the digital age.

Nathan Holic believes that millennials born between 1980 and 2000, which includes current young adult readers of dystopian literature, are so overloaded with technological options—labeled as the "*hypertext syndrome*,"—that the only way publishers, magazines, blogs and the film industry will be able to keep young adults reading dystopian literature and view the films and buy products related to this genre, is to increase the use of the latest technological advances and social issues that appeal to young adults in their platforms.

Mark Fisher, appears to agree with Holic in his assessment of the increasing use of technology and social issues to keep young adults engaged—cited in answering question 3 in this paper, when he stated that Susan Collin's inspiration for writing *The Hunger Games* came from channel-surfing one evening and discovering various programs depicting young adults going through various reality-type situations. One channel focused on young adults competing in a game show, another focused on young adults of the same age fighting in a war zone in the Middle East. As a screen writer for children's programs, Collins appeared to realize that television viewers spent a great deal of time watching "reality-type" shows in which they could vicariously live out the dangerous and dramatic experiences of participants without having to

leave their living rooms. This realizations culminated in the creation of the story about the cyberfeudal society of Panem.[18]

There are several examples in academia that add support how modern technology and virtual tools in dystopian literature, games and movies keep young adults continued involvement in this genre. One example is Ashley Ann Haynes master's thesis "*The Technology Question: Adolescent Identities of Home in Dystopic Young Adult Literature Post-Hunger Games*." Haynes lists several research studies in her references, including Jen Scott Curwood's, that support the above hypothesis, and gives one reason for this notion the ability of young adult readers to shift concepts of "*home*" between physical and virtual spaces.

In her thesis, Haynes outlines how Veronica Roth and Susan Collins appear to be aware of the capacity for young adult readers to navigate between physical and virtual spaces for the concept of *home*, and how they used this knowledge to frame the actions of the two female protagonists in *The Hunger Games* (Katniss Everdeen) and *Divergent* (Beatrice Prior).

Before focusing upon the use of technology and virtual spaces in dystopian literature to attract young adult readers, in her Introduction, Haynes points out that authors focused upon dystopian literature for young adults differ in how they portray protagonists in these novels, as opposed to children's books. Children's' books focus on *"self and self-discovery,"* while dystopian literature focuses upon "*the relationship between society and the individual"* (20).[19] Haynes posits that this shift is in both physical spaces, as well as cyber spaces may relate to their continued use of *"digital media technologies [Twitter, Facebook, MUD's, video games, reality*

[18] Everett, S.M. "A Conversation. Susan Collins, Author of *The Hunger Games*." severett@scholastic.com (no date)
[19] Haynes, A. A. "The Technology Question: Adolescent Identities of Home in Dystopic *Young Adult Literature Post-Hunger Games." (2014).* Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 13813.

television, and blogs] that provide a plethora of new tools and contexts for youth to express and explore their identities" (7-8). Haynes points to Zygmunt Bauman's belief, stated in *Liquid Times*, that young adults often perceive and treat home spaces *"as a matrix of random connections and disconnections"* (9).

Suzanne Collins appears to utilize the above concepts in *The Hunger Games* in Chapter 25 of *Mockingjay*, when Katniss asks herself if events are "*real or not real*" (348). Haynes underscores Katniss questioning of reality by referring to Michael Heim's interpretation of the spaces in the hunger games as having a physical as well as a virtual appearance, which causes them to have the appearance of *"more of a dream-like state of consciousness"* (12).

In that section, Collins has Katniss shift her home spaces between the hunger games, District 12 and the Capitol. Haynes posits that the physical and dream-like state of consciousness give the masses outside the games and the adolescents inside the games different perspectives. These differences in perspectives are manipulated by President Snow through the use of technology. This shifting around of home spaces is similar to how young adults navigate between their public and private physical and virtual spaces.

To underscore how the media uses technology related to "affinity spaces," Haynes refers to how man-made themed environments like Disney World, on-line virtual reality games and other media might cause some young adults to have problems distinguishing between the difference between "*what is real and what is not real*." As Haynes points out, constant switching between virtual and physical spaces may cause young adult's a loss of a physical "*sense of place*" due to a "*time-space compression*" (22). Haynes further points out that advertisers want young adults to view virtual spaces as safe environments, but in reality, they are like shopping malls; privately owned spaces which try to give the appearance of public spaces.

Haynes compares this misperception of private and public spaces to the Capitol in *The Hunger Games*. The reality is that the games and tributes belong to President Snow and the Capitol, not to the participants or inhabitants of the twelve districts who view the games (22-23).

In Chapter 3 of her thesis, "The Media Question: Adolescent Misconception in the *Divergent* Series, Haynes presents a different perspective of technology and its influence upon affinity spaces and home. As pointed out in other sections of this paper, the structural use of technology to manipulate the population in the *Divergent* is not as overt as it is in *The Hunger Games*. Haynes uses the term "heterotopia" (a counter-site), coined by Michael Foucault, to describe the culture within the city of Chicago—which is controlled and manipulated by two different forces by serums, fences and virtual reality, one within the city (the leaders of the factions) and one outside of the city (the Bureau) (25).

Roth's creation of a female protagonists who can resist being controlled by the leaders of the factions and the Bureau because of her divergence, not only gives young adult readers an important element with which they can identify, "hope," but in giving Tris the dilemma that is related to where *home* is located—she provides a mirror of the same struggle young adults have with defining their home spaces. Roth's use of these mimetic (representational) experiences in the novel provide examples of how young adults can integrate heterotopic experiences with geographical communities and "*move beyond the moment of crises to an integrated home identity"* (25).

An additional form of technology used in *Divergent* are the trains that transport the Dauntless around Chicago and outside its parameters. While these trains represent freedom of mobility, they also represent a transitional state from the interior location of the city of Chicago and the exterior location of the Bureau.

Tris perceives Dauntless and then the Bureau as physical spaces where she can find *the identity of place.* Unfortunately this is not the case because she is divergent and unwilling to submit to the control of either entity. Although Tris never finds the utopian society and physical home she desires, before death, she discovers that the *identity of place*, is not in the physical environment, but is associated with members of the various factions and Bureau with whom she has become socially interconnected (35).

Haynes hypothesizes that exposure to television, the internet and dystopian literature are avenues that provide globalized heterotopic experiences that allow young adults go through Arnold van Gennep's three stages of symbolic transition: separation, margin, and reag-gregation. These three transitions require separation steps involving initiations that lead from adolescent life to adulthood (25-26).

5. Conclusion

This paper has provided several journal articles and academic papers as support for answers to the four questions posed at the beginning, that relate to the compositional elements and structure of dystopian fiction; the relationship between the teenage identity developmental crises of the protagonists in these stories; concern about governmental policies; and the use of modern technology and virtual tools in dystopian literature to attract young adult readers. The material has focused upon research on young adult readers and dystopian fiction which provides data that highlights several theories on why young adult readers are drawn to this genre.

One researcher focused upon the compositional structure of the stories that incorporated the first person narrative which allowed the reader to visualize that action is taking place "real time" and in the "now" so that the action is continuous.

Other research studies pointed out that because of the exponential growth of technology since the 1980's, young adults are consistently exposed to affinity spaces that allow them to shift their concepts of "home" between both physical and virtual spaces. This ability to navigate through different media has given this generation an unprecedented global awareness of governmental policies that affect economic, educational, environmental, political and social issues, and created the most intelligent generation to ever exist.

An additional group of researchers hypothesized that young adults find reading dystopian fiction cathartic and therapeutic, because they are going through the same gender identity developmental crises exhibited by the protagonists, and the stories often provide real-life examples of how protagonists find solutions to overcoming the catastrophic problems they face daily.

And finally, an additional attraction to dystopian fiction, besides the characters, plots and story-lines, and empathy with gender identity crises, may also be the "cool futuristic" technology incorporated in the stories. These high tech "gadgets" are not only in the books and movies, but are also marketed on television and the internet, often in games, which allows young adults to vicariously experience the dangerous environments through which the protagonists have to maneuver without any real physical harm to themselves.

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