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Mother-Daughter Relationships  
in  
Young Adult Dystopian Novels

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Candidate for the degree

Bachelor of Arts

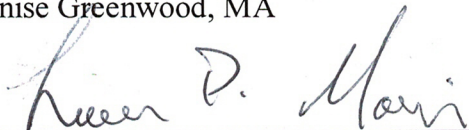
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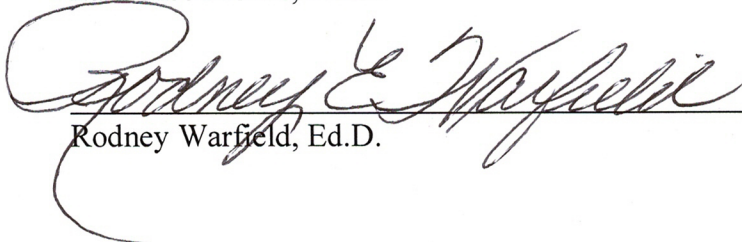
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## **Introduction**

### **Definition of Adolescent/ YA Literature**

Adolescent literature is a specific genre that has been established over time for individuals between childhood and adulthood. Generally, adolescent “books generally are aimed at twelve- to seventeen- year-olds, although some may be enjoyed by precocious younger readers and other were originally written for adults but feature teen-age protagonists and have become popular with that age group” (Weisbard 31). What sets this category apart from traditional novels is the connection to the adolescent’s life. Typically this is the time period of great transition for individuals from child to young adult, thus the fiction represents some of the familiar aspects of this coming of age time period. Weisbard explains, “Both males and females like ‘illustrations in books, adolescent protagonists of their own gender, characters the age of the reader or slightly older, face-paced stories, humorous stories, [and] familiar experiences about teen life’” (32). An important aspect of this type of literature is its ability for the readers to connect themselves with the literature. When they are experiencing troubles within their own lives, they turn to fiction in order to find recognition that they are not alone. The “problem novels” that adolescent fiction consists of help the readers to deal with internal issues and external conflicts like those with the family, society, and peers. Ultimately, it is the connection between the literature and the reader during the rite of passage time period that sets this genre apart.

Since adolescent fiction aims at connecting to the reader, contemporary issues constantly change the genre itself. While in the past adolescent fiction may have been more conservative, due to the natural changes of teenagers in society, the elements of the novels have been altered as well. In order to relate to the reader, “novels incorporated more realism in covering a wide range of topics such as family problems, sexuality, death, alcoholism, drugs, rape, and divorce,” all of

which are contemporary issues that teenagers face in modern society (Scifres 6). Not only have the issues or topics of these novels transformed throughout history, but they have also broadened the use of cultural diversity in order to engage teenagers of all races, classes, and religions to explore the experiences of various ethnicities (Scifres 6). The alterations to the genre have encouraged more individuals to connect with the tales and issues of the modern teenager. Furthermore, to keep the novels accurate to these issues of the modern teenagers, the novels also tend to reflect political and social changes taking place within society; “a significant change has taken place in the treatment of social, racial, and political issues in this literature” (Scifres 7). Collectively, the literature for adolescents changes as the young adults and society in which they thrive transforms.

As in most literature, change is necessary in order to draw interest from the readers, yet some cycles will continue to remain constant, shaping adolescent fiction as the rite of passage novels. Because “Fiction for young adults almost always tells a rite-of-passage story that moves its protagonist from innocence to experience” the reader can relate to the text as he or she begins to experience these changes (Brown and St. Clair 26). Regardless of the material covered, adolescent literature will continue its goal of producing “literature that helps them [adolescents] to understand their own problems, to feel communion with the human race, and to see the world as knowable” (Ellis 94). As a result of connecting with literature, the adolescent is able to realize his or her connection to the world and develop into a member of society knowing that he or she is not alienated by feelings or experiences.

As the need for literature designated for this age group grew, adolescent literature was established to deal with issues ignored in adult and children literature. No literature prior to the 1960s incorporated such raw issues that adolescents faced like sex and the realistic issues of

maturation (Ellis 96). The “Assembly on Literature for Adolescents—NCTE (ALAN) was formed early in the 1970s to focus on adolescent literature as its main concern” as a reaction to this missing area of literature (Ellis 95). Since then, literature has been established to reach the adolescents by discussing the temporary issues, and it continues to transform in order to remain an accurate representation of the teenage population. Throughout the last fifty years, the progress in this area has been immense, not just in content but also in literary merit. Scifres argues, “These novels have advanced in terms of literary merit with the writers relying less on the plot to carry the book” (7). Overall, showing how adolescent fiction has become a significant element of literature by providing adolescents with noteworthy reading to help them socially and academically. Collectively, “The overall concern has been to bring young people and books together. The desired outcomes have included both the enhancement of youngsters’ psycho-social well-being and the leading of young people to an appreciation of literature of high quality” (Ellis 97). Adolescent novels will continue to improve both the development of the teenagers and their appreciation and understanding of literature.

While throughout this paper, the genre will be described as adolescent literature, it is important to note that other titles are commonly used interchangeably such as junior novels and young adult novels (Ellis 96).

### **Defining Dystopian Literature**

In order to understand the nature of dystopias, one first must comprehend the utopia, which was the initial movement. Established in 1516, Thomas More’s book, *Utopia*, presents the ideal of an ideal society that is created from scratch (Greene 2). In order for this society to work, it is envisioned in a new world completely disconnected from the current time. Greene explains,

“they [utopian novels] rarely occupy a present time and real place but, rather, an imaginary past, an invented present in a faraway site, the future, or the world of fantasy” (2). However, this ideal world quickly became corrupted by the government, creating a totalitarian society with a dictatorship. It is understood that an “Utopia is an imaginary island with a perfect social and political system in which everyone is treated fairly. Yet, since this perfect state of government and existence is imaginary, utopia had also come to mean an impossible idealistic projection” (Hintz and Ostry X). It is inevitable that this world will be corrupted because the human nature of wanting power, causing the government to quickly take control. This general idea of a “utopia gone wrong” is what has formulated the idea of a dystopia (Greene 2). Furthermore, “This is where the dystopian factor plays a role, for the pursuit of perfection, the perfect place and society, can also lead to rigid if not totalitarian societies” (Hintz and Ostry XI). Dystopias are unavoidable because perfection fails to exist. Dystopian literature tends to highlight the issues that follow from the totalitarian government, such as “oppressive canons and the suffocation of independent thought,” as well as constant surveillance (Greene 2). A gap is generally forged between the rich and poor through these novels creating rigid class systems. The government within these created societies produces a form of propaganda in order to control the minds of the citizens into conforming to their expectations and void of individuality. As a result, citizens live in constant fear or are dehumanized to believe that the corruption government of the government is acceptable. Through these oppressive ideals of dystopian fiction, the literature acts as “modes of social criticism” by bringing forth the issues within government and society as a whole (Wolfe 437).

The protagonists of dystopian literature stand out due to their disagreement with the expectations of society. Generally, they are able to escape the mind-controlling propaganda that

is produced within the dystopian society and use their intuition in order to attempt to break free from this world. Due to the nature of dystopian government to preach conformity, the protagonist struggles to become an individual, while not be terminated within the society. This becomes the premise for the dystopian novel, to follow the struggle of the protagonist to break free from the oppressive government. Following this story is essential because “These kinds of texts ‘mirror and criticize reality, forcing readers to consider reality, ironically at the same time as they are escaping from it’ ...Such narratives play upon deep, unresolvable fears from ‘reality,’ exaggerating (and sometimes solving) them in fictional scenarios” (Ames 6). Ultimately, dystopian literature allows for readers to use their imagination to criticize their own world while simultaneously escaping from it.

The challenges in dystopian literature are easily confronted in adolescent literature due to the nature of teenagers to feel as though they are being oppressed by society and their parents. Particular dystopian themes specifically connect with individuals experiencing the transition from youth to adult, which makes them more realistic and relatable to the problems these adolescents are facing; “dystopian narratives play well to teenage audiences because they serve as powerful metaphors for their current developmental stage” (Ames 9). Pressures to conform and the struggle to be an individual is experienced during adolescence in modern society, which is heavily reflected in the dystopian government expectations. Furthermore, “teens are now entrenched in the culture of the 24-hour news networks and connected to social media, which constantly expose them to depictions of terror, extremism, and violence” (Ames 8). Thus, the climate created by the modern world of violence helps formulate the “ripe context for these dystopian texts” (Ames 8). While this environment is established for every citizen of modern society, the fact that adolescents are the individuals so deeply enthralled by social media, they



are most significantly affected, not just in the violent content, but also the constant surveillance that it brings. In modern society, “American children are becoming more controlled, every minute of their time measured out in supervised, organized activity, and increasingly influenced by the market and media” (Hintz and Ostry 12). Similar environments can allow teenagers to connect with the literature on a deeper level. As a result of various similarities between the reality of adolescence and the ideology of dystopian literature, it only seems natural that these two components would overlap to form dystopian adolescent fiction. As a result of connecting with the literature, adolescent will be able to learn from these novels how to deal with their own issues; “Young readers, faced with the pressure to conform in their own lives, can learn from these texts not to be ashamed of how they may differ from the norm” (Hintz and Ostry 8). Dystopian adolescent literature creates the accepting environment that helps students deal with issues and accept their maturing self.

As explained in Appendix A, the overall purpose of adolescent literature is to connect to the readers and provide an outlet for young adults to connect with literature. This purpose is furthered in dystopian adolescent literature because “exposure to these types of texts can lead young readers to see inequality in their own communities and countries” (Ames 16). Just as dystopian literature as a whole acts as a social criticism, young adult dystopian literature beckons adolescents to connect themselves enough with the plot in order to acknowledge the social injustices that currently exist in modern society. Ultimately these novels follows along with the loss of innocent that circulates with the great transition from children to young adult by presenting the truths about society attempting to control its citizens; “Dystopian literature thus mingles well with the coming-of-age novel, which features a loss of innocence” (Hintz and Ostry 9). Most of the criticism that are incorporated within this genre has some form of relation to

issues that exist within the modern world, thus the authors are attempting to “spark social change among teens” (Ames 17). Authors of these texts hope to awaken this desire for change in their readers after the young adults realize and understand the injustices that exist in their own reality.

Another aspect of dystopian novels that are specifically important for adolescents is the ability to provide the teenager with the opportunity to break free from society and gain the desired independence. Essentially, “In real life, children and young adults are the most powerless individuals in a citizenry. In children’s literary utopias and dystopias, however, they emerge as powerful, understanding more than their elders, often taking control and doing their best to alter society’s course” (Hintz and Ostry 15). Within most young adult adolescent fiction novels, the protagonist is a teenager, due to its attempt to connect with the teenage audience. Following the criteria of dystopian literature, it is the protagonist that is observant and intelligent enough in order to rebel from the conformity of society. This protagonist now is taking charge, typically defying both the society and his or her parents, giving the adolescent the freedom he or she seeks in reality.

### **Mother-Daughter Relationships**

Over time, the relationships that mothers and daughters share have been observed and studied in order to discover insight about its effect on the development of both females. It is relevant to study this connection because mothers are the primary caregivers out of the parents and as a result “mothers spend more time with their children than fathers, regardless of their job status” (Onayli and Erdur-Baker 167). Generally, mothers have a significant relationship with their children because of this role, so they become responsible for nurturing and preparing their children for life. Ultimately, “mothers are often supposed to be liable for transferring values and

preparing their children as functioning members of society” (Onayli and Erdur-Baker 168). As a result, the mother’s influence on her child, regardless of gender, is increasingly important for the development of the child. Yet the mother’s connection with the daughter is even more significant because “mothers are believed to be the most important role model for their daughters” (Onayli and Erdur-Baker 168). Children learn about the world and the expectations put on them through their relationship with their mothers, and daughters especially learn how they are expected to act within society as a result of their interactions with their mother. Mother’s are the ultimate role model for a daughter, and the connection between the two females greatly affects the development of the child.

Each mother-daughter relationship is different, yet they all impact the development of the daughter in the same way. In order to understand the relationships, first one must comprehend motherhood in its various forms. Essentially, “our culture defines a mother as a woman who bears a child out of her body and/or raises a child or children, a woman who alone performs for those children the social functions of mothering—nurturing, healing, teaching, and serving” (Pildes 2). While the ideals of motherhood over time have changed, the overarching idea of mother remains as a woman who bears or cares for a child to prepare him or her for the reality of life. Yet, the types of mothers can range drastically depending on the life circumstances of the family. This can include, the absent mother, single/ divorced mother, martyr mother, involved mother, and various others. Despite the great variety in motherhood, society has grown to accept a certain role as “mothers of perfection—the ones whose understanding and sympathy never fail, whose only desire in life is that we be happy, and who never make us feel guilty because that is their only reason for existing—mothers as angels—beautiful and soothing presences who have no human needs or flaws” (Pildes 2). This “perfect mother” creates an unrealistic expectation for

mothers to work toward, giving up their own life in order to consistently cater to their children. While this perfect mother ideal does exist, the most commonly accept and dutiful mother is “When mother-daughter relationships were perceived as consistent, mothers usually assumed a traditional role and encouraged daughter’s independence” (Hendrickson et al. 263). Overall, the typical mother-daughter relationship that is sought after is that which provides the traditional structure with mother providing authority but also providing the daughter with an opportunity to find her own autonomy, which is fostered through similar interests and good communication skills.

Just as adolescent fictions replicates real life situations to connect to its characters, it generally attempts to relate to those relationships to those the young adults would have in real life as well. Studies on adolescent fiction novels has shown, “these findings found in the mother-daughter books seem to compare quite well to real life, or reality, as it has been portrayed in the past” (Hendrickson et al. 263). Moreover, it is understood that this important relationship is incorporated into the adolescent fiction novels because of the overall theme of “problem novels” dealing with the young adults transformation from childhood. This time period can be identified as the “launching stage.” Mother-daughter relationships should be most closely examined at this time because “often the ‘launching stage’ provides a setting where the expectations of parents and their young adult children are incompatible,” thus creating tension in the teenagers life when attempting to mature (Bell and Buerkle 384). Being that the mother is supposed to be the role model for the daughter, having tension or disconnect during this time can make it extremely difficult for the young girls. This is the time when a close relationship with a mother would be most important due to the confusion that rises because “she [daughter] lives in a society that both encourages and demands that she increasingly be her own decision make” when she was raised

to rely on her mother (Bell and Buerkle 388). As a result of the contradictory expectations of young women, tension arises both internally for the adolescent and external between herself and her mother.

The true test of both reality and fiction is for the young woman and her mother to find the ideal balance of authoritative compromising mother that allows the relationship to transform. Not only is the young girl attempting to redefine herself, but “the function of the role [daughter] is changing as well” (Bell and Buerkle 388). Finding a common ground to strengthen this relationship will lead to the ideal relationship, which will help the adolescent mature. Not only is the mother-daughter relationship significant because the mother is a role model but also because “the relationship between the mother and the daughter plays a crucial role in a woman’s self-definition” (Onayli and Erdur-Baker 168). By fostering a healthy and understanding relationship between mother and daughter, the daughter is able to develop her own independence and personality. Having this mother figure will allow the daughter to define herself accurately because having a positive mother-daughter relationships were closely related to the indicators of well-being; self-esteem and life satisfaction” (Onayli and Erdur-baker 172). Ultimately, the relationship between a mother and daughter is essential for development, thus it is commonly an important feature in adolescent fiction; whether it captures the ideal mother-daughter bonding or demonstrates what a daughter must do to reach this self-definition when lacking the “perfect mother.”

Adolescent fiction is important because of the connections it allows readers to make with the characters. It helps them to see that they are not alone with their problems. In order to foster this connection with the readers, writers of adolescent fiction need to portray real relationships such as the mother-daughter connection. The importance of the relevant mother-daughter relationship is increasingly significant not only to show the relation to the teenage readers but also in their development of autonomy. The mother daughter relationship is very important in order for the young female to have a positive outlook on life and a strong sense of self. The mother-daughter relationships in the trilogies: *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, and *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver, showcase the protagonists' motivation and self-esteem. While extensively discussed in this paper, short summaries of the trilogies can be found following the paper in the Appendix. The authors convincingly capture the effects of the relationship on the individual, leading the females to become strong and liberated protagonists. Ultimately, none of these novels presents the “ideal” mother-daughter relationship because of the environment in which these relationships were fostered.

Furthermore, that these three trilogies are dystopian novels also emphasizes this inability to portray the perfect mother-daughter relationship. These are not the ideal situations for these connections to be nurtured. Instead, dystopian literature presents the perfect setting for the adolescents to rebel and find liberty, especially over their parents. As explained previously, the mother-daughter relationship is essential in forming a progressive young adult, yet these imperfect mother-daughter connections still allow growth in the protagonist. Despite the fact that none of these novels initially portrays the ideal mother daughter relationship, the female protagonist is still able to emerge as a powerful leader who rebels against the oppressor. The

weak mother-daughter relationships cause a disconnect between the two females and lead the daughters to be blinded to the true strengths the mothers' inevitability possess, in order to survive in their oppressive societies. In the end of the each series, the protagonist has discovered a new appreciation for both herself and for her mother. The reader sees how coming-of-age helps fix this relationship and fosters a better mother-daughter relationship, resulting in the liberated young woman as well. Therefore, the dystopian settings of the young adult trilogies—*The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver, and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth—foster non-ideal mother-daughter relationships, yet, as a result of the corruptive environment and the inner strength not at first apparent, of the maternal figure, the coming-of-age of the daughters allow them to discover the mothers' strength that in turn influences the daughter's strength as the narrative progresses.

As *The Hunger Games* begins, the reader is introduced to fierce and rebellious Katniss Everdeen. As a result of her father's death, she is left with an emotional distraught and "absent" mother who is unable to effectively care for her children. Katniss attempts to see the positives in her mother, yet she is so greatly affected by the lack of a mother figure; "she must have really loved him to leave her home for the Seam. I try to remember that when all I can see is the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest, I'm not the forgiving type" (Collins 8). After falling into her depression following her husband's death, Mrs. Everdeen leaves her eldest daughter feeling as though she must take charge. As a result, "Despite verbally eschewing motherhood, Katniss, nonetheless, becomes a surrogate mother to Mrs. Everdeen and Prim, who might as well be her children since they rely on her for sustenance" (DeaVault 193). She takes on the fatherly role in the absence of Mr. Everdeen and attempts to make up for the lack of

mothering that Mrs. Everdeen is unable to provide. Unfortunately, “She deeply resents Mrs. Everdeen, who after her husband’s death became catatonic with grief while her children slowly starved. This maternal defection has forced Katniss into the role of family protector, and she equates the classical feminine pursuit of romantic love with violence and danger” (DeaVault 193). She carries out this role of the provider by sneaking out to the forbidden areas surrounding District 12 and hunting along side of Gale, in order to provide for their families. With her game, Katniss feeds her family or ventures to the black market to sell in exchange for other goods for the family. Moreover, “She steps into the void left by her father, the former provider, her protective instinct manifesting itself both as protect of others (Prim, Rue) and preservation of the self” (Lem and Hassel 123). Collectively, Katniss’s lack of a father has allowed her take on the role of the protector even if it means putting herself in danger.

Throughout the novel, Katniss reflects on the details of her father’s accident, thus illustrating the importance of this event in the formation of her character. While mother-daughter relationships are essential in an adolescent’s development, Katniss’s lack of connection with her mother has caused her to view motherhood in a derogatory nature. Collins expresses, “I [Katniss] suppose now that my mother was locked in some dark world of sadness, but at the time, all I knew was that I had lost not only a father, but a mother as well. At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was not choice” (27). She initially started with the loss of her parents, yet it impacts her character indefinitely as she continues to protect others in the area, defining herself by her strength and protective nature. Yet, she continues to take on this role, not only to supplement her mother’s lack of provisions, but also to protect her sister and Rue, a young girl competing in the Hunger Games alongside of Katniss. When she takes on this role “she is unemotional (as when she confesses that she initially preferred to drown



the family cat rather than provide for him), and she remains emotionally detached throughout much of the narrative, sometimes exerting emotional control at critical junctures in the plot” (Lem and Hassel122). Being forced into motherhood at a young age without a good role model has caused Katniss’s approach to motherhood to be at times emotionless and disconnected. This can be seen when Katniss takes Prim’s place in the hunger games, leaving the younger sister extremely distraught. Instead of attempting to comfort her, Katniss pushes the hurting child away. When Prim is hysterically begging her sister not to volunteer, Katniss responds, “Prim, let go,” I say harshly, because this is upsetting me and I don’t want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reappings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I’ll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction. ‘Let go!’”(Collins 23). This reveals to the reader that Katniss is not only missing the nurturing link to motherhood, but that she also is a strong and intelligent warrior, always thinking about the next step.

Similarly, Katniss protects Rue in the games by becoming her ally despite the lack of advancement in this decision. Even Rue is aware of her inability to offer much as an ally; this is shown when she questions, “You want me for an ally?” (Collins 200). Demonstrating Katniss’ ability to think strategically and her nurturing side, she responds: “Why not? You saved me with those tracker jackers. You’re smart enough to still be alive” (Collins 200). Her rationale for the protection of Rue, despite her little fighting qualities—she reminds Katniss of Prim, whom she naturally had been protecting at home. After making this alliance, Katniss thinks to herself, “I can almost hear Haymitch groaning as I team up with this wispy child. But I want her, because she’s a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim” (Collins 201). These instances show how “Katniss is not only responsive; she is proactive in her protection of the weak and in her willingness to sacrifice herself” (Eskin 183). She will forever protect those

around her because of her upbringing as a surrogate father and mother within her household.

“While she is at ease in a masculine position as provider, Katniss cannot entirely divest herself of the nurturing feminine role into which society posits her” (DeVault 193). As a result, Katniss continues to struggle between the cold-hearted leader and the sympathetic mother.

After Mr. Everdeen’s death, Mrs. Everdeen’s inability to care for her children caused a strain on her relationship with her daughters, affecting not only Katniss’s role as the provider, but her personality and identity as well. Initially, “The death of her father in a mine explosion is the defining event of Katniss’s life before the Hunger Games. The suffering and deprivations of her youth initially make Katniss a rebel in a brutal, oppressive society” (Hanlon 61).

Demonstrating that before Katniss even got involved in the games, her dystopian society was to blame for this struggle of her character and in her relationship with her mother. It is the oppression from the capital within Panem that fostered this dangerous and impoverished district that has cost Mr. Everdeen his life and caused Katniss to grow cold. There is already emotional strain on the relationships because of the increase in the entire district’s struggle to survive. Not only is the setting credited for Katniss’ development of self but also the rationale for her familial situation, which deprived her of the nurturing relationship that a child needs from her mother.

The lack of communication and common interest with her mother drove Katniss to become void of emotional and unable to foster appropriate relationships with others. Throughout the novel, Katniss’s interactions with others appear to be cold and remote because it appears that she does not know how to officially form these connections. As a result, Katniss demonstrates a mix of the traditional male and female roles. In the novel, “First, we contend that Katniss Everdeen is a female character who balances traditionally masculine qualities such as athleticism, independence, self-sufficiency, and a penchant for violence with traditionally female qualities

such as an idealized physical beauty and vulnerability” (Lem and Hassel 118). Katniss is even aware of this combination of characteristics within herself, which she reveals during a conversation with Cinna, her stylist. She expresses, “My spirit. This is a new thought. I’m not exactly sure what it means, but it suggests I’m a fighter. In a sort of brave way. It’s not as if I’m never friendly. Okay, maybe I don’t go around loving everybody I meet, maybe my smiles are hard to come by, but I do care for some people” (Collins 122). She is able to internalize how others view her to help gather her true beliefs about herself, along with how she portrays herself to others. While others mainly see the hard masculine qualities she portrays, she does have the deep loving qualities inside, but she demonstrates them sparingly, for those who are truly deserving. Ultimately, it is because of her familial relationships that Katniss has adapted to these characteristics.

It is important for adolescent readers to examine and understand the roots of Katniss’s character, so they are able to connect with the conflict of not having appropriate parental figures and learn how to adapt accordingly. Katniss has been able to acclimatize her lifestyle to make up for the lack of parental figures by becoming a paternal and maternal figure to others, while fostering surrogate relationships with others that help her mature. Despite the lack of a relationship with her biological mother, “Relationships are the lifeblood of this novel. From the outset, there are the familial bonds that first bring Katniss to the arena. Rather than send Prim into the Games to kill or be killed, “Katniss volunteers to take her place, showing family loyalty in her action rather than in emotional language, smooth rhetoric not being her style” (Lem and Hassel 125). This shows how Katniss’s personality has been affected, while showing the reader that the absence of maternal figure to guide one in life does not mean that the daughter will experience the same outcome.

Not only does Katniss's experience with her mother teach adolescent readers that a lack of relationship with a mother does not perpetually set them up for the same reality in their future, but the series also demonstrates that it is okay to take only characteristics of the opposite gender. Overall, Collins is reconstructing society's opinion of female and male characteristics and is instead solidifying the idea of being independent and strong, which can be felt and experienced by all. Studies show that "One of the ways that *The Hunger Games* bridges the divide between boys' and girls' culture is Collins's portrayal of a heroine who embodies traditionally masculine characteristics—in her role within her family, in her behavior, and in her adherence to patriarchal expectations regarding masculinity" (Lem and Hassel 121). As a result of her relationship with her mother, Katniss has had a poor role model to display the compassionate and typical gender constrictions of a female. Instead, she retreats to more masculine qualities to make up for the lack there of in her family. Suzanne Collins is able to demonstrate to readers that during this coming-of-age process, teenagers may not fit into the ideal or acceptable roles that society tells them to fill, and that is okay. Instead of being criticized, they are praised; this is seen in how strong and heroic Katniss is portrayed. Collins invites readers who may be dealing with similar issues to imagine themselves in the role of Katniss in order to find their place.

Utilizing a dystopian setting is ideal in order for Collins to refine Katniss' character because it helps generate an environment that becomes a harboring ground for strong young adults as a result of the distrust in society. Dystopian settings provide a more ideal situation for an adolescent to experience an enlightenment about the real world because issues of society are emphasized and familial connections as a result of this appear to be artificial or altered. Basu, Broad, and Hintz further in their article, "this awakening often includes a realization of how ruined the adult world has become: kids learn adults are lying, their parents have problems, the

system can't protect them, they have to take care of themselves, and so on" (Basu et. al 7). In Katniss' situation, her life has been constructed this way, causing her to lose her father, as a result of the corruption in society. The reader learns in the first chapter about Katniss' hunting skills that were presented by her father; "But there's food if you know how to find it. My father knew and he taught me some before he was blown to bits in a mine explosion" (Collins 5). Even through the way Katniss approaches the subject can demonstrate that hardness that Katniss has gathered as a result to protect herself from hurting. Furthermore, this creates a domino effect for Katniss' mother to be negatively affected as well. Before this tragic death, Collins' portrays that, "Katniss's mother, the daughter of an apothecary who left the merchant class to marry a miner, knows folk medicine and uses all kinds of healing methods to treat the sick and wounded who have no doctors" (Hanlon 63). Not only is she knowledgeable and caring in order to take on such a position, but she is also an effective teacher, which is seen through the medical skills that Prim has learned through her mother. Katniss even recounts of this past mother, which seems to be so far gone that even Katniss cannot fathom her own mother in this sense. She ponders, "My mother was very beautiful once, too. Or so they tell me" (Collins 3). Her introduction of her mother's positives is very abrupt, emphasizing that Katniss has a more negative view of her mother.

Although her mother may have once portrayed these strong skills, the corruption of Panem, as a result of the dystopian setting, has led Mrs. Everdeen to disintegrate into an incompetent mother. It is not until Katniss overcompensates for both the provider role of father and protector role of mother, the Mrs. Everdeen is able to slowly rejuvenate herself. Katniss furthers, "Slowly, my mother returned to us. She began to clean and cook and preserve some of the food I brought in for winter. People traded us or paid money for her medical remedies. One day, I heard her singing" (Collins 52). This lack of emotional and supportive connection between

Mrs. Everdeen and Katniss has allowed Katniss to become strong and defensive, and as a result of her increase in authority, Mrs. Everdeen is slowly able to regain her own strength, which is portrayed throughout the novel as she continues to care for hurt victims. Yet, she is never able to completely return to her status as mother, which is portrayed through Prim continuously taking the lead on these medical issues and Katniss not fully accepting her mother's role.

Katniss' rejection of her mother's attempt at authority is demonstrated countless times throughout the novel. Starting in the beginning chapters:

Prim was thrilled to have her back, but I kept watching, waiting for her to disappear on us again. I didn't trust her. And some small snarled place inside me hated her for her weakness, for her neglect for the months she had put us through. Prim forgave her, but I had taken a step back from my mother, put up a wall to protect myself from needing her, and nothing was ever the same between us again. (Collins 53)

This characteristic of Katniss is carried out as Katniss volunteers as tribute. Instead of fearing for her life, Katniss switches over to her authority role by stating procedures that need to take place to keep everything up and running. Then she turned to her mother and coldly states, " 'Listen to me. Are you listening to me?' She nods, alarmed by my intensity. She must know what's coming. 'You can't leave again,' I say" (Collins 35). While Katniss claims that she is not the forgiving type and countlessly attempts to take the authority role, she still demonstrates the weakness and uncertainty of a child. Especially when she is thrust into the capital to begin training for the games. In her solitude, she thinks of her mother; "My fingers stroke the silky braids my mother so carefully arranged. My mother. I left her blue dress and shoes on the floor my train car, never thinking about retrieving them, of trying to hold on to a piece of her, of

home. Now I wish I had” (Collins 63). Although these moments of weakness are few, Collins incorporates these to mimic the natural tendencies of adolescents to want their mothers for guidance, no matter how much they rebel from parental control. Additionally, this reinforces the fact that it is her mother and her experiences at home that created this strong character, thus taking Katniss out of this element causes her to lose a sense of identity. She wishes to be reminded of that life and the power she has to help her as she moves forward into the games. Ultimately, this dystopian setting fosters this deconstructed mother-daughter relationship, which in turn allows Katniss to become independent and powerful.

Conversely, in *Delirium*, the reader is introduced to Lena Halloway, who eagerly awaits her eighteenth birthday because it brings about the procedure that will change her life. In a futuristic version of America, citizens must endure a procedure once turning eighteen that ultimately removes emotions; more specifically love, from their lives. It was discovered long ago that emotions, most likely stirred from love, only brought upon pain to the individual and must be destroyed. Lena explains, “Things weren’t always as good as they are now. In school we learned that in the old days, the dark days, people didn’t realize how deadly a disease love was. For a long time they even viewed it as a good thing, something to be celebrated and pursued. Of course that’s one of the reasons it’s so dangerous: *it affects your mind so that you cannot think clearly, or make rational decisions about your own well-being*” (Oliver 3). Following the traditional dystopian format, the citizens of America are forced to believe that their way of life is the only way, and that divergence from the rules of society would only bring about destruction anyway, so there would be no point in doing so. As a result of society fueling this hatred of love, Lena is disgusted:

I don't like to think I'm still walking around with the disease running through my blood. Sometimes I swear I can feel it writhing in my veins like something spoiled, like sour milk. It makes me feel dirty. It reminds me of children throwing tantrums. It reminds me of resistance, of diseased girls dragging their nails on the pavement, tearing out their hair, their mouth dripping spit. (Oliver 2)

Not only is society fueling this idea of suffering coming from love, but also Lena is simultaneously feeling it from her own familial situation. While waiting for her own procedure, Lena recounts, "My mother had remained uncured despite three separate procedures, and the disease had claimed her, nipped at her insides and turned her eyes hollow and her cheeks pale, had taken control of her feet and led her inch by inch, to the edge of a sandy cliff into the bright, thin air of the plunge beyond" (Oliver 31). Though Lena was merely a child during this event, the hurt and pain rests with her forever. She cannot forget the last words and "the hot pressure of her [mother's] fingers on my face in the nighttime and her last whispered words to me. *I love you. Remember. They cannot take it*" (Oliver 32). Essentially, Lena is brainwashed to believe that this is the only way of life, seeing firsthand how this procedure had driven her own mother mad. She is embarrassed to live in this world with the shame of her mother's suicide, thus she thrusts herself whole-heartedly into the society's belief systems.

Lena is blinded by the social construction of the society and is unable to see what strength her mother possessed, which was purely out of love for her family. While the procedure may provide serenity for individuals seeking love, it creates more harm for those who by human nature need love—like children. Unfortunately, "that's one of the downsides of the procedure; in absence of *deliria nervosa*, some people find parenting distasteful. Thankfully, cases of full-blown detachment—where a mother or father is unable to bond *normally, dutifully*, and



*responsibly* with his or her children, winds up drowning them or sitting on their windpipes or beating them to death when they cry—are few” (Oliver 7). With the loss of love, few parents actually enjoy the gift of a child. Instead of devoting time and love to nurturing a baby, some parents are detached; without their emotions, they find no reason to care for a crying, cranky, and hungry individual. Davis further explains, “In this world, marriage exists as an institution controlled by the Government: people are matched after their procedure and informed of how many children they may have, based on their character and ability” (58). The society imposes roles upon individuals who may not exactly desire to be married or have children, creating these harmful situations. Instead of getting involved in a family because of the emotion, people are merely just functioning as a part of an oppressive society. Lena essentially views her mother negatively for her rebellion against the procedure in order to keep her emotions intact, but she does not yet understand the why behind it because this society fosters detached relationships, where parents do not even show their children love and compassion.

In place of her mother, Lena has been put under the care of her Aunt Carol. Despite the fact that the void of emotion causes some parents to be completely disconnected from their children, Carol is still able to take on the role of provider. It is clear through her interactions with Lena that is more of a guide and less of a nurturing. Oliver expresses Carol’s concern with getting Lena started off right in the future when it comes to the procedure and other evaluations. Lena recounts the interaction with her aunt, “She smiles, just barely, a brief, flitting thing. ‘Don’t worry. You’ll be fine. Take a shower and then I’ll help you with your hair. We can review your answers on the way” (Oliver 9). While a smile is apparent, she is more focused on the task at hand than how Lena will feel or nurturing her to believe that even a poor score will suit Lena well. As the walk to the evaluation commences, Aunt Carol continues to hound Lena with the

details of the procedure emphasizing its importance and showing submission to the society in which they thrive; “‘Remember,’ she is saying for the thousandth time, ‘they want to know about your personality, yes, but the more generalized your answers the better chance you have of being considered for a variety of positions.’ My aunt has always talked about marriage with words straight out of *The Book of Shhh*, words like *duty, responsibility, and perseverance*” (Oliver 14). Lena’s observation of her aunt’s actions shows how reliant she is on *The Book of Shhh*, which is the Government’s official publication (The Safety, Health, and Happiness Handbook). Not only do her words resemble the society but her attitudes and actions as well. In response to her younger niece’s question, “‘Don’t be stupid,’ my aunt says, but without irritation. ‘You know she can’t marry until she’s cured’” (Oliver 11). She is able to display meaning in her response but does not include any emotion, making responses feel a bit unauthentic. Other reactions throughout the novel display her lack of human qualities. Such as when, Oliver expresses, “‘Okay.’ Carol stands there, kind of awkwardly, like she does when she wants to say something meaningful but can’t quite remember how to do it” (18). Furthermore, Carol demonstrates committedly what it is to be a member of this society, thus she, as a surrogate mother, influences Lena’s beliefs that the way the society is run is accurate and beneficial to all.

In a world that provides parents who lack nurturing aspects, the children are forced to feel everything without having an understanding of how to do so. This causes Lena to constantly be afraid and revolted by the disease that lurks in her blood. What Lena is initially unaware of, however, is that she is already demonstrating bits and pieces of the *amor deliria nervosa*. She develops a sense of nurture and care toward her younger cousin, Grace. She can already connect with Grace on a deeper level of pain because they both are left as orphans under the care of Aunt Carol. Oliver explains, “‘Marcia, Grace’s mother, is dead now. She always said she never wanted

children in the first place” (7). Both left alone, but for different reasons: Lena torn from her mother as a result of too much love, and Grace abandoned by her mother as a result of no love at all. This strength of Lena’s mother to endure love can be seen slightly in Lena at the onset of the novel when she cares for Grace, causing her to be a surrogate mother to the young girl. During the first morning of the novel, Lena wakes to Grace gnawing at an orange, peel and all. Lena first unpeels the orange, but Grace still silently stares, unsure of what to do. So Lena continues to assist her: “I nudge her. ‘Go ahead. Eat now.’ She just stares at it and I sigh and begin separating the sections for her, one by one. As I do I whisper, as gently as possible, ‘you know, the others would be nicer to you if you would speak once in a while’” (Oliver 6). Despite the fact that Grace is socially and perhaps mentally malfunctioning, Lena has the compassion to care for her, unlike Grace’s own sister, Jenny. Lena demonstrates qualities of love early on; she even is able to feel pity for her younger cousin, something that adults can no longer do.

Unlike Katniss, who has been strong since she was first introduced to the reader, Lena, on the other hand, is only able to gain this sense of authority when she herself is pulled into rebellion by a love interest—Alex. As the novel opens, Lena presents herself as a nervous and feeble character, slowly emerging as an adult. She thinks to herself, “I’d been terrified of the streets of Portland then, and reluctant to leave my aunt’s side” (Oliver 14). She is very excited for the procedure but also fears that her results will not be accurate for a happy lifestyle. Not only does her performance in school determine where Lena will be headed in the next in terms of occupation or college, but also who will be chosen as her mate, ultimately structuring her future lifestyle. Lena commonly compares herself to her best friend Hannah, “I’m not ugly, but I’m not pretty, either. Everything is in-between. I have eyes that aren’t green or brown, but a muddle. I’m not thin, but I’m not fat either. The only thing you could definitely say about me is this: I’m

short” (Oliver 15). Resembling the typical American teenage girl of the modern times, Lena is hyperaware of her flaws and constantly deems herself unacceptable. The dystopian setting also creates a way to remove this worry, because without emotions, individuals will not care if their beauty does not match those who surround them. Despite her insecurities, Lena is able to catch the eye of a young boy, Alex. They meet during a bike ride past a forbidden area for authorized personnel only. He introduces himself, “‘Alex. Nice to meet you.’ Alex keeps his eyes on me as he and Hannah shake hands. Then he extends a hand to me. ‘Lena,’ he says thoughtfully. ‘I’ve never heard that name before” (Oliver 61). This initial meeting is enough to awaken the love within her that she had cast away. She expresses, “Besides, I’ve never actually touched skin-to-skin with a stranger. But he’s just standing there with his hand out, so after a second I reach out and shake. The moment we touch, a tiny electrical shock buzzes through me, and I pull away quickly” (Oliver 61). This moment is the initial turning point in Lena’s personality. She is still terrified by love, but she has gotten a taste of the *amor deliria nervosa*.

As the novel progresses, Lena’s emotions grow stronger and begin to emerge, demonstrating her rebellious nature; however, the ultimate revolt comes when Lena discovers that Alex is not just an ordinary boy but also an Invalid. Now the cautionary tale that has been taught to individuals in school to scar them out of love, *Romeo and Juliet*, has been brought to life as Lena must face not only the issue of love, but forbidden love with “Alex, an invalid who works underground in the city to subvert the Government’s policies” (Davis 59). Through her secret interaction with him, Lena is able to bring her insecurities about her “tainted blood” to the forefront and question if maybe her mother was right all along. Davis furthers, “When Lena begins to believe Alex and suspect that the cure might actually be a means to control the population, she starts to question everything she has been taught” (59). Now, the days counting

down to the procedure, which she could not wait to get through, seem like they are slipping by too fast. Alex's influence and Lena's curiosity lead her to the ultimate rebellion, approaching the wall to "resist the procedure and escape to the Wilds" (Davis 59). By the end of the novel, she is able to break free from this society which she now realizes is oppressing her. This realization comes only when she notices that the policies and procedures instated by the government are only ways to control the citizens. She realizes, "They say the cure is about happiness, but I understand now that it isn't, and it never was. It's about fear: fear of pain, fear of hurt, fear, fear, fear—a blind animal existences, bumping between walls, shuffling between ever-narrowing hallways, terrified and dull and stupid" (Oliver 383).

Although Lena is driven to this realization on her own, the illness has been in her "tainted" blood from the beginning because of her own mother. Likewise, it is the influence of her mother that pushes her to make the final decision to retreat to the Wilds. This comes when Lena realizes that her mother might actually be alive. Using his Invalid connections, Alex is able to figure out the truth about her mother and bring Lena to the Crypts, a dungeon-like jail that holds the traitors. Lena gets her hopes up believing that her mother would be trapped inside but instead of finding her, she is staring into an empty cells: "And, ultimately, the word that helped her escape. In the lower half of one wall, she has traced the word so many times in such enormous script—LOVE, each letter the size of a child—and gouged so deeply into the stone that the O had formed a tunnel, and she has gotten out" (Oliver 369). Immediately, Lena is reminded of love **and** the government's belief that the disease will drive some insane. This has caused her mother to be locked away, but like her mother had reminded Lena, no one can take the love away. She was able to escape the oppression because of her reliance on emotion. Davis explains that "the expression and circulation of emotion [is] a catalyst for social change" (52).

The emotion drives Mrs. Halloway to feel so deeply, thus she cannot stand being a part of society that forces her to believe otherwise and so she escapes.

The truth about her mother causes Lena to rethink her entire life, she begins to question things more than ever before. The knowledge is overwhelming to Lena; “even now, this second, my mother is out there somewhere—moving, breathing, being” (388). Here the author is effectively able to capture the pain in which the government is attempting to rid of. Lena describes the hurting that she feels as a result of her mother’s abandonment:

Lost and found and lost again, all at once. And now I know somewhere in this world, in the wildness on the other side of the fence, my mother is alive and breathing and sweating and moving and thinking. I wonder if she is thinking about me, and the pain shoot deeper, makes me lose my breath completely so I have to stop walking and double up, one hand on my stomach.” (Oliver 371)

The great impact that Mrs. Halloway has had on her daughter’s development is evident as Lena expresses the great turmoil she feels upon learning the truth. Before, knowing about her mother’s decision to remain uncured scared the young girl. Now after knowing that “*She’s out there somewhere, breathing, thirsty, eating, walking, swimming*. Impossible, now, to contemplate going on with [her] life...” (Oliver 373). Lena’s transformation has come full circle now that she is able to realize the strength that her mother has provided her with from the very beginning with her final words, “I love you. Remember. They cannot take it” (Oliver 441). Although Lena does not find her mother by the end of *Delirium*, the first book of the trilogy, gaining this insight has pushed Lena even further toward finding her own role within society. Now, her “power lies, on the one hand, in their [her] personal agency, obtained by being able to make choice about what they [she] desire and, on the other, in their perception of the Government’s strategy for political

control” (Davis 60). Furthermore, the reader is able to visualize how even an absent mother can spark such a monumental shift toward autonomy for a young girl.

Another maternal characteristic is the desire to hide information from the daughter in attempt to protect the innocence of the child. This mother-daughter relationship can be seen in *Divergent* with Beatrice and her mother. Unlike the other two novels, Mrs. Prior is neither mentally or physically absent, but she instead withholds information from her daughter, making their relationship strained. This is a reflection of the faction in which the Priors live: Abnegation. Within this futuristic America, the dystopian setting leads individuals to choose their factions by a particular ideal that they believe is the key to living in harmony. Furthermore, “Each faction is responsible for a specific function: the government is run by Abnegation (the selfless); the law by Candor (the honest); education and invention by Erudite (the intelligent); caretaking and social services by Amity (the kind); and defense and security by Dauntless (the brave)” (Basu 23). In Abnegation, the focus is on selflessness; while this may appear to the reader to be the perfect setting for a devoted mother, it is the opposite because this is also the most reserved faction that seldom shows affection.

The author includes nuances from the beginning of the novel to demonstrate the standoffish nature of the faction, especially the Prior family. Beatrice recounts on the first page while her mother is cutting her hair, “When she [my mother] finishes, she pulls my hair away from my face and twists it into a knot. I note how calm she looks and how focused she is. She is well-practiced in the art of losing herself. I can’t say the same myself” (Roth 1). It is clear from very early on that Beatrice believes she is not like her mother. Beatrice thinks her mother can fully exhibit the characteristics of an Abnegation member, whereas Beatrice constantly finds her mind wondering, unable to lose herself in selflessness. Furthermore, in this same encounter, the

reader can see that there is not a negative relationship between the two, like with Katniss or Lena, but instead, there is just a simple disconnect or inability to really know one another. Roth writes, “She kisses my cheek and slides the panel over the mirror. I think my mother could be beautiful, in a different world. Her body is thin beneath the gray robe. She has high cheekbones and long eyelashes, and when she lets her hair down at night, it hangs in waves over her shoulders. But she must hide that beauty in Abnegation” (Roth 2-3). Thus it is shown that Mrs. Prior is able to show affection and care for her daughter, especially by carrying out the practices of Abnegation like trimming the hair, but it is also demonstrated here that Beatrice seems to admire her mother and is curious about what she could have been without Abnegation, foreshadowing her future discovery.

Unlike the other two protagonists, Beatrice is retrospective and realizes she does not fit in, but this revelation confuses her, as she is not strong in her personality. She understands from the very beginning of the novel that she does not exactly fit into the faction in which she was raised; yet she does not find herself fitting in with any of the other factions either. This confusion at the onset foreshadows that Beatrice is different and intelligent for being able to see that the way of life incorporating factions is not the most beneficial. When the time comes for the aptitude test, Beatrice encounters various results that “perplex” the administrator. As Tori, the test administrator leaves to figure out the “inconclusive results,” Beatrice fears the idea of being factionless as a result of not getting a score (Roth 19-20). In those moments of fear, Beatrice remembers her mother’s words: “My mother told me once that we can’t survive alone, but even if we could, we wouldn’t want to. Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live” (Roth 20). This incident evidences both the fear Beatrice feels and the influence her mother has



exerted on Beatrice's life. Although they do not demonstrate an extremely close or open relationship, Beatrice still takes her mother's words to heart.

To Beatrice's surprise, the news she ultimately receives as a result of the aptitude test proves her originally thinking that she does not fit in. After the test, Tori expresses, "you display equal aptitude for Abnegation, Dauntless, and Erudite. People who get this kind of result are..." She looks over her shoulder like she expects someone to appear behind her. "...are called...Divergent." She says the last word so quietly that I almost don't hear it, and her tense, worried look returns. She walks around the side of the chair and leans in close to me" (Roth 22). As a result of the test, Tori is able to explain to Beatrice, all of the factions in which she belongs, but learning that she is divergent does not bring Beatrice peace of mind either, especially with the tone of voice Tori presents this information; "however, the threats to her safety concern her less than the uncertainty about her identity, which she expected the aptitude test to end. She is disappointed because she doesn't want to choose a faction herself; instead, she wants the choice to have been made for her by the aptitude test, so she can finally know who she is and where she belongs" (Basu 24). This emotion expressed by Beatrice is very authentic to the teen reader, by showing the desire to fit in. At this age, "it is evident that group membership—successfully fitting into a community—is the most desirable thing in the world to Beatrice, and her divergence also worries her because she is afraid it will make her incompatible with the faction of her choice" (Basu 24). From this point forward, Beatrice must hide the truth about herself, which she is not entirely sure of yet.

As the selection process gets closer, Beatrice is aware that she has a big choice in front of her: to be her own person or to rely on the choice of her family. To add to the uncertainty, she describes, "My mother hugs me, and what little resolve I have left almost breaks. I clench my

jaw and stare up at the ceiling, where globe lanterns hang and fill the room with blue light. She holds me for what feels like a long time, even after I let my hands fall. Before she pulls away, she turns her head and whispers in my ear, 'I love you. No matter what' (Roth 41). Beatrice's last interaction before her selection demonstrates her mother's intuitiveness that was not at first apparent to Beatrice. Previously, she believed that her mother wished for her to live a life in Abnegation with the rest of the family, yet this remark puzzles Beatrice, revealing to her that Mrs. Prior knows a different choice is about to be made. This is furthered when Beatrice makes her selection and notices the reaction of her mother...she is smiling (Roth 49). Beatrice is confused by this response, but she does not internalize the event, but instead travels on to her new faction: Dauntless.

Although the idea of being Divergent leaves Beatrice nervous about her place within society, choosing a new faction allows her to reinvent herself as the person she truly wants to be. This is a desire that most adolescents readers can relate to. Once she had jumped from the building, beginning the initiation process into Dauntless, she is able to capture this new persona with a different name. When asked her names, she responds, "'Um...' I don't know why I hesitate. But 'Beatrice' just doesn't sound right anymore....A new place, a new name. I can be remade here. 'Tris,' I say firmly." (Roth 60). Slowly Beatrice reveals the inner strength she has had all along: first by choosing Dauntless, second by being the first to jump, and third by shedding her Abnegation past; all of which will continue as her initiation process progresses. Beatrice continuously reminds the adolescent readers that they can be strong; they may have to work hard but they will amount to what they put their mind to, like Beatrice making her way to the top of the rankings.

Despite Beatrice's strong desire to make a new name for herself, she continuously is referring back to her mother and other experiences of being a part of Abnegation. This demonstrates how influential a mother can be on a daughter, even if the initial relationship did not appear to be so significant. When Tris trains vigorously and thinks negatively of her components, she considers "If my mother knew what I was thinking, I know what face she would give me. The corners of her mouth turned down. Her eyebrows set low over her eyes—not scowling, almost tired. I drag the heel of my hand over my cheeks" (Roth 74). In this new setting, the behavior Tris is exhibiting is essential to be successful. Yet, because she was raised with the Abnegation protocol ingrained in her head, she is constantly reminded of the past she has left behind. Now she must make a conscious effort to rid of this maternal influence that is no longer needed in Dauntless: "I push my family from my mind, set my feet shoulder-width apart, and delicately wrap both hands around the handle of the gun" (Roth 78). It is only when Tris is able to separate the "new" her from the "old" Beatrice, that she becomes aware of her true self. The following example demonstrates her constant reference to the past, but also emphasizes the demeanor of the new Tris when she is able to fulfill this separation; "My mother and father would not approve of my kicking someone when she's down. I don't care" (Roth 173). Furthermore, Christina helps Tris reach this realization by breaking Tris out from her conservative and reserved dress. Afterwards, Tris claims, "Looking at myself now isn't like seeing myself for the first time; it's like seeing someone else for the first time. Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine and don't realize me; this is Tris" (Roth 87).

While transforming into a true Dauntless, Tris constantly believes that she is disappointing her mother; however, their interaction during parent's day reveals that this is not

the case. At first, Tris acknowledges how out of place her mother is at the Dauntless compound, furthering her belief that her mother does not approve of this lifestyle; “Then I see her. My mother stands alone near the railing with her hands clasped in front of her. She has never looked more out of place, with her gray slacks and gray jacket buttoned at the throat, her hair in its simple twist and her face placid. I start toward her, tears jumping into my eyes. She came. She came for me” (Roth 178). With the supposed displeasure aside, Tris is overcome with happiness upon seeing that her mother came to visit, demonstrating the importance of this connection, even with them in separate factions. Mrs. Prior herself also exhibits this happiness, but is more reserved in the display, thus staying true to the Abnegation faction. When the pair runs into Four, Mrs. Prior reveals her satisfaction in hearing about Beatrice’s success. She states,

“‘That’s good to hear,’ she says. ‘I know a few things about Dauntless initiation and I was worried about her’” (Roth 181). In little nuances like that in the example above, Natalie Prior is slowly revealing to her daughter that she is not the reserved Abnegation mother that she is believed to be. This begins to become clear to Tris as she notices her mother’s familiarity with the compound: “Mom,” I say. “Mom, how do you know where you’re going?” (Roth 185). Continuing with the secretive nature, Natalie Prior does not reveal any details about herself but instead keeps the conversation focused on Tris. With only a few moments alone, Natalie is able to subliminally tell Tris the truth, while reminding her daughter that she loves her and wants her to succeed. On her way out, Natalie states, “Have a piece of cake for me, all right? The chocolate. It’s delicious” She smiles a strange, twisted smile, and adds, “I love you, you know” (Roth 188). With this, Roth is revealing that Mrs. Prior must have been here before to know about the cake, especially since this delicacy was unheard of in the Abnegation faction. Tris is finally able to piece it all together as her mother departs: “She has been to the compound before.

She remembered this hallway. She knows about the initiation process. My mother was Dauntless” (Roth 188).

Not only does this short interaction reveal that Mrs. Prior was once a Dauntless, but it also exposes to Tris that her mother is more aware of the idea of divergence. While in the secluded hallway, Mrs. Prior exclaims, “‘Good.’ She nods. ‘No one looks too closely at the bottom. Now, this is very important, Beatrice: What were your aptitude test results?’” (Roth 186). Although Beatrice remembers the warning from Tori, her connection with her mother is much more important to her; she believes she can trust her mother. She responds by telling her mother the results were inconclusive. Natalie replies, “‘I thought as much.’ She signs. ‘Many children who are raised Abnegation receive that kind of result. We don’t know why. But you have to be very careful during the next stage of initiation, Beatrice. Stay in the middle of the pack, no matter what you do. Don’t draw attention to yourself. Do you understand?’” (Roth 186-7). Her response does not reveal that Natalie knows what a Divergent person is or that her daughter is divergent. Roth words it in a way to emphasize the secretive nature of Mrs. Prior, demonstrating the common motherly characteristic of attempting to protect one’s child. This is advanced when Beatrice attempts to admit to her mother that she is Divergent. In response, Natalie snaps, “‘Don’t say that word,’ she hisses. ‘Ever’” (Roth 187). Ultimately demonstrating the danger that it would put Beatrice in to be revealed as a Divergent. Beatrice is not left with much information about her own situation or her mother’s past, yet she is reassured of the love that her mother has for her. As she is leaving, Natalie expresses, “‘I don’t care what faction you chose,’ she says, touching her hands to my cheeks ‘I am your mother and I want to keep you safe’” (Roth 187). The love and compassion Mrs. Prior has always had for her daughter can now

be revealed because the two are out of their Abnegation setting and are hidden from the rest of the Dauntless faction, thus the true characters can be exposed.

As the novel progresses and Beatrice gets involved with the uprising against Erudite, she finds herself in harms way. The strength she has gained throughout her training as a Dauntless is no match when she is out numbered. Just when she is about to give up, Tris realizes a familiar face. She recounts, “She pulls my arm across her shoulders and hauls me to my feet. She is dressed like my mother and she looks like my mother, but she is holding a gun, and the determined look in her eyes is unfamiliar to me” (Roth 439). It may be the combination of her weakness from fighting or the shock of actually seeing her mother in this way, but Tris cannot fathom the idea of her mother being a warrior. She describes her mother further, “She wears a sleeveless shirt. When she lifts her arm, I see the corner of a tattoo under her armpit. No wonder she never changed clothes in front of me. ‘Mom,’ I say, my voice strained. ‘You were Dauntless’” (Roth 439). Finally having the opportunity, Beatrice questions her mother on her past, to finally get the answers that have been hidden from her for sixteen years. In response Mrs. Prior states, ‘Yes,’ she says smiling. She makes her jacket into a sling for my arm, tying the sleeves around my neck” (Roth 439-40). Both her response and her actions demonstrate Mrs. Prior’s abilities as a result of her past in Dauntless. Beatrice is stunned at this realization. She thinks to herself, “I stare at her. I sat next to her at the kitchen table, twice a day, for sixteen years, and never once did I consider the possibility that she could have been anything but Abnegation-born. How well did I actually know my mother” (Roth 440). Not only was Beatrice unaware of her mother’s past, but she also was unobservant of her mother’s abilities, which make her closer to Beatrice than the young girl could have ever imagined.

Beatrice is finally able to reach out to her mother for answers, and after hearing about Mrs. Prior's past in Dauntless, Beatrice presses further. She questions her mother's knowledge about divergence. To her daughter's surprise, she responds, "'I know about them because I am one,' she says as she shoves a bullet in place. 'I was only safe before my mother was a Dauntless leader. On choosing Day, she told me to leave my faction and find a safe one. I chose Abnegation.' She put an extra bullet in her pocket and stands up straighter. 'But I wanted you to make the choice on your own'" (Roth 441). The strength that had been deep within Beatrice all along is a result of the influence of her mother—they both are Divergent. However, it is a result of this oppressive society that this information was kept a secret. Not only does the dystopian setting separate the individuals into factions, but it fears those who stray from the path—the Divergent. Thus, Mrs. Prior was forced to appear weak and disconnected from her daughter due to her role in the Abnegation faction. She chose this way of life at first to protect herself. After raising her daughter, Natalie became aware of Tris' abilities and tries her best to protect her as well. Her advice provided on parent's day "to stay in the middle of the pack" was out of caution for Tris. Mrs. Prior does not reveal too much to her daughter out of the instinct to protect her. In any other environment, the pair would have been closer and more connected upon realizing their common abilities.

Not only does Mrs. Prior have the strength her daughter possesses, but also the knowledge, which sets her aside from most parents in these types of novels. She reveals toward the end of the novel: "'You're my daughter. I don't care about the factions.' She shakes her head. 'Look where they got us. Human beings as a whole cannot be good for long before the bad creeps back in and poisons us again'" (Roth 442). Thus, she is able to acknowledge that her love for her family trumps the society and their belief in "faction before blood." These ideals are also

embedded into Tris' mind, which can be seen through the many references to her family, despite being in a new faction. Basu furthers, "This is amplified a few pages later when Tris's mother (naturally also secretly divergent) presents the novel's ostensible message in her description of the condition, demonstrating that this relationship and the mindset of both females presents the overall message of Roth that criticizes the entire system" (25). The true emphasis on the importance of the mother is expressed later in this scene when Natalie saves her daughter by taking a bullet to her abdomen. Although in the middle of fighting, Beatrice reacts to her mother in so much distress that she is unsure if she can go on. However, "My blood cries out that is belongs to her, and struggles to return to her, and I hear her words in my mind as I run, telling me to be brave" (Roth 444). The words and the mentality that Natalie Prior has instilled within her daughter push Beatrice forward. Even after her death, Mrs. Prior leaves a lasting impression on Tris that will motivate her to be the strong and intelligent young woman that she is, exemplifying the importance of this connection.

Ultimately, the young adult dystopian novels present an oppressive world that is familiar to the adolescent readers. Despite the fact that these settings may appear unrealistic, given the oppressive governments, the adolescents are able to connect with the protagonists due to the aspects of everyday life that are included within the novel, such as relationships and the search for autonomy. The authors present one of the most important connections, mother-daughter relationships, in a realistic way: absent mother or lack of connection with mother, so that the young adult audience can visualize themselves as the protagonist in the novel. Finding commonalities to the protagonist will allow the reader to see that a feeble mother or a weak relationship with mother does not mean that the daughter is fated for failure. The authors even portray that these seemingly fragile maternal figures, all possess some inner strength as a result



of enduring the oppressive societies themselves, demonstrating that the mothers are actually fiercer than they appear, which in turn establishes this strength in the daughters. The female protagonists within these trilogies—Katniss Everdeen, Lena Halloway, and Beatrice Prior—all emerge as successful, strong, independent, and intelligent women who are able to choose for themselves by the end of the plots. Collectively, these stories exhibit universal truths about the development of young girls, which can help the adolescent readers to strive for their full potential, even if the strong connection with their mother is less evident or they lack an influential female figure in their lives.

## Appendix: Brief Overview of Novels

*The Hunger Games* was written by Suzanne Collins and published in 2007. This novel takes place in what can be understood as America in the far future. The characters live in the area of Panem, which is divided in 12 districts. The lower the number of the district, the more wealthy the citizens and absurd are the styles. The center of Panem is the Capital from where President Snow dictates all of the districts. Each year two adolescents are selected from each district, one boy and one girl, to represent their home in a battle for the death “game” inside of an arena that is televised for the entire population to witness. This game has been taking place for seventy-four years when the novel begins and is said to represent sacrifice and loyalty to Panem after the revolt of District 13, which is no longer in existence.

The protagonist of this novel, Katniss Everdeen, is a young female who resides in district 12. She lives in a rundown home with her mother and younger sister, Primrose. Katniss’s father had perished in a coal mining accident, leaving her mother dysfunctional and Katniss as the head of the family. She is a very strong and abrasive character from the very beginning of the novel, and she breaks the law to hunt in order to make money for her family. Typically, she ventures off into the forbidden areas of the forest to hunt alongside of her long-time friend and romantic interest, Gale.

The story begins when Katniss’s younger sister is selected for the 74<sup>th</sup> annual hunger games, and Katniss, as a result, volunteers as the female tribute from District 12 to serve in her younger sister’s place. Katniss must appear likeable to the population in order to gain sponsors that will send her goods during her time in battle. She must attempt to save herself during this battle as well as her fellow district 12 tribute, Peeta Mellark, who becomes another love interest for Katniss (Collins).

Divergent, written in 2011, by Veronica Roth details a futuristic world in which America is divided into factions. The five factions are built on an ideal: truth (Candor), peace (Amity), knowledge (Erudite), selflessness (Abnegation), and bravery (Dauntless). The people that live within these factions acknowledge this archetype as the most important to embody. An individual is born into a particular faction and continues to live there and fit into the ideals for the first sixteen years of his or her life. When the adolescents are in their sixteenth year, there is a choosing ceremony, which takes place for the entire population to come and witness. Individuals come forth, prick their hands with a knife and dribble a droplet of blood into the bowl of the faction of their choice. This follows the city's motto "Faction before Blood," the transfer of blood shows the individual's new connection to the faction instead of his or her family. The sixteen-year-old now will leave his or her family behind and go to the new faction in order to begin living in their way of life.

The protagonist of the novel, Beatrice Prior, was born into the Abnegation faction. Although she was raised for sixteen years trying to fit into this lifestyle, she believes that she is not good enough to be in Abnegation because her efforts at being selfless are too forced. She feels very pressed about her decision, unsure of where she truly belongs. Before the selection process, all of the individuals go through an aptitude test in which they have tasks that reveal which faction best suits his or her personality and decision making processes. After taking this test, Beatrice learns from her test proctor, Tori, that she is labeled as Divergent because she fits the personality of multiple factions. This is considered dangerous, and Tori insists that Beatrice keep this information to herself, hurry home, and Tori will forge the results to make sure no flags are raised concerning Beatrice.

Beatrice struggles with the decision of what faction to choose, but ultimately surprises everyone by choosing the Dauntless faction. She leaves the world she has always known behind and immediately begins training for the fierce competition for spots in the Dauntless faction. This being the only faction that requires a competition, leaving the bottom individuals to become factionless. The factionless are the individuals who rebelled against the system or that have been forced out of their current faction. They are not provided with food or shelter, while the Abnegation faction typically volunteers to help.

During the training process, Beatrice takes on a new persona as Tris, the Dauntless tribute. One of her trainers, Tobias Eaton (Four), becomes a love interest as he notices how different Tris is. Throughout the novel, these two grow closer and eventually develop feelings for one another. Tris later learns that Tobias is Divergent as well. The story follows her journey toward becoming a Dauntless and learning the truth of the city and its government powers (Roth).

Lauren Oliver wrote the novel, *Delirium*, in 2011. This novel takes place in a futuristic version of the United States in the year 2091 in which an individual has to receive a surgical cure in their 18<sup>th</sup> year to remove their emotions. The government in this civilization preaches that love, known as amor deliria nervosa, is a disease that drives people insane. The ancestors of this civilization decided that amor deliria nervosa should be outlawed and that individuals would undergo far less suffering without the emotion. Along with this procedure comes a test. When individuals take this test, they are selected for a particular career, mate, and number of children. After the procedure has occurred, people are referred to as “cured” and a small crescent shaped scar behind their ear differentiates them. While there is compliance among the citizen, government officials exist that keep order and control in a totalitarian nature. Members who

refuse the cure typically slip free of these officials and escape to the “wilds.” The forest is heavily guarded to ensure that no citizens get out, or that the uncured “invalids” do not come into the city.

The story follows, Lena Halloway, who is coming about the age of her procedure. She is a quiet and dull girl who anxiously awaits to be cured. This is because both the government and the life choices of her mother have convinced her that love is dangerous and should be removed from each person’s system. An aunt is raising Lena after her mother apparently committed suicide because she refused the procedure and faked being cured until love drove her mad. This is all until a few months prior to receiving the cure that Lena meets Alex who is an invalid secretly living in the city. Along with the rebellious nature of her best friend Hannah, Lena confidence in the cure begins to waver as she finds herself having feelings for Alex. As the two begin to get closer and share more personal stories, Alex reveals to Lena that he believes her mother is still alive and that he can find her. The combined efforts of Hannah’s disbelief in the cure, the love for Alex, and the chance to finally reunite with her mother causes Lena to begin plotting to leave the world she has always known behind (Oliver).

The protagonists in each of the novels described above have their rite-of-passage story completed by the third novel, making each character’s transformation a trilogy. The stories do tend to continue further in other works. For example, in *Divergent*, a fourth novel entitled *Four* exists that describes the life of the male lead character, Tobias and his beginning before the trilogy. In the *Delirium* series, many novellas exist to continue the story of other relevant characters in the novel. Similarly *The Selection*, includes novellas and continues the story of the next generation, thus creating another rite-of-passage story.

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