

Dystopia in Young Adult Fiction.

Identity, relationships and social growth in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogies.

Marianne Seppänen

University of Tampere

Faculty of Communication Sciences

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Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia nuoren kehitykselle tyypillisiä teemoja dystopisessa nuortenkirjallisuudessa. Tutkimuksen aineistona on kaksi nuorten dystopista trilogiaa, Suzanne Collinsin *The Hunger Games* ja Veronica Rothin *Divergent*. Kyseiset trilogiat on valittu, koska molempien tapahtumapaikkana on dystopialle tyypillinen yhteiskunta, joka sortaa kansalaisiaan ja jossa väkivalta ja kuolema ovat yleisiä. Lisäksi molempien trilogioiden päähenkilö on nuori, jolla on edessään itsenäistyminen ja oman elämän ja identiteetin rakentaminen, jotka jatkuvat läpi trilogian.

Tutkimuksen teoriana on käytetty sekä kasvatuspsykologiaa että kirjallisuusteoriaa. Kasvatuspsykologisista teorioista hyödynnetään niitä, jotka kuvaavat nuoren kasvamista aikuiseksi ja hänen kohtaamiaan muutoksia ja haasteita. Myös Erik Eriksonin teoria eri kehityksen vaiheista nostetaan esille, jotta saadaan yhtenäinen kuva nuoruuden piirteistä. Kirjallisuuden puolelta käsitellään nuortenkirjallisuuden ja dystopian yleisimpiä teemoja sekä sitä, miten dystopiaa on ennen käytetty nuortenkirjallisuudessa.

Tutkimukseen valitut teemat ovat päähenkilöiden identiteetin rakentuminen, ihmissuhteiden muotoutuminen ja yhteiskuntaan sopeutuminen, ja näitä tarkastellaan dystopiselle kirjallisuudelle ominaisia piirteitä vasten. Hypoteesi on, että dystopisen yhteiskunnan ongelmat muistuttavat nuoruudessa kohdattavia ongelmia, joten nämä kirjallisuuden lajityypit sopivat hyvin yhteen. Nuoret vastustavat auktoriteetteja, kohtaavat kriisejä ja muita ongelmia yrittäessään kasvaa, sekä yrittävät saada äänensä kuuluviin aikuisten ylläpitämässä yhteiskunnassa. Dystopisen kirjallisuuden sorretut kansalaiset kokevat samanlaisia vaikeuksia, joten nuoren on helppo samaistua lukemaansa. Dystopian sekasortoa ja sotia voidaan myös pitää kielikuvana nuoruuden ongelmille, ja lisäksi lukemalla yhteiskuntaa kritisoivaa kirjallisuutta nuoret voivat oppia ymmärtämään omaa yhteiskuntaansa.

Avainsanat:

Dystopia, nuortenkirjallisuus, identiteetti, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*

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1. Introduction

In recent years, dystopia has grown to a rather popular literary genre, among older as well as younger readers. One reason for its popularity are the film adaptations of several dystopian novels that have brought the genre in front of a larger audience. The topics of dystopian fiction have also expanded: the earliest dystopian fiction, such as Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, mostly dealt with issues of political authority and social controls, but today the topics range from natural disasters to any kinds of terrible situations caused by humans themselves. Young adult fiction has also grown from a marginal genre to a more popular one. As Thomas and Garcia point out, the huge popularity of a few series, like *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*, has increased the demand for young adult fiction. (xi) Furthermore, young adults seem to be eager to read dystopian fiction, which has created a new sub-genre of dystopian young adult literature.

Among the most successful dystopias written for young adults are Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy. This thesis concentrates on these two trilogies, not just because of their popularity, but because both are set in a futuristic and oppressive society, which is typical for dystopias, and because both have young female protagonists who are developing their identities, gaining independence and finding their place in the society. An individual's development from adolescence to adulthood is a process of several years, which is why it is necessary to take into consideration all parts of both trilogies, as they describe this process over a protracted timespan.

The Hunger Games is set in future North-America, a nation called Panem. It is divided into twelve districts and the Capitol, where the elite and the government are located. The society oppresses most of its citizens with the threat of violence, punishments and death and controls them with strict rules. The center of the novels is a game show called Hunger Games, where twenty-four children and teenagers, two from each district, are sent to fight for their lives. The winner is the last one standing. The protagonist of the novel is nominated as one of the players, which sets off the events and forces her to grow from a teenager to an adult fast. *Divergent* is also set in future North-America, in the city of Chicago. The city is divided into five factions, each with its own task in the society. There is no elite, but the rules of the city keep the people oppressed and their choices at a minimum, with the threat of being cast out of the society. This has created anxiety among some of the factions, which results in rebellions and wars. The protagonist of the novel ends up in the middle of the rebellion, making plans

and alliances with faction leaders and other powerful figures of the society, while she tries to build a new identity to replace her old, “faction-based” identity.

The purpose of this thesis is to study how different themes of young adult literature are presented and dealt with in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. The themes chosen for this study are the forming of relationships, finding one's place in the society and identity development in the novels. These themes are always present in novels with a young protagonist and they also link to the lives of real young adults. What is of interest to this study, is how they work in dystopian novels, which are often very violent and dark. How much room is there for the psychological and social development of the protagonist, when he or she also has to survive in the deprived society of the novel? The hypothesis of the study is that dystopian fiction with its violence and different social problems suits well for young adult fiction. The problems and revolutions in the dystopian society resemble adolescents' problems and the need to rebel against the society built by adults. Furthermore, as Wolk points out, dystopian fiction can teach young adults about social responsibility and encourage them to think about moral dilemmas (668).

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of two different parts, developmental psychology and literary theory on young adult literature and dystopian fiction. The developmental psychology described in the thesis is mostly based on Erik Erikson's theories, because he was one of the first to study the development of identity and his theory on the psychological stages of development has been used as a base for further theories. Erikson considers social environment, such as culture, institutions and family, to influence the individual's development in addition to psychological and biological changes. (Hamachek 354) In addition, other typical changes and behaviors of young adults are discussed to create a coherent image of adolescence. The literary theory of the thesis is divided into young adult fiction and dystopian fiction, although these overlap at times. As neither genre has a strict set of rules, the theory consists mostly of the main themes used in the genres. The themes of young adult literature follow the theories on developmental psychology, as identity development, relationships and social growth are mentioned in nearly all of the sources. Furthermore, young adult literature often discusses social problems, violence, abandonment and other dark themes. Dark themes are also at the core of dystopian fiction, which makes it a suitable genre for young adults.

The thesis is divided into one theory chapter and three analysis chapters. The theory chapter presents first the theories on developmental psychology, with the focus on young adult development. After that, the literary theory will be introduced, first young adult literature and then dystopian fiction,

ending with the similarities between the two. The analysis of the primary literature begins from Chapter 3, which focuses on identity development. Identity is viewed from different aspects, such as identification, self-image, feeling of belonging and traumas that have a negative impact on development. Chapter four focuses on relationships to other people. An important relationship for young adults is the one with their parents. Adolescents need to rebel against their parents, or some other authority, in order to gain independence. Other important relationships are those to peers, as their importance increases and the adolescent needs to learn to develop and maintain meaningful relationships. The final chapter discusses the social aspect of development. The society and the different institutions around adolescents affect their development. Furthermore, adolescents need to accept the norms and values of the society and adapt to them, or as is the case in dystopian fiction, rebel against them and create new ones. The educational aspects of young adult dystopias will also be discussed in the chapter.

2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter the theoretical background will be introduced. For the purpose of this thesis both theory on developmental psychology and literary theory on young adult literature and dystopia will be used. There are several theories on human development from children to adults. The theory will include a general overview of the different changes occurring during adolescence and then move on to discuss Erikson's theories, which take into consideration the effect of one's relationships and environment on the growth of the individual. For the literary theory, there is no one theory chosen, but different aspects and themes are considered to build a coherent image of the genre.

The first subchapter discusses the development from adolescents to adults in general, what kind of changes occur and what kind of behavior is typical for adolescents. The second subchapter focuses on Erikson's theory, which includes different psychological stages of development and the psychosocial crises that an individual has to go through. The third subchapter discusses young adult literature, its most common themes and characteristics and the last chapter focuses on dystopia and how it can be used in young adult literature.

2.1. From adolescence to adulthood

Youth is the period in life, in which people usually look for their identities and test their own, and society's, limits. Young adult literature describes this period, with its changes, problems and difficulties. The protagonists in young adult literature go through the same stages and therefore, young readers may find it easy to identify with them. To understand the development of the characters, one must understand the changes that occur in youth. During adolescence, individuals grow from children to adults and full members of their society. Therefore, this period of life is bound to include lots of changes both physically and psychologically. According to Nurmi (256), among the most important changes in adolescence are the changes in the roles an individual has. Adolescents have to become independent and break loose of their parents. At the same time, they have to prepare for the roles of adulthood. As the new generation adapts to the surrounding society and culture, it also changes these institutions. (256-257)

The society where the individual grows has a great effect on the individual's development at different stages of life. As Nurmi (259) points out, there are for example different responsibilities and privileges for adolescents in different cultures. There are also beliefs about what is "appropriate"

behavior or what kind of roles are acceptable for adolescents. It is good to bear in mind that these expectations are constructed within a society and therefore may change from one society to another. (260)

Besides the society around individuals, also their own choices and characteristics affect their development. (Nurmi 263) Adolescents are capable of making their own choices, although society might limit these choices, for example with laws or entrance qualifications for schools. Also the previous decisions an individual has made affect the possible decisions later in their lives. However, individuals' own characteristics steer their choices, too. For example, temperament or talent in certain fields affect the choices an individual makes. (263)

During youth, an individual builds an image of him- or herself. Nurmi describes in his book how self-image is built in adolescence through the evaluation of achievements and failures. (264) Different people have different interests and motives that guide their choices. Based on their own interests, people set different goals. To achieve these goals, adolescents have to consider different options and discuss different possibilities with their family and friends. Thus, while trying to achieve their goals, the adolescents are also finding their own identities. (Nurmi 264) Nurmi names a few goals that are typical for adolescents, such as education, choosing a profession, relationships and leisure time. (265) However, these goals are limited by the society, the environment and the previous choices made by the individual. Education, for example, is restricted to certain options at certain age.

Once adolescents have made certain decisions and reached certain goals in their lives, they need to evaluate the goals they have reached, and whether or not they match their original goals. (Nurmi 265) According to Nurmi, one of the frames against which young people evaluate their success, is culture. The norms in a culture dictate what a member of that culture should have achieved by a certain age. (265) In general, success in achieving the goals dictated by the culture helps the adolescent to build a positive self-image, whereas failure in achieving those goals leads to a more negative self-image. However, the process of evaluating goals is not that simple, as the adolescents' own perceptions of themselves affect the evaluation as well: for example, if they believe the failure is due to the difficulty of the task or goal rather than their personal qualities, it does not seem to lower their self-esteem. (Nurmi 266) Furthermore, individuals with good self-esteem can learn from their failures, change their goals and consider new ways to achieve them. (Nurmi 269)

Another factor that creates positive self-esteem is the feeling of being in control of one's own life. According to Kuusinen (318) individuals evaluate their development, goals, success and failure

and their own control over them. If individuals feel in control of their development, they feel subjectively happy about their life. Kuusinen (318) also points out that adolescents tend to compare their life situations to those of their peers and set goals for themselves based on these comparisons. If adolescents feel they have succeeded in life in comparison to others, they gain a more positive self-image and a better self-esteem.

As was already mentioned, the goals set by the adolescents are partly dictated and limited from the outside. Nurmi (267) argues that besides the surrounding culture, other factors like family, friends and media can have an unconscious effect on the decisions and goals set by the adolescent. Furthermore, adolescents may unconsciously adopt or copy the decisions and behavior of others or rely solely on their emotions when planning their goals, without much conscious consideration. Coincidence is also a factor in an individual's life-course, since for example a severe accident or parents' divorce during adolescence can have an impact later in one's life. (Nurmi 267) All these factors affect the protagonists in young adult literature, too. It is common that the environment the protagonists grow up in is limiting them, so that they need to rebel against it. Unfortunate coincidences, such as deaths or accidents, are also common, as they create problems for the protagonist to solve. Furthermore, a limiting environment often predicts a low self-esteem, which they must develop as a part of their process of growing up.

2.2. Erikson's psychological stages

Erikson's theory on psychological development is based on the idea that human identity grows through different psychological stages. (Hamachek 354) According to Erikson, there are eight stages which individuals go through in their lives. During each stage the individual faces a so-called crisis, which they have to solve in order to move on with their development. These are called psychosocial crises, which Hamachek defines as "a turning point when both potential and vulnerability are greatly increased, a time when things may go either well or not well depending on one's life experiences" (355). These stages can be seen in young adult literature as well. The protagonists struggle with their identities and roles in the society and try to gain independence over their parents and at the same time, create relationships to friends.

During childhood, the child needs to develop a basic trust, which is "an attitude toward oneself and the world derived from the experiences of the first year of life" (Erikson 57), an autonomy to move and have his or her own will (68) and an initiative to explore the world and find out what kind of a

person one is (78). After that comes the crisis of industry, the time of school and learning (87) and the development of an identity (94). In adulthood the individual needs to develop interpersonal intimacy, which allows them to build meaningful relationships (101), generativity, which means taking care of the next generation (103), and, finally, integrity, the last stage of development, where the individual needs to accept their own life cycle (104). Erikson's theory is based on Freud's psychoanalysis, but as Hamacheck (354) points out, Erikson focuses more on the ego as the center of development, instead of an unconscious id. Erikson also emphasizes biological, social and psychological development equally, believing that all three have an impact on an individual's developing identity. (Hamachek 354) This means that the adolescent's growth and development happens in a social context formed by family, friends, school and other social environments. (Kuusinen 316)

The two psychological crises associated with adolescence and young adulthood are identity versus identity confusion and intimacy versus isolation. A psychosocial crisis means that an individual must solve the crisis in order to continue his or her development in a successful way. (Hamachek 355) Once the above mentioned two crises are solved, adolescents experience the feeling of their own and complete identity and are able to build and maintain important relationships. Failure, on the other hand, can cause the adolescents to feel isolated and lonely. (Kuusinen 316)

Developing an identity has often been considered the most important task in adolescence, and Erikson, accordingly, describes the development in adolescence in terms of identity development. (Nurmi 262) The cognitive development of the mind, which occurs during early adolescence, is crucial to the forming of an identity. (Erikson 245) It allows the young individual to "operate on hypothetical propositions" and "think of possible variables and potential relations" (Erikson 245) Thus, the adolescent can consider possible outcomes of their decisions, forcing them to think of the "personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments" (245) they are about to make. As the adolescents make and commit to these decisions, their identity develops to a more permanent direction. (Nurmi 262) Success or failure in solving the crisis of identity development affects adolescents' views, attitudes and feelings towards themselves and their lives. (Nurmi 262) Furthermore, adolescents need to be recognized for their personal qualities, as this helps them to build a permanent identity. (Erikson 156)

As was already mentioned, the second crisis that an adolescent needs to solve is the "the crisis of intimacy". (Erikson 135) By this Erikson means "the capacity to develop a true and mutual psychosocial intimacy with another person, be it in friendship, in erotic encounters, or in joint

inspiration.” (135) Intimacy makes it possible for an individual to feel love, and Erikson argues that mutual love “is the vital strength of young adulthood”. (137) The opposite of this, isolation, means that it is hard for an individual to engage in interpersonal intimacy and they thus tend to avoid it. Isolation is often a problem with adolescents who suffer from identity confusion. (Erikson 136)

According to Erikson, a person’s identity can be “superordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past: it includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonably coherent whole of them”. (161) This means that individuals begin to build their identities at a very young age. Children identify with the people around them, and all these identifications will be part of the identity that the individual reaches by the time of adulthood. Thus, for Erikson, the previous events in life, especially in childhood, influence the individual’s identity and well-being. (128-129) He claims that for adolescents this means facing and solving the crises of childhood before reaching one’s final identity.

The individual’s past experiences have an impact on the success or failure of solving crises. However, as Hamachek (355) points out, there are both “positive and negative qualities associated with each stage”, and although positive qualities improve an individual’s chances at solving crises later in life, also the negative qualities are essential. The different psychological stages are built on one another, which means that an adolescent must go through the stages of basic childhood development before moving on to developing an identity. If adolescents have acquired several negative ego qualities during their childhood, such as mistrust, shame or guilt, they are more likely to suffer from identity confusion and have problems with controlling life in adulthood. (Hamachek 356)

Hamachek has studied what kind of behavior positive and negative ego qualities during the first five stages of development can cause in an individual. By the time of adolescence, the individual has gathered experiences and built “a sense of ego identity” (Erikson, qtd. in Hamachek 357). In the stage of identity development and identity loss, the individual needs to develop a more permanent identity that fits the surrounding social reality. (Hamachek 357) In the case of an identity confusion, the individuals are not merely at loss with who they are, but depending on the negative ego qualities of the previous development stages, they might not know what they can do or how they could do what needs to be done. (Hamachek 360)

Erikson considers adolescence the “last stage of childhood”. (155) He argues that to complete this stage, adolescents must create their own identities, form meaningful relationships and adapt to the society. Once these are completed, the choices and decisions an individual makes lead more likely to

long-term commitments. (Erikson 155) As the tasks of adolescence often take time and energy, most societies offer “more or less sanctioned intermediary periods between childhood and adulthood, often characterized by a combination of prolonged immaturity and provoked precocity”. (Erikson 156) This period is called a moratorium. It is the time when adolescents have the opportunity to try different things, search for values and ideologies that suit them and find a permanent place in the society, sometimes by rebelling against the existing system; by Erikson’s words, “a period of delay granted to somebody who is not ready to meet an obligation or forced on somebody who should give himself time” (157). The adolescents are given time for self-exploration, as they are not children anymore, but also not adults with all the responsibilities of adults. The moratorium includes “experimentation with identity images” and “play with the inner fire of emotions and drives” (Erikson 158) and it can be unconscious, if adolescents realize only later that they had been in a transition phase. However, the individuals might also “fail” the moratorium if they end up being defined too early because of commitments assigned to them by authorities. (158) In literature, the moratorium is often failed, which has a negative effect on the protagonist’s identity development. For example, in the novels discussed in this thesis, the moratorium is shortened and the society forces the protagonists to settle on certain roles too early, which causes them to feel confused about who they are.

Adolescence is often characterized by a desire to look for “something and somebody to be true”. (Erikson 235) Young adults want to find permanence amidst of change before making commitments for life. Adolescents need to “test extremes before settling on a considered course” (235-236). They also have a craving for movement, whether physical or a feeling of being moved or making something move forward. (Erikson 243) This becomes apparent in adolescents’ desire for different sports, busy lifestyle, being “on the go” or taking part in demonstrations or ideological movements to change and improve things. However, the craving for movement can also drive adolescents to bad kinds of movements and losing oneself. (243) Role confusions are another typical characteristic of adolescence: it is important for the role experimentation and plays a vital part in identity development. (Erikson 163-164) When individuals achieve a coherent whole of their identity, it creates “a sense of psychosocial well-being”. (Erikson 165) This means that a person feels good about oneself and knows what he or she wants from the future.

Adolescents are in constant contact with the surrounding community and culture. As was already mentioned, Erikson considers social environment to be one the three important aspects in an individual’s development. This social environment includes the culture and social system in which the

individual grows. Social systems are based on ideologies, which are transferred to the youth and thus to the next generations. However, the youth also have the power to change these ideologies and the ruling social system if they do not approve of the old ones. This is called social evolution. (Erikson 134)

Erikson argues that adolescents have a certain mistrust towards society and thus tend to rebel against it in many ways; they value free will, the opportunity to decide on their own lives within the limits of the available paths and thus sometimes find it hard to adapt into the society built by the previous generation. (129) Whether an adolescent adapts into a society or not depends on the society's ideals and the individual's ability to accept new roles and inventions. The individuals who feel that the society is limiting them too much, often begin to resist it. (130) In other words, the community's way of identifying the individual is not in accordance with the individual's way of identifying him- or herself, which makes the individual feel like the society is turning one into something "not him/her". (160) Erikson believes that the most common reason for adolescent misbehavior and resistance is "the inability to settle on an occupational identity". (132) This inability might result in the loss of one's own individuality and identity. To cope with this loss of identity, adolescents form cliques and stereotype themselves, their ideals, their groups and other groups. Adolescents might also isolate others from their group or clique for reasons such as different ethnic background or taste or just because someone dresses differently. (132-133) Through these group identities and the strict rules about who can belong in them the adolescents try to form their own identities. In young adult literature, these groups are often against adults and those who are in control.

Erikson's descriptions of young adult development and behavior is a rather detailed one, and for this thesis only those points that are relevant for the study were chosen. Self-exploration and role-experimentation, defiance against the society built by adults and the different groups that adolescents form are present in young adult literature. The different problems that the protagonists may face during their adolescence can be explained with the help of Erikson's theory and connected to events in their childhood or explained as a typical stage of adolescent development.

2.3. Young adult literature: Identity, empowerment and society

Young adult literature has its origins in the commercial world, which began to market certain novels especially for young adults. As Thomas and Garcia (5) point out, the genre emerged in The United States when adolescents began to be able to spend money. Furthermore, the literary shift from functionality to individual's self and development allowed the development of young adult literature.

(Rättyä 172) Search for the self and an identity crisis, the inevitable change towards adulthood with no return to childhood, are often considered the core of young adult fiction. (172) Rättyä (98) defines young adult literature as fiction that has a young protagonist and deals with the issues of developing an identity. The main focus in young adult literature are thus the questions about identity and subjectivity, “Who I am?” and “When and how I became me?”. (99)

Rättyä discusses the different aspects of identity and how it is built: physical features, mental and social qualities, values and attitudes and how these are portrayed in appearance and actions. (100) Young adults compare themselves to others both physically and mentally as they grow. This is evident in young adult fiction as well: comparisons with peers are common, and if someone turns out to be rather different, it can cause rejection from the peer group. (100) Along with the changing body, ideas of femininity and masculinity begin to emerge. Especially in fiction aimed for females, issues such as fashion, appearance and weight are present. (110-111)

Rättyä (102) discusses the idea of a postmodern identity in young adult fiction. Adolescents do not yet have a permanent identity, but their identity is fragmented and depends on the situation and community they are in. Youth itself can also be considered as part of an identity, as it defines young adults and separates them from other age groups. These age-related identities are common for everyone in the same culture, and everyone goes through them as they get older. (Rättyä 101)

McCallum also emphasizes that young adult literature frequently discusses the issues of identity, subjectivity and the self. According to her, young adult novels handle different kinds of psychological ideas about the formation of identity and subjectivity as they deal with maturation. They can depict identity as for example “essential and unique, internally fragmented or socially constructed”. (67) These different representations of subjectivity are then “juxtaposed and represented in dialogue with each other” (67), as young adult fiction rarely follows one psychological idea strictly. In many novels, there is the idea of “finding one’s self” (McCallum 68), which implies that developing an identity is a quest that aims towards a stable subjectivity. It also implies that an individual’s identity is something unique, which exists as a separate entity from the surrounding society. (68)

McCallum discusses different narrative strategies used in young adult literature. (68) Internalized dialogue is used to represent the “internal fragmentation of the subject – the split subject” (68). Characters often use internalized dialogue to consider things such as moral, ideologies or questions about the self. Another strategy is to place a character in a foreign place, outside of their familiar surroundings, where they will experience “temporal, cultural or psychological displacement or

marginalization” (68). Amidst of this displacement they will face some sort of crisis and develop their identities by solving it. According to McCallum, this is used to “foreground the social construction of subjectivity, ... but also to assert an essentiality of self” (69). These different strategies enforce the impression that subjectivity and identity are complex ideas that are built in many different situations in many different ways.

Relationships to others, especially the opposite sex, are common in young adult literature. In adolescence, relationships to peers become important and thus they are present in young adult fiction, too. Part of the process of identity development is the development of meaningful relationships to friends and romantic relationships to the opposite (or same) sex. (Rättyä 112) Several young adult novels have a romantic subplot, which gives the protagonist an opportunity to consider their sexual identity as well.

The complex relationship between parent or other adults and the adolescent is present in almost all young adult fiction. As Trites points out, in Anglophone cultures achieving independence from one’s parents is considered a requirement for growing up, and this requirement is visible in young adult fiction as well. (55) In the world of young adults, parents are more likely to repress than comfort, and they cause several conflicts for the adolescent. Even if the parents are not present in the novel, as is often the case, they still have “a psychological presence that is remarked upon as a sort of repression felt strongly by the adolescent character” (Trites 56). In this case, it is the psychological presence of the adult that the adolescent needs to rebel against. In some young adult fiction, a substitute parent is presented instead of an actual parent, if the actual parent is for some reason not available. (Trites 60) The substitute parent gives advice and acts as the authority, thus giving the adolescent something to rebel against. Rättyä reinforces this idea by discussing the division to *us*, the adolescents, and *them*, the adults. (115) Adults frequently represent authorities, even enemies, who are opposing the young protagonist. This division is often presented as a gap between different generations and an inability to understand one another, rather than actual fighting. (115)

Death is another common theme in young adult literature. In children’s literature death is presented as “a part of a cycle, as an ongoing process of life” (Trites 118) and it symbolizes the separation from one’s parents. In young adult fiction, on the other hand, death is a threat, a kind of endpoint of a linear life. (118) According to Trites, accepting death and its finality, and being aware of the inevitability of one’s own death, are a sign of maturity and empowerment. (119) Trites argues that adolescents are powerless, when someone close to them dies, and they acknowledge and begin to fear

their own mortality for the first time. By processing and accepting death and the loss it has caused, the adolescent becomes empowered. (119)

According to Trites, there are three patterns in which death appears in young adult fiction. (119) First, death is immediate, often happening in front of the protagonist's eyes and described to the reader. This forces the adolescent to confront death and accept its essentialness, thus becoming empowered. (120) Second, death is often violent and unnecessary and can occur at any time, making it a threat not just for elderly people, but for children and adolescents as well. (120) The last pattern is loss of innocence. (121) This means accepting one's own mortality and vulnerability and recognizing the power that they have or do not have. The adolescents reach maturity "because they recognize and accept themselves as Being-towards-death" (Trites 121).

Young adult fiction often describes outsiders. As Thomas and Garcia (59) point out, the theme of not belonging, or being different from others, is one that adolescents can easily identify with. The outsiders may be characterized by their social status in for example school community, or their socioeconomic status in the whole society. (59) The outsider does not fit into the society, or might not be welcomed at all. (72) According to Thomas and Garcia, the outsider's story of conquering difficulties and gaining acceptance and success is more appealing to the western reader than the story of someone with a wealthier background, as it is in line with the idea of the American Dream of prosperity. (60) Furthermore, the outsiders are in a minority position, which according to Thomas and Garcia sends an encouraging message to the young readers: "they embody the capacity to challenge, to lead, to revolutionize." (72)

Österlund discusses the change in young adult novels towards darker and more violent themes than before. When in the 80's young adult fiction dealt with normal everyday life, the novels written after the 90's began to break the taboos of the earlier decades with pessimistic and dystopic themes such as violence, social problems and defenselessness. (120) Abandonment is also a frequent theme in young adult fiction, as parents are absent or otherwise nonchalant towards the adolescent. The parent – adolescent roles may also be reversed, forcing adolescents to take care of the parents and themselves. (131)

Depictions of different social, mental or other problems are in the center of the contemporary young adult novel. (Österlund 138) Instead of just one problem, they include several problems which are dealt with thoroughly and psychologically in order to get to their core. (138) Everyday life or happiness is not present, as they are replaced with violence, murder, suicide and other problems cast on

the young protagonist. (139) Traditionally, the plot of the novel ends with a solution to the problems, but as Österlund points out, young adult novels often have an open ending or even end in a disaster. (140)

According to Österlund, (142) the violence and rough language in young adult fiction are part of the power struggle that is present in it. These struggles are about the power of adults over adolescents and often also about the gender roles that control the development of boys and girls. Trites focuses specifically on power in her definition of young adult literature. According to her, the growth in young adult fiction links to power, as learning about power enables growth. (10) The adolescents must, for example, “learn their place in the power structure” (Trites 10) and “balance their power with their parents’ power and with the power of the other authority figures in their lives” (10). Institutions and their power also play a role in young adult fiction. (3) The adolescent needs to work with school and government, and the social constructions of sexuality, gender and class. Once they learn how power works in these institutions, they can become full members of the society. (3)

According to Trites, identity politics is one type of institution in young adult literature. (47) It refers to race, gender, class and other such concepts which regulate the behavior of people and are the core of different stereotypes. Even though individuals might reject these institutions, others in the society can still impose them on them and thus everyone in the society are at least partially regulated by them. (47) In young adult literature, the focus of identity politics is in “how an adolescent’s self-identifications position her within her culture” (Trites 47). Trites argues that the way in which adolescents define themselves in terms of race, gender and class affects their access to power. (47) If adolescents recognize the discourses about identity politics, such as racism or sexism, they can reject and resist them and thus gain power. On the other hand, if adolescents fail to recognize the discourses around them, they become oppressed by them. (51) Another way of repressing or liberating young adults is school and education. (35) The school system has lots of authorities, teachers and instructors, who repress the adolescent, but at the same time the knowledge they acquire from school liberates them.

Most young adult novels comment the society or its ideologies in some way and focus on the social aspects of growth. According to Trites, “YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual” (20). They can for example discuss the importance of education or condemn racism (Trites 27). As Trites points out, some novels comment directly on the government and try to convince the adolescent reader that they should accept

the institutions in the society, not resist them. (27) This applies to novels that depict contemporary society, but for example dystopias, which depict alternative societies, tend to criticize their fictional governments and thus could be interpreted as guiding the reader towards accepting the contemporary, democratic society and its institutions.

Because young adult literature is strongly connected to society, it can teach its young readers about society, governance and other important issues. Wolk discusses the importance of teaching social responsibility to adolescents through literature. Several books have moral and ethical problems that the adolescent needs to ponder on while reading. (667) Wolk believes that literature teachers should pay attention to the ways they present novels to their students, as there are so many things to learn not just about reading, but about social responsibility. He gives a list and examples of themes that can be learned by reading young adult literature. (667) The first on his list are social problems and social justice, and learning to understand them and improve them. This includes issues such as culture, gender, economic class and sexual orientation. (667) Literature can also teach about government and constitution, or the lack of these and what consequences it has. (668) Through the power and propaganda in literature adolescents also learn to read critically: “who has power and who is denied it; how is power used and how is it abused” (Wolk 668). Especially dystopian fiction teaches about social imagination and helps to question the contemporary world and imagine a better one. As Wolk points out, “although these stories are set in the future – often postapocalyptic – thematically they are really about the present” (668). Young adult literature can also teach about historical consciousness, multicultural communities, global awareness and the environment, like natural resources and consumerism. (668-669) By learning about social responsibility adolescents feel more empowered and may learn more about themselves and about who they are in their own communities. (Wolk 672)

2.4. Dystopia and young adult literature

Dystopia is nowadays a popular genre, common in literature as well as movies and television shows. It is a relatively new genre, without a clear theoretical background and often compared with the idea of utopia. The word dystopia was coined by J. Max Patrick in the 20th century as the opposite of utopia, which had been used in literature since the 16th century. (Jacoby 6-7) However, defining utopia and dystopia as opposites is not that simple and there is a lot of debate among critics about the proper definitions for these ideas.

L.T. Sargent's definition of dystopia has been considered the most prestigious, as many other critics refer to and accept his views. He discusses the problem of defining the terms utopian and dystopian in his article "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited". He presents his own definition of dystopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (9). His definition of a positive utopia, on the other hand, is that a society is a "considerably better than the society in which that reader lived" (9). Thus, the difference according to Sargent is a matter of better or worse compared to the reader's contemporary society.

Dystopia has some of its own traditional elements that separate it from other literary genres. One important factor is that dystopia always takes place in a society, which is somehow different from the contemporary one (Sargent 7). According to Gottlieb, the dystopian society is connected to the contemporary society and offers a warning to the reader:

... classics of dystopian fiction ... offer a definite sense of continuity between the flawed world of the present and the even more profoundly flawed, monstrous world of the hypothetical future, where our society's errors against justice and reason become a totalitarian dictatorship of organized justice. (Gottlieb 27)

Although this definition seems radical in its depiction of the contemporary world as a "flawed" one, it is safe to say that dystopian fiction is criticizing the society: dystopian fiction often depicts a society in the future, after a war or other catastrophe caused by human actions. Gottlieb also points out that injustice and oppression in the society in dystopian fiction is organized and there is often a "machinery for the deliberate miscarriage of justice" (30). There is some sort of governance, by other humans or a machine, that keeps control over the rest of the population and oppresses it systematically.

The protagonist in dystopian fiction is typically brave and able to stand up against the "elite ruling through a semidivine leader, who is responsible for the enslavement of the population, for a deliberate conspiracy against the welfare of his own people" (Gottlieb 31). The protagonists refuse to give in to the ruling of the elite and try to bring back justice, even risking their own lives in the attempt. However, according to Gottlieb, the reader is not supposed to identify with the protagonist, but rather focus on the "historical forces that led from his society's past to the nightmare society in his present" (32). The destiny of a single character is not as important in dystopian fiction as is the destiny of the society as a whole.

According to Hintz and Ostry, utopian and dystopian elements are common in children's and young adult literature. They depict a world separate from ours, and some novels aim to present this other world as a notably better or worse place. (1) Dystopia and utopia have several functions in young adult literature: as was already mentioned, they can teach about society and governance and about individuals' roles in them, about the importance of change and encourage young readers to make a change in the society. (1) Furthermore, they learn to view their own society critically, as they compare the dystopian world to their own. (7) As Hintz and Ostry point out, this is typical for children's and young adult literature, as they are "pedagogical genres" and thus aim to educate young readers in some way. (7)

Utopias and dystopias written for children often criticize the adult world. (Hintz and Ostry 8) Adults have created problems in the fictional world, and it is only the young protagonist who can solve them in the end. The class system has been radically criticized in young adult dystopia, as the inequalities of different classes are taken to the extreme in the fiction world. (8) According to Hintz and Ostry, this helps the young reader to understand society and inequalities better, as they are forced to think about these things while they read. (9) Furthermore, they help young readers to think about their values and the freedom of an individual, which is often nonexistent in a dystopian society. (9)

Hintz and Ostry argue that utopias are more common in children's literature, whereas dystopias are more prevalent in young adult literature. (9) They believe this is because collective suffering and personal and social traumas fit better to the world of adolescents, who are struggling to learn about the society and find their roles in it. They even argue that dystopia is a metaphor for adolescence. (9) Indeed, adolescents feel oppressed by adults and authorities, they have responsibilities but not so many privileges and they often feel there is too much adult surveillance. Like the oppressed masses in dystopian fiction, the adolescents want more power and freedom. Furthermore, young adult literature tends to romanticize the adolescent protagonists, who save the world from adults. While they fight against the unfair order of the society, they learn about leadership and cooperative decision making and their difficulties. This view is reversed from the traditional view of adults in control and children and adolescents at the bottom of hierarchy. (Hintz and Ostry 10) Hintz and Ostry also point out that the problems in adolescence are similar to those in a dystopian society: "What are the proper limits of freedom? To what extent can one rebel? At what point does conformity rob one of his or her identity?" (10) Thus it is easy to agree with Hintz and Ostry, when they argue that dystopian literature "mingles well with the coming-of-age novel, which features a loss of innocence". (9)

3. Identity Development

This chapter discusses the protagonists' identity development in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. Identity is a complex concept, which is affected by many things: the individual self, the people around him or her, external factors and the society around them. This chapter focuses on the individual and how he or she experiences the changes and incidents around him or her.

The first sub chapter discusses the concept of identity, how it is built in the novels and what kind of things affect it. The second sub chapter focuses on self-image and self-esteem, explains some of the reasons for a low self-esteem and describes how the protagonists' in the novels develop a positive self-esteem. In the third sub chapter, the theme of the outsider will be discussed. Young adult literature often describes outsiders who end up in unfamiliar places and are thus faced with problems. The last sub chapter discusses death and traumas and how they affect the protagonists' identity. Death and traumas are common themes in young adult literature set in a dystopian future.

3.1. Who am I?

As Rättyä points out, young adult literature focuses on identity through the questions "Who am I" and "When and how I became me?" (99) Individual's characteristics, physical features, mental qualities and the choices he or she makes affect one's identity. Furthermore, external factors, such as the socioeconomic status of the family or death of a family member, affect the individual. The protagonists in Collins' *The Hunger Games* and Roth's *Divergent* are similar in many ways. *The Hunger Games* follows the growth of a sixteen-year-old girl called Katniss Everdeen. She is described as small and almost child-like in her features, but also as athletic, muscular and well fed because of her hunting. She lives with her mother and younger sister in District 12, which is the poorest district in the country of Panem. She is half orphan, as her father passed away in a mining accident several years before the events in the novel take place. Tris Prior, the protagonist in *Divergent* is also a rather small and childish sixteen-year-old, living in the most modest faction of her city. She lives with her parents and big brother, but the family is soon separated as Tris and her brother choose to live in different sections of the city.

There are different kinds of depictions of subjectivity and identity in young adult literature. They can be described as fragmented, fixed, essential or socially constructed and these different descriptions are often juxtaposed with one another. (McCallum 67) Especially the idea of a fragmented

identity, the so called postmodern identity, is common in youth, before the adolescent has developed a permanent identity. (Rättyä 102) A fragmented identity varies between different situations and is affected by previous life events. The protagonists in both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* have fragmented identities, which change as they leave their homes and head towards fights and rebellions. As the stories go on, the protagonists try to figure out who they are and find themselves. This quest of finding one's self implies that an identity is stable and unique, something one must develop to be whole. (McCallum 68) This is a complex task, which is why most societies give adolescents give adolescents a "moratorium" (Erikson 156) – a time to experiment and search for the right values before becoming adults.

The moratorium gives adolescents time to figure out who they want to be, without all the responsibilities of adults. Therefore, when there is no moratorium or the moratorium is remarkably short, it can have a negative effect on the individual's identity development. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss becomes the provider of the family at a young age and therefore cannot enjoy a care-free childhood or experiment with things during her adolescence. With only one parent left, living in the country's poorest area, Katniss' life is a struggle, poaching meat to eat and trading in the black market of the town. Her father used to be a poacher and taught her how to hunt with a bow and an arrow and how to recognize edible plants in the woods. He also introduced her to the black market, where he used to sell the game he did not need himself. With this information, Katniss could provide for her mother and sister since she was twelve years old. Thus, her role in the family changed directly from a child to an adult: she is the one making sure the family has enough to eat and she is also the one taking care of the finances, trading in the black market or selling the illegal game directly to potential buyers. Furthermore, Katniss does not have any free time or hobbies of her own so she does not know what she likes or does not like.

Katniss is only sixteen years old, when has to leave her family to participate in the Hunger Games competition. The competition forces her to mature even faster, because in the arena she will face violence, death and other challenges alone, without any help from the outside. For Katniss, this seems easy because of her adult-like role in her family. She is used to doing things her own way, with little control from the outside, since she has never had anyone telling her how to do things. She is independent and clever, and makes strategies to defeat the other players in the Hunger Games arena. She considers how the audience sees the events through the cameras, and thus manipulates her own actions and emotions to seem as appealing as possible. She finds solutions to problems, stays calm

under pressure and thinks of likely outcomes and events, such as which players are likely to attack and when. In the end, she wins the whole game because of her wits and even outsmarts the makers of the game by threatening to commit a suicide with another player, thus also threatening to leave the audience without a victor. Because of these actions, she later ends up as the number one enemy of the Capitol and the symbol of the rebellion.

Katniss seems to be successful in her growth, overcoming the obstacles in her life – providing for her family and becoming the victor of the Hunger Games. However, because Katniss has been forced to grow up too fast, she has not had the chance to figure out who she is and feels lost because of it later in the trilogy. Her identity is fragmented and it seems to vary according to the situation. Furthermore, her previous experiences in life have affected her identity. Katniss' life as a half-orphan, who has had to take care of her family, has made her feel responsible for looking after others, and when she is unable to save someone, she feels guilty and useless. Because of this, she volunteers to go the arena instead of her sister in the first place, chooses the weakest ones as her allies so she can protect them and risks her own life to save others.

Katniss has spent most of her free time in adolescence in the woods, which is why she has a strong sense of her own identity as a hunter. Therefore, even after her first games, when she is famous and has enough money to last the rest of her life, she keeps on poaching and breaking the law because she does not know what else to do. "Most of it [Katniss' life] has been consumed with the acquisition of food. Take that away and I'm not really sure who I am, what my identity is." (*The Hunger Games* 378) She feels like she belongs in the woods, and plays with the idea of running away from the society, into the wild with her family. The forest is the only place where she feels happy and where she can clear her mind of bad things. When she is allowed to get out of the underground base of District 13 in the last novel, she says "... it's about as close to happiness as I think I can currently get." (*Mockingjay* 63) She has built her identity based on her life in her old district and feels lost when she is forced to leave it.

Katniss' time in the Capitol and the game-arena confirm that her identity strongly relates to her past life and home: "As I slowly, thoroughly wash the make-up from my face and put my hair in its braid, I begin transforming back into myself. Katniss Everdeen. A girl who lives in the Seam. Hunts in the woods. Trades in the Hob. I stare in the mirror and try to remember who I am and who I am not." (*The Hunger Games* 450) She does not want to be a fashionable celebrity of the Capitol, but prefers her simple life and feels she belongs in District 12. Katniss also seems to embrace her tired appearance and

not care too much about what she looks like: “The person in the mirror looks ragged, with her uneven skin and tired eyes, but she looks like me. I rip the armband off, revealing the ugly scar from the tracker. There. That looks like me, too.” (*Mockingjay* 92) Thus, appearance is important to Katniss, but rather than looking good, she wants to look like herself.

Because of the failed moratorium, it is hard for Katniss to develop a permanent identity for herself. She identifies herself as a hunter and the supporter of the family and is confused when those things are taken away from her. She suffers from identity confusion and has problems controlling her life. Because she does not know who she is, she clings to the identifications others offer her, such as the role of the mockingjay, the face of the rebellion. Her inability to see her future without that role, after the rebellion is over, confirms this view. Furthermore, her traumas, which are discussed in detail in chapter 3.4, prevent her identity development. It is only when she has enough time to think about who she is, deal with all her past traumas and do the things she enjoys that she becomes more stable and can take adult-like responsibility over her own life.

In *Divergent*, identity is based on the factions that people have chosen, as the factions have been developed on the basis of different personality traits. Every sixteen-year-old in the city is required to take an aptitude test that shows the most suitable faction for each, after which the adolescents choose a faction they want to live in for the rest of their lives. The society does not offer a moratorium, as everyone is expected to develop their identities in accordance to the faction they choose during their adolescence, without the chance of experimenting different lifestyles. Furthermore, the factions’ rules encourage certain behaviors and discourages others, which prevents the citizens’ identity development and independent thinking. For the society, identity is a social construction that is used to keep the people in control.

Tris, the protagonist, has grown up in Abnegation, where she has learned to suppress her own desires and personality and to put others first. She is modest, does not pay attention to herself, does not have her own style or hobbies, lives under strict rules concerning household chores and is forbidden to be curious or argue with her parents. At the choosing ceremony, she decides to leave her family to join another faction, the Dauntless, because she feels like she is not selfless enough, and therefore does not belong in her old faction and. In Dauntless, Tris has a sense of freedom for the first time in her life, and wants to be accepted among her new peers. She abandons some of her old values, those which made her invisible, but still considers selflessness to be important and is always ready to stand up for her friends and help them.

In her new surroundings Tris has conflicting thoughts about herself and, like Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, suffers from identity confusion. Away from her parents and their values, she becomes a different person. Because of the lack of the moratorium, she has not had time to think about her own values, but instead adopted the ones of her new faction. She becomes vengeful and violent, features that she despised before, and loses her kind and forgiving side and because of this, feels she has disappointed her parents. During the rebellion, Tris is forced to fight, even kill people to survive, which affects her in a negative way. Her traumas are further discussed in chapter 2.4. She loses her innocence and feels older, is tired of all the deaths and afraid of the person she has become. Her personality depends on the situation she is in, and she seems to rely on the factions to tell her who she is, instead of figuring it out on her own.

In the novels, the factions are so deep in the society that the idea of living without them horrifies the citizens. The factions serve as guidelines for identity, so without them people would not know who they are or where they belong. Furthermore, people without a faction are at the bottom of the society. Growing up in the modest Abnegation has influenced Tris' identity and even in her new faction, she thinks that "Abnegation is what I am" (*Divergent* 379). At the same time, she believes in the Dauntless' ideals and the longer she stays in her new factions, the more she feels she belongs there. Tris' identification with more than one faction makes her divergent, a person that does not fit in the strictly organized society. After the factions break due to a rebellion, Tris is forced to let go of her faction-identity. At first she feels insecure and separated from all communities, but soon begins to define herself through her divergence. This proves that she has not yet developed her own identity, but needs a faction or a term to help her understand who she is.

The trilogy deals with the question of identity through genetics as well. In the last novel, Tris and her friends discover that the faction-system was merely an experiment of the government and divergence is just an anomaly in one's genetic code. This shatters the foundation of their identities and forces them to develop their own identities. Furthermore, after the scientists perform a brain scan on Tris, showing her the different parts of her brain responsible for different personality traits, she considers the effect of genes on one's personality. She feels uncertain of her own personality and identity, until she understands that genes do not define her or make her a better person, but her choices do. Throughout the trilogy, Tris tries to find out what kind of a person she wants to be and what kind of things she should value. Her freedom in her new section allows her to be selfish and to do things that were forbidden before, and this makes her question her new identity and ask, "What kind of person am

I?” (*Divergent* 177). She is over the phase where she defined herself according to labels given to her from the outside, such as “dauntless” or “divergent”, and instead defines herself through her own actions and thoughts. Furthermore, she learns to accept her imperfections and becomes content with her “bad” sides, like selfishness or vengefulness.

In both trilogies, the protagonist’s identity is fragmented, depending on the situation one is in. However, the fragmented identity is considered as something incomplete that one must finish in order to become an adult. This fits well with Erikson’s theory about the different stages of development – before moving on to the next stage, one must finish the previous task, in this case develop a permanent identity. The idea of a socially constructed identity is also present in both trilogies, as the dystopian society suppresses its citizens’ freedom to fully experiment with their identities and offers identities that help to keep them in order. However, identities that come from outside of the individual are not considered sufficient, as both protagonists need to consider their own values and ideals to build an identity they feel content with. This is not an easy process, and in the novels, it is hindered by rebellions, wars and traumas, but in the end both the protagonists seem to find out who they are, build a coherent identity and move on to adulthood.

3.2. Self-image and self-esteem

One of the most important tasks of adolescence is building a self-image and a positive self-esteem. An individual’s self-esteem is built through setting goals, achieving them or failing to do so and evaluating the achievement or failure. (Nurmi 266) Success helps to build a better self-esteem, whereas failure correlates with lower self-esteem. Furthermore, individuals’ control over their own lives affects self-esteem. (Kuusinen 318) In dystopian fiction, characters have rather limited control over anything, which predicts a low self-esteem. The goals available to the characters are also limited and deviation from the path set by the government is discouraged and even considered rebellious and thus punishable.

The lack of choice in Katniss’ life has prevented her from developing a positive self-esteem. She cannot choose her own career, hobbies or place to live, as she needs to obey the Capitol’s rules and follow its orders. In the beginning of the trilogy, Katniss seems to believe that most people do not like her, and are only kind to her because they like her sister or used to know her father. When someone compliments her, she believes it is meant as an insult or that she is being pitied. Katniss also underrates her own hunting and survival skills before entering the first games. Her low self-esteem leads her to believe that whenever she fails, it is her own fault, and success happens by accident. She believes that

every bad thing that happens is her fault, if not directly then indirectly. For example, she believes that the whole rebellion and the deaths it has caused are her fault, because her actions in the game arena were considered the first public rebellious acts. As Nurmi has pointed out, an adolescence's self-perception affects the evaluation of failure or success (267), and because Katniss considers herself a bad person, she sees failure, but not success, as her own fault.

Even winning the Hunger Games does not improve Katniss' self-esteem. She does not consider winning an accomplishment, but rather as something that makes her a bad person. After her victory, she is forced to make a celebratory tour through the other districts and give speeches about the dead tributes, which makes her feel even worse and think "No wonder I won the Games. No decent person ever does." (*Catching Fire* 143) This self-loathing follows her throughout the trilogy, as Katniss keeps blaming herself and refuses to see positive outcomes in her actions. When she for example thinks about running away from the rebellion, it immediately turns into negative thoughts about herself: "Because I'm selfish. I'm a coward. I'm the kind of girl who, when she might actually be of use, would run to stay alive and leave those who couldn't follow to suffer and die." (*Catching Fire* 143) She seems to believe the worst of herself and claims to hate herself because of things she has no control over, like having left Peeta behind when the rebels saved her from the game arena. Furthermore, she considers herself "Violent. Distrustful. Manipulative. Deadly." (*Mockingjay* 271) and refuses to believe otherwise, no matter what her family and friends tell her.

Building a self-esteem is a task every young adult must go through, as it is part of one's identity. Therefore, Katniss must build her self-esteem step by step. She begins to change her negative image of herself by questioning her own motives for her actions. One of the most important moments is the one at the end of the Hunger Games, when Katniss and her friend, Peeta, are the last ones alive in the arena. They refuse to kill each other, so Katniss comes up with a plan to trick the audience to believe they are both going to commit suicide with poisonous berries, which is later considered a symbol for defiance. Katniss thinks about this moment and the reasons behind her actions:

I realize the answer to who I am lies in that handful of poisonous fruit. If I held them out to save Peeta because I knew I would be shunned if I came back without him, then I am despicable. If I held them out because I loved him, I am still self-centered, although forgivable. But if I held them out to defy the Capitol, I am someone of worth. The trouble is, I don't know exactly what was going on inside me at that moment. (*Catching Fire* 143)

It is the first time Katniss thinks of herself as someone who could be brave and worth all the admiration she gets. Later, she gets more confident, as she helps the rebels and travels to other districts to fight the enemy with them. She keeps feeling guilty for anyone that loses their life or suffers during the rebellion, but understands that she cannot save and protect everyone she knows.

In *Divergent*, Tris has a rather limited control over her own life, too. In her society, adolescents go through an aptitude test that shows them the most suitable faction, and are then required to choose which of the five factions they want to stay in for the rest of their lives. Although everyone is free to choose whichever faction they like, changing faction after one's decision is prohibited and they can associate only with people from the same faction. Furthermore, the factions dictate their members' occupation, living quarters and place in the society. Consequently, Tris has not had the chance to develop positive self-esteem. Her parents have taught her to be modest to the point where she finds it hard to believe in her herself or trust her talents.

In her new faction, Tris' self-esteem becomes more positive because of the positive experiences she gains during the initiation training. She learns lots of new things and advances quickly from a weak child-like girl to an experienced fighter. She also learns to take advantage of her discernment and uses it to make strategies for her goals. The more she learns, the more her confidence grows. However, her modesty sometimes makes her question her own achievements and qualities even when others believe in her. Little by little Tris trusts herself and develops a strong enough self-esteem that the failures she faces do not bother her anymore and she can take full control of her own life.

Both of the protagonists' self-esteem is low at the beginning of the trilogies. Building a more positive self-image is a difficult task, especially for Katniss, whose own mental processes prevent her from seeing the positive outcomes of her actions. However, by learning new skills and achieving goals they develop a stronger self-esteem and a positive self-image. A person with a good self-esteem is then able to deal with failures and losses and can be happy about the achievements in one's life. A positive self-esteem is also necessary for identity development, because it affects the individual's self-image and self-perception.

3.3. Outsiders in foreign places

The protagonist in young adult fiction is often an outsider and an underdog, who conquers difficulties and thus embodies the idea of the American dream. (Thomas & Garcia 60) Furthermore, an outsider is more appealing to the audience, which makes him or her easier to identify with. (59) In *The Hunger*

Games the protagonist is belittled throughout the trilogy: sometimes because of her age, as she is only 16 years old, sometimes because of her other qualities. Because Katniss is a half-orphan from the poorest district, she immediately becomes an underdog when she is chosen to be a tribute in the Hunger Games. She is physically small and weak-looking, so nobody believes in her chances of winning. Thus, by winning the Games, she proves that the underdog can be the best and gives hope to others with a lower social status. As the winner, Katniss is rewarded with a lifetime supply of food and money and a mansion in the finest part of town, thus conquering poverty, too.

Later in the trilogy, Katniss becomes the face of the rebellion. She trains to be a soldier and takes part in the strategy meetings of the rebels, but is still being belittled. The president of the rebels considers her a mentally ill child and does not believe she could be of any help with the war. Therefore, Katniss needs to prove her worth again by giving speeches and encouraging the citizens to act. She takes part in battles with the other soldiers during the rebellion, proving to be useful for the rebels and manages again to rise from a minority position to a powerful figure.

Tris is also considered an underdog in her new environment in *Divergent*. Before she is accepted to her new faction, she needs to go through initiation. The initiation requires physical strength and combat skills, which Tris does not have, but the other initiates do. She is the weakest, but manages to pass the combat test. However, the last part of the initiation is about strategy skills and the ability to control one's fears, which are Tris' strengths. She transforms from the underdog to the most successful initiate. Besides being an underdog, Tris also feels like an outsider. She is the only initiate from the Abnegation faction and therefore is used to different customs than the others. Loud laughter, free time activities, make up or the ability to choose one's own clothing are all foreign ideas to her and separate her from the others in the beginning. However, she quickly gets accustomed to the new lifestyle and makes new friends.

Feeling different from others and wanting to fit in is common in adolescence. Because both Katniss and Tris are outsiders and feel like they do not belong in their new environments, it is easy for adolescents to identify with them. They both change, but still hold on to their values and are accepted as who they are, which sets a good example for young readers. Furthermore, because they both overcome their difficulties and become leading characters in the rebellions that take place in the trilogies, they encourage readers to act and work towards their goals despite being in a minority position. As Thomas and Garcia pointed out, it is an encouraging message to young readers, who might feel they have no control in their communities or society. (72)

As is often the case in young adult literature, the events in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* take place outside of the home and away from parents. As was already discussed in the theory section, one of the narrative strategies used in young adult fiction is placing characters in a foreign place. (McCallum) Outside of the home, the protagonist experiences displacement or marginalization, which often leads to a crisis that the protagonist needs to solve. (68) In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is sent to the Capitol and to the game arena, which are both unknown places to her. She feels lonely, having left her loved ones behind, and is forced to form new relationships. She also needs to learn new skills to survive in her new surroundings, including combat skills and how to present oneself in front of the media.

After surviving in the arena, Katniss ends up in yet a new environment in the base camp of the rebels, where she needs to find a new place for herself. At first, she finds it difficult to fit in and mourns her old life and home: “We barely scraped by, but I knew where I fitted in, I knew what my place was in the tightly interwoven fabric that was our life. I wish I could go back to it because, in retrospect, it seems so secure compared with now.” (*Catching Fire* 8) The security that familiarity brings is lost, and the new place seems strange compared to home. She tries to get back in touch with her identity by visiting the ruins of her home after it is bombed, but realizes it will not help her with her problems. Instead, she needs to build her identity in accordance with her new surroundings. For Katniss, this means accepting her role as the face of the rebellion.

In *Divergent*, Tris also leaves her family and everyone she knows to join a new faction. Unlike Katniss, Tris chooses to leave because she feels like she does not belong in her old faction. The values in her new faction, the Dauntless who are responsible for security and surveillance in the city, differ from the ones she has learned at home. The Dauntless embrace bravery and a life full of risks, whereas her old faction valued modesty, selflessness and putting other’s needs before one’s own. In her new faction, she becomes independent from her parents and forms new relationships. Furthermore, she learns skills that are essential in her new life, such as combat and using weapons. However, Tris remains loyal to her old faction and their habits, believing that true bravery is helping others.

Because Tris has defined herself through the faction she lives in, she needs to change her ways of thinking to adapt to her new surroundings after transferring to the Dauntless. Helping others is not her priority anymore, but she learns to hurt and kill others and uses these skills to defend herself or those close to her. She learns to think and act like a soldier and thus becomes brave. Because of these

qualities she is accepted into the new faction and she feels like she belongs there and at the same time gains full independence from her parents.

Sending the protagonist to a foreign place offers a chance for them to gain independence, solve crises on their own and develop their identities. In a foreign place, adolescents must evaluate the influence of family, especially the parents, and of childhood identifications to their own development. They have to develop their own and coherent identities, forget their roles as children or adolescents and carry the responsibilities of a grown-up. The protagonist must also conquer the feelings of an outsider or someone who does not belong, and find or create a place in the society where he or she fits in. In order to achieve the feeling of belonging, adolescents must create new relationships to those around them, which will be further discussed in chapter four.

3.4. Death, violence and traumas

Young adult novels have lots of dark themes, such as violence, social and mental problems and abandonment. (Österlund 138) Death is also present in almost all young adult fiction, since accepting it as a part of life is something young adults need to learn. As Trites argues, adolescents need to accept death and its inevitability in order to become mature and empowered. (119) In young adult fiction, death is often violent and happens in front of the protagonist, which helps them to understand the finality of death and the protagonist's own mortality. (120-121) Furthermore, in dystopias the destiny of a single character is not important, as the focus is on the society which allows a lot of central characters to die. (Gottlieb 32) This is also the case in both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, where violence and death occur frequently, causing traumas to the characters in the novels. In *The Hunger Games*, the protagonist's first experience with death occurs before the novels take place, when her father dies. In addition, she has been surrounded by famine and the annual Hunger Games, where violent deaths are common. Thus, Katniss is no stranger to death when she is sent to the Hunger Games arena. However, in the arena she needs to turn into a killer herself to survive.

Before going into the arena, Katniss thinks about what awaits her, comparing it to the times she has spent hunting in the woods. She especially thinks about the difference between killing humans and animals. (*The Hunger Games* 48) At first, Katniss does not believe she has any chance to win, but rather wants to survive as long as possible, driven by the fear of death. However, when she gets her hands on a bow and arrows, which is the weapon she has practiced to shoot with, she no longer feels like a prey that needs to run and hide from others. She begins to make plans to eliminate the rest of the

tributes, and soon becomes a killer herself. After shooting her first victim, a boy from one of the wealthier districts, Katniss remembers that he, too, had a family, friends and a future that will now never happen. She is reminded of the finality of death, and that she herself was the cause of it. She also begins to keep a list of all the people she has killed, directly or indirectly, to help ease the guilt and to remember those who deserved to live, but did not get a chance because of her.

When Katniss ends up in the arena again in the second novel, killing becomes more difficult. This time, she gets to know her competitors better, but has decided to protect her friend Peeta again, with the cost of her own and others' lives: "... the more I come to know these people, the worse it is. Because, on the whole, I don't hate them. And some I like. And a lot of them are so damaged that my natural instinct would be to protect them. But all of them must die if I'm to save Peeta." (*Catching Fire* 281) Katniss is reluctant to kill others if she considers them harmless, but when someone threatens her or her friends' lives, she does not hesitate to kill for defense. In the last novel, she focuses all her hatred and need for revenge to the person who keeps the Hunger Games going: the president of Panem, who lives in his mansion in the Capitol. She joins the rebels with the condition that she gets to be the one to assassinate the old president and this thought keeps her going.

Having had the role of the provider and protector, Katniss is used to risking her own safety for others. Therefore, it is no surprise that she is willing to sacrifice her own life to save Peeta during their second time in the game arena, or that she wants to give herself to the Capitol to stop the revolution and the deaths it requires. She is not afraid of death, but accepts it and wants to die with dignity. When she is nearly killed for the first time in her first Hunger Games, she refuses to scream or beg for her life and instead stares down on her killer, thinking "I will die, in my own small way, undefeated". (*The Hunger Games* 347-348)

The society in *Divergent* aims for peace, so Tris has grown up in a peaceful environment. However, after transferring to Dauntless, she encounters lots of violence, even deaths and suicides. What most affects her, however, is seeing both of her parents die. They both sacrifice themselves to keep Tris alive, which makes her feel like she cannot let them down or die in vain. In Dauntless training, Tris is taught how to be a soldier and use weapons, and she needs to put her knowledge into use during the rebellions. When her own life is at risk, she is capable of killing others, although she feels devastated afterwards. Furthermore, similar to Katniss, Tris also feels guilty for the people who have died as an indirect result of her actions.

Besides seeing others die, Tris thinks about her own mortality. Her selflessness, the trait she learned from her parents, makes her reckless. She frequently risks her own life to help her family and friends, or anyone who shares her values, because she does not want to sit and wait while others fight. Tris is not afraid of death, but seems to be embracing it and for her, true bravery is facing death. This fits with the idea that in dystopian fiction, one character's destiny is not as important as the destiny of the whole society, which often means that in order to turn the dystopian society into a better one, sacrifices must be made. (Gottlieb 32) Tris is willing to sacrifice her own life to save her old faction from the threat of war and volunteers as a hostage for their enemies. However, Tris' desire to sacrifice herself is not genuine, but a way for her to escape the guilt and grief over the deaths of her family and some of her friends. She has lost her will to live and sees death as a comforting state, where she will be reunited with her dead loved ones. It is only when she accepts that death is a part of life and life is sometimes hard that she can start her mourning process and move on: "... I don't want to die anymore. I am up to the challenge of bearing the guilt and the grief, up to facing the difficulties that life has put in my path." (*Allegiant* 411)

The violence and death in the novels affects the characters in a negative way: they create traumas that the protagonists need to deal with. After her experiences in the arena, Katniss has lost her trust in people. She is confused about the rebellion, not knowing what really happened and who is on her side, and feels that "the memories swirl as I try to sort out what is true and is false". (*Mockingjay* 4) At the rebels' base-camp she does not obey their daily schedules or listen to their leaders, does not even want to be the face of the rebellion at first, because she is too distracted by her own traumas. She is even classified as "mentally disoriented" and wears a hospital bracelet at all times. Katniss spends her days wandering around the camp, looking for places to hide as she wants to avoid other people. She is even more keen on solitude and silence after her time in the Games, than she was before.

Because Katniss was surrounded by enemies and had to keep guard at all times in the arena, she finds it hard to adapt to normal life again. She would rather pretend that the games were a bad dream, but is obliged to appear in all the Hunger Games celebrations. In the arena, her outer appearance changes, making her look "rabid, feral, mad" (*The Hunger Games* 422-423) and she needs to be sedated several times so that she can be healed. She has nightmares, and the idea of returning to the arena makes her hysterical: she tries to run away into the woods, starts drinking liquor and bursts out crying in front of her family. She even feels she is losing her sanity: "Maybe I'm already going crazy and no one has the heart to tell me. I feel crazy enough." (*Catching Fire* 469) In the last novel, at the

rebels' base camp, Katniss frequently gets break-downs and does not want to eat, speak or even live. She is constantly at the edge of hysteria, and is thus kept sedated in the hospital: "I've spent most of my time in 13 disoriented, worried, angry, being remade or hospitalized". (*Mockingjay* 215) Later, she learns to cope with her traumas with the help of therapy and her family and friends, and can live a nearly normal life.

Tris, too, has traumas after all the deaths and wars she has been a part of. She tries to forget the violent events and distract herself with other things, but with weak results. She has nightmares of the deaths and loses her senses when memories of the attacks are triggered. Furthermore, she feels useless because she cannot hold a gun anymore without having flashbacks of the people she has killed herself. Tris tries to avoid mental pain, grief and anger by denying the negative feelings, and refuses to talk about them with her friends. She even tries to hide some of the things she did, because she is afraid of how others would react if they found out all the horrible things she did. Even after others forgive her, she has trouble forgiving herself. Because of her traumas, Tris has suicidal tendencies and she no longer cares whether she is dead or alive. It takes a near-death experience for Tris to get back her will to live. When she is captured by her enemies and told the exact date of her execution, she realizes she wants and needs to stay alive for the people who have died for her, and she needs to keep fighting for the rebellion. Furthermore, after she has talked to her friends about her traumas, she regains her ability to function normally.

Identity development may be hindered by different traumas and social or other problems. In both novels, traumas are created by violence and death, which the protagonists have been a part of. They must accept the traumas and deaths and learn to live with them in order to move on with their development. As has been discussed in this chapter, identity development is a complex task, which is affected by several things, including the traumas and childhood experiences one has. The protagonists need to consider who they are and who they want to be, think about their own values and act according to these values. Through their actions, successes and failures, they must develop a healthy self-esteem, which helps them to deal with the inevitable misfortunes in life. The protagonists must also adapt to different situations and environments, and build an identity that is not dependent on these environments, as they may change during their lives. However, although everyone needs to build their own identities, it is always done in a social environment, in relation to other people and the surrounding society. The next chapter focuses on the different relationships in the protagonists' lives, which affect their development.

4. Forming New Relationships

Forming and maintaining relationships is important in every period of one's life, but especially in adolescence, when the young adult is trying to gain independence from his or her parents. As the parents become less important in the young adult's life, the importance of peer relationships increases.

The first subchapter discusses the relationship between the young adult and his or her parents and the process of becoming independent from them. It also discusses substitute parents that are present in both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, because the protagonists lose their own parents early in the trilogies and need other adults to rely on and rebel against. The second subchapter focuses on peer relationships and the sense of belonging among them. The last subchapter discusses romantic relationships, which are a minor theme in both novels.

4.1. Parents and substitute parents

As was already mentioned in the theory section, the relationship between the adolescent and the parents is often foregrounded in young adult fiction. The protagonists gain independence from their parents, but not without conflicts. (Trites 55) In both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, the protagonists leave their homes and families, thus also their parents, behind as the novels begin. This way, they are forced to become independent rather quickly. Katniss is selected as a player to the Hunger Games, and travels to the Capitol without her parents and Tris changes factions, heading to her new home all alone. However, even if the parents are not with the adolescent, they have a "psychological presence" (Trites 55). This means that the adolescents feel their parents' morals, when they consider their actions. Trites argues that this is mostly a repressing presence, but it can also be felt in a comforting way. For example, in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss, who has lost her father when she was younger, finds comfort in her father's old hunting jacket, in which she feels his presence. She also remembers her father's instructions on edible and poisonous plants in the arena, which help her survive.

The parents in *Divergent* also have a "psychological presence" when they are not around. When Tris leaves her home to join a new faction, she loses her parents. They no longer have any real control over her and she cannot rely on her parents for advice or support, but has to survive on her own. She is supposed to consider her new faction as a new family, because as the faction rules dictate, "faction before blood". However, Tris keeps thinking what her parents would say or do and feels good when she acts according to the values her parents taught her and knows they would be proud of her. Furthermore,

when Tris meets her parents again on visiting day, she is concerned about whether they will approve of her new style. It is then that she realizes she does not need her parents' approval anymore, because she is independent from them and can make her own decisions. She also begins to question her parents' morals and no longer considers their decisions to be the only right ones. As Tris says, "I am not my parents." (*Divergent* 102) and thus she does not have to think or act like them.

Tris gains independence from her parents rather quickly, but still feels affectionate about them amidst her new life. She is happy to see them on visiting day and trusts them with her divergent secret. They have a close relationship despite the distance and the fact that they do not speak much or share memories with each other. The parents seem to trust Tris as well and consider her a grown-up. During the first wave of the rebellion, her father lets her decide on a strategy against the enemy and supports her ideas. Furthermore, Tris can stand up for herself against her parents' ethics when it comes to shooting and killing to prevent further deaths.

After her parents' deaths, Tris cherishes their memory. She has recordings of her parents on a hard drive, which she hides and tries to preserve, and later she finds her mother's old journal. Because her faction did not allow photographs, these are the only keepsakes she has of her parents and they make her feel like she gets pieces of them back. She tries to remember how they behaved and what they valued, because she believes that remembering them will make her a better person. As her parents died to keep Tris alive in the rebellion, she thinks that she needs to keep fighting for a better future so that her parents did not die in vain.

In *The Hunger Games*, the relationship between Katniss and her parents is complicated. Katniss' father has passed away and her mother is unable to take care of her children, as she became depressed after her husband's death. In young adult fiction, parents are frequently nonchalant and abandon the needs of the adolescent. Furthermore, the whole parent – adolescent relationship can be reversed, which means that the adolescent takes on the role of the carer and looks after the whole family. (Österlund 131) This is Katniss' fate as well, when she needs to learn how to provide and care for her family. She goes hunting, handles the finances, trades in the market for necessities and does most of the cooking. Before leaving for the Games, she leaves instructions for her mother and sister on how to survive without her. Because of her role in the family, Katniss feels she needs to protect her mother against the rebellion and the threats of the Capitol: "there was no going back after I took over caring for the family when I was eleven. How I will always have to protect her." (*Catching Fire* 38) She does not tell her family about the threats and troubles she faces, because she wants to keep them

from worrying. She acts strong and reassuring, sometimes forgetting to tell them about all the dangerous things she is about to face, sometimes choosing not to. “It’s automatic. Shutting Prim [Katniss’ younger sister] and my mother out of things to shield them.” (*Catching Fire* 39)

Because of the role changes in the family, the mother-daughter relationship between Katniss and her mother is a complex one. The mother has not been fit for parenting since the father’s death, so Katniss has grown up with no boundaries or rules, and has never asked for an adult’s permission to do things. She makes her own decisions, which during her life have mostly dealt with the acquisition of food and other supplies. Because of her mother’s neglect in taking care of her children Katniss finds it hard to trust her. They were starving to death before Katniss learned how to hunt, and she cannot forgive her mother for failing to protect them. The mistrust has created a wall between the two and therefore, Katniss never confides in her mother.

Despite the complex relationship between Katniss and her mother, Katniss still misses her, a parent that would take care of her, although she finds it hard to admit it. After returning home from the Games, she tries to mend their relationship. She realizes that the depression her mother was in was a disease, and it is unfair to punish her for being sick: “Because sometimes things happen to people and they’re not equipped to deal with them.” (*Catching Fire* 38) She begins with small things, like letting her mother draw her a bath, and slowly learns to treat her mother like a parent. They develop a healthier relationship, although Katniss never considers her mother to be the one she relies on during difficult times.

As the actual parent is often not available where the action takes place, a substitute parent is commonly presented in young adult fiction. The substitute parent has several parent-like qualities: they can give advice, encourage the protagonist or serve as an authority that the protagonist can rebel against. (Trites 60) In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss’ substitute parent is Haymitch, her mentor during the Games. Haymitch is a middle-aged man, who in his own youth participated in, and won, the Hunger Games. Because of this, he now works as a mentor for new tributes in his district, training two new minors every year for the arena. As most of the tributes die during the Games, it is not a pleasant job, and has made Haymitch “surly, violent and drunk most of the time”. (*Catching Fire* 12)

Haymitch and Katniss do not get along with each other, but they share an understanding from the beginning. Haymitch sees potential in Katniss and Peeta, Katniss’ fellow tribute, so he agrees to decrease his alcohol consumption and to help them build strategies for their appearances, interviews and the game arena. Katniss understands that she cannot survive alone, and thus she needs to take

advantage of the advice Haymitch gives her. In the arena, Haymitch is her only link to the outside world. They cannot speak directly, but because they think alike, they are able to communicate through the sponsor gifts Haymitch sends to the arena. Even after the Games, Haymitch continues to mentor Katniss and Peeta. He escorts them on their victory tour, making sure they stay safe and do not say anything that could upset the Capitol. He reminds them that the Games are never over and they must hold on to their strategies whenever they are on camera.

Having worked as a mentor in the Games for decades, Haymitch knows a lot about the Games and the Capitol. Thus, Katniss begins to trust him with her troubles concerning the elite of the country. Haymitch is the first person she tells about the President's threat, because she believes Haymitch "will know best who to burden with it" (*Catching Fire* 46). She also confides in Haymitch with her thoughts on the possibilities of an uprising and shares her plans about running away with a selected few. One event at a time, Katniss thinks of Haymitch less as merely her mentor in the Games, and more as a mentor that guides her in her life. As they spend more time together, Katniss begins to consider Haymitch as a part of her family, despite their disagreements: "He's dreadful, of course, but Haymitch is my family now." (*Catching Fire* 214) Katniss and Haymitch also have a lot in common: they both hate the Capitol, like solitude, and they have both survived the Hunger Games and the traumas it brings with it. When Katniss is leaving for the second Games, her goodbyes to Haymitch are one of the hardest ones: "I know I should say a whole bunch of things to Haymitch, but I can't think of anything he doesn't already know, and my throat is so tight I doubt anything would come out, anyway." (*Catching Fire* 313-314)

After the first Games, Katniss feels like she owes Haymitch her life, because she could not have won without a good mentor. She trusts in Haymitch's judgement, as he won the Games with his wits, just like Katniss herself. She lets Haymitch decide who to take as allies and how to perform on camera, because, as she discusses with her friend Peeta, Haymitch is often right: "Don't tell him I said so, but he usually is [right], where the Games are concerned." (*Catching Fire* 277) Haymitch continues to work with Katniss throughout the rebellion, because he knows how to make her a believable rebel, and how to make her appearances convincing. This time Haymitch is able to control Katniss' actions better, making sure she stays safe and demanding she wear a headpiece in her ear every time she is out on the field. Thus, although Katniss' mother is also at the rebel camp, it is Haymitch who watches over Katniss.

In the end, Haymitch is important to Katniss because he understands her and, due to their similar experiences in the Hunger Games arena, thinks like her. Haymitch is the only one who understands Katniss' worry and stress over those who are held captive by the Capitol, because Haymitch knows how cruel the Capitol can be. They both have a personal vendetta against the Capitol, as it has threatened their friends and family. They are even ready to organize the last Hunger Games for the children of the Capitol to make the old elite pay for their cruelty. Because Katniss and Haymitch are alike, Haymitch is able to set the limits Katniss needs, and give her enough space to make her own decisions, which is something her own mother has failed to do.

In *Divergent*, Tris needs to leave her family behind, too. In her new faction she faces lots of challenges and needs to deal with her divergence, which she has been told to keep a secret, but does not understand why. Thus, when she meets Tori, a woman from the Dauntless faction, who seems to know something about divergence, she relies on her and expects her to give her the answers she needs. The first time Tris and Tori meet is at Tris' aptitude test, which is supposed to test her personality and offer a suitable faction for her. During the test, Tris finds out she is divergent, and it is Tori who tells her to hide the divergence and helps her to cover her aptitude test result. Later, when Tris is at the Dauntless compound during her initiation training, she has more time to discuss her divergence with Tori. It is a subject that is forbidden in the society and thus Tris is having a hard time figuring out what it means. With Tori's help, she finds out what she is and why she needs to keep her identity a secret.

Because Tori knows about divergence, Tris goes to her every time she has questions about it. After trusting her with the divergence secret, Tris can tell her other things that bother her as well. When she is feeling upset because of difficulties in training, she goes to Tori for comfort and encouragement. Tori also feels compassionate towards Tris, because she reminds her of her brother, who was also divergent, but whose secret got out and who was killed by the authorities. Because of their bond, they can trust each other even amidst rebellion, when it is hard to tell who is a friend and who is an enemy.

During the rebellion, Tori is nominated for a Dauntless leader, just like Tris, and accepts the position. She becomes one of the authorities, and although she and Tris agree on several things and are on the same side during the war, they have their disagreements. Tori is driven by the desire for revenge for her dead brother, whereas Tris wants to unveil the secrets the city's authorities have been keeping. When these desires are in conflict due to a misunderstanding, they end up fighting with each other. Tori turns from a compassionate advisor to yet another authority who tries to limit Tris, stop her endeavors and trial her with the other war criminals. However, as the war goes on and the society changes, Tris

and Tori discover that they have similar ideas of a just society and end up working on the same side again, willing to leave the city behind and discover what awaits beyond its fences.

In both novels, substitute parents are the ones who offer guidance and give advice, because the actual parents are not available. In *The Hunger Games*, the mother is distant and unable to be a parent because of her own traumas, and in *Divergent*, both parents die during the first novel. Thus, it is the substitute parent who takes over and acts as an authority, against which the protagonists can rebel. However, once the protagonist has gained independence, developed a permanent identity and adapted to the society, they no longer need the help of the substitute parent. They often remain friends, as is the case in *The Hunger Games*, but as equals instead of an advisor – apprentice relationship.

4.2. Peer relationships

There is often a gap between different generations, which divides adults and adolescents into opposing teams. (Rättyä 115) When parents and other authorities seem too oppressing and do not understand the adolescent, the importance of peer relationships grows. Furthermore, forming meaningful relationships is a part of identity development. (112) In both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, the protagonists need to form new relationships as they leave their families and old lives behind. They identify with their new friends and form groups, through which they develop their own identities. According to Erikson, these groups often have rules and terms about who can belong in it. (132-133) In both novels, these groups are formed with people who have the same goals or values, and those who are not trustworthy are left out. The importance of these peer relationships becomes more important when the protagonists are opposed by a corrupted society led by adults.

In *Divergent*, Tris does not have many friends in her old faction. She and her brother spend time with some of the neighbors, but they do not develop close relationships because their faction forbids free time where they could get to know each other better. However, as soon as she leaves her old faction for Dauntless, she befriends new people. Because Tris has left her whole family behind, her friends in Dauntless soon become important for her, like a new family. They help and support each other, and cheer each other up during the initiation tests. Tris identifies herself as a “Dauntless” with the others, which strengthens the feeling of belonging she has in the faction. However, the initiation is a competition, where the weakest ones will drop out of the society, and the best ones get the most interesting jobs, while those in between must guard the fence or the streets for the rest of their lives. This competition causes a crack between Tris and her friends. When Tris does well in the

psychological part of initiation, others begin to see her as a threat. It becomes impossible to know who to trust and some friends turn into enemies who try to harm Tris.

In her old faction, Tris has learned to survive on her own, keep secrets and not get too close to anyone. Therefore, it is hard for her to trust her new friend and she keeps her darkest thoughts and secrets to herself and is even ready to lie. At the same time, she does not want barriers between her and her friends, because she feels a connection with them and has made several good memories with them. During the rebellion, everyone loses someone close to them, so the loss and grief connects Tris and her friends and helps her to finally trust them and develop a closer relationship to them. By the end of the trilogy, Tris feels that her friends are more like a family to her than her own brother.

The person that Tris befriends first is Christina, another faction transfer. They do not seem to have a lot in common, but their similar situations connect them. They are both in a new place away from their families and can thus explore their new freedom together. They come from different factions and have a lot to teach each other. As a stronger and a better fighter than Tris, Christina sometimes acts like a protective big sister, and they both defend each other whenever necessary. They have their fights as well, but Tris still trusts Christina the most, telling her plans and secrets to her. After everything they have been through together, the rebellion and the loss of other friends, they have a strong connection. Furthermore, they have a similar desire for justice and an equal society that they are willing to fight for: “Christina and I are not people who cry together; we’re people who fight together.” (*Insurgent* 507)

The protagonist of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss, likes to spend a lot of time on her own. She does not have a lot of friends, nor is she interested in making new acquaintances. In school, she never had a group of friends, and in the Capitol, she prefers to dine alone, not with the other tributes. She likes to wander off alone, be it in the woods or in some closed space inside. However, she cares a lot about the people that are close to her, and keeps them safe at the cost of her own life. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Katniss is very protective of her loved ones, and prefers to team up with those who cannot survive on their own and who need someone to look after them.

Katniss’ only real friend is Gale, her hunting partner. They met in the woods, and have ever since shared hunting and gathering tips. Katniss’ relationship with Gale will be discussed further in the next subchapter. Another person that Katniss considers a friend is Madge, the town mayor’s daughter. They got to know each other in school and began to have lunch together, as neither of them has other friends and they both enjoy silence. When Katniss is leaving her home to participate in the Hunger Games, Madge comes to say goodbye to her and gives her the golden mockingjay pin, which later

becomes the symbol for the rebellion. Furthermore, after Katniss' victory, they both have a lot of free time as neither of them is required to work, and their friendship continues as they teach other skills such as playing the piano or shooting arrows.

It is hard for Katniss to form meaningful relationships and trust others, which means that she has not yet solved Erikson's psychological crisis of intimacy. (Erikson 135) Intimacy makes it possible to form meaningful relationships to other people and to feel love, and those who fail to solve the crisis of intimacy become isolated. (137) As previous experiences affect development, and Katniss has had trust issues with her mother since she was a child, it is no wonder she prefers solitude. Tris also has troubles trusting others with her secrets. However, as both protagonists develop their identities, they learn how to trust others and thus form meaningful relationships. With the help of others, they achieve their goals and learn cooperation. During the psychosocial stage of intimacy, they also develop romantic feelings and relationships, which is the focus of the next subchapter.

4.3. The romantic subplot

Relationships to others, especially romantic relationships, become important during adolescence. As was already mentioned, in order to build these relationships, the adolescent must solve Erikson's psychological crisis of intimacy versus isolation. (Erikson 101) Relationships play a big role in young adult literature, and as Rättyä has pointed out, building meaningful relationships to the same or the opposite sex is a part of identity development. (112) Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* have a romantic subplot in them. In *Divergent*, Tris has a crush on her distant but modest initiation instructor, while in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss struggles with her feelings towards Peeta, her fellow-tribute who becomes her friend and fiancée, and Gale, her hunting partner who has been her best friend through her adolescence.

Peeta is from one of the wealthier families in town, as his parents own a bakery. He gets together with Katniss as he, too, is chosen to be a tribute for the Hunger Games. Although they had never spoken before the Games, they knew each other from school and when they were kids, Peeta threw her a piece of bread when she was starving. This has made Katniss feel like she owes Peeta for her life, which makes it hard to consider him an enemy. From the beginning, Katniss has conflicting thoughts about Peeta. He has always been nice to her, and offers to listen anytime Katniss has troubles in the Capitol, but because they will be enemies in the arena, she wants to keep some distance between them. However, because the Hunger Games is a reality spectacle, their team comes up with the idea of

star-crossed lovers to keep the audience interested. Katniss is forced to play Peeta's girlfriend without knowing if she can trust him, or if he is just playing along to improve his own chances of victory.

Despite the unfavorable conditions, Katniss befriends Peeta in the arena. They become allies and with him, Katniss feels safe for the first time in years. While continuing their lover-act for the cameras, Katniss begins to ponder whether their feelings are real or whether the closed arena distorts emotions. This makes her question her own motives for her actions: "What I did as part of the Games. As opposed to what I did out of anger at the Capitol. Or because of how it would be viewed back in District 12. Or simply because it was the only decent thing to do. Or what I did because I cared about him." (*The Hunger Games* 435) During the trilogy, she has very little time to consider her emotions amidst all the action, and she remains doubtful even after Peeta confesses his true feelings for her. This creates a crack in their relationship, and they end up acting lovers on camera, but avoiding each other in off-camera.

Gale is Katniss' oldest friend and the only person Katniss can relax, smile and be herself with. They have a mutual hobby, poaching, which is what brought them together in the first place. They began their friendship by sharing hunting tips and gradually became a team, helping each other to hunt and selling the game together. Gale gives Katniss the sense of security and companionship, and she can share secrets and thoughts with him in the woods, where nobody else can hear them. He is also someone Katniss can trust completely, because he cannot be influenced by other's opinions: "There's no point trying to dictate what Gale thinks. Which, if I'm honest, is one reason I trust him." (*Mockingjay* 76) However, when Katniss is sent to the Hunger Games, where she meets Peeta and ends up in the middle of a hopeless love story, her relationship with Gale becomes complicated.

Katniss has always considered Gale as just a friend, but as she is forced to think about romantic emotions during her time in the game arena, she begins to question her and Gale's relationship as well. Katniss' time in the Capitol and the Games has created a crack between the two, and it is impossible to go back to the uncomplicated friendship. Furthermore, as they can no longer hunt together, their whole friendship fades away: "The glue of mutual need that bonded us so tightly together for all those years is melting away. Dark patches, not light, show in the spaces between us." (*Mockingjay* 149) Katniss tries to make sense of her feelings, but finds it hard, when there is a rebellion and a war going on at the same time. She even consults her mother with the issue, who mentions Katniss' love for Gale: "Of course I love Gale. But what kind of love does she mean? What do *I* mean when I say love Gale? I don't know." (*Catching Fire* 152)

Throughout the trilogy, Katniss compares Peeta and Gale, trying to decide which one she would like to be with, or if she would be better off alone. The Capitol is pushing her to be with Peeta, as the audience loved their romance in front of the cameras and now wants to see more, but her family and friends consider her to be inseparable with Gale. She keeps comparing the two, trying to think who she cannot live without, but ends up changing her mind whenever something unexpected happens. Furthermore, Katniss' traumas from the Hunger Games prevent her from developing romantic feelings and she keeps wondering how things would have turned out if she had not been chosen as a tribute. Because of her indecisiveness, she feels guilty for being affectionate for either boy, and others disapprove of her indecisiveness as well. However, after the rebellion is over and Katniss has had time to work through her traumas, she is able to build a normal relationship and start a family.

In *Divergent*, the romantic subplot is between Tris and Tobias, her initiation instructor. In their faction, Tobias goes by the name Four, because he does not want anyone to know his real name or where he came from. He is distant and harsh and Tris is afraid of and intrigued by him at the same time. During initiation, they get to know each other better and notice how similar they are, and after the initiation training they begin a relationship. Although everything seems to be going fine at first, they soon discover that maintaining a healthy relationship amidst a rebellion is difficult: they have plans and secrets they do not share, which causes trust issues between them. Tris lies to Tobias on several occasions to keep her plans a secret, which leads to arguing and nearly a break up. Even after the war, they have problems as both are mentally wounded and have internal conflicts.

Tris has problems trusting anyone, because she wants to be independent and survive on her own, without the help of others. Furthermore, it is hard for Tris to show or confess her feelings, because she is not used to any kind of intimacy. She gets jealous and over-dramatic and instead of confrontation, she runs away and keeps herself busy. However, Tobias makes her feel like home after her family is torn apart, and she learns to feel weak with him. Tris realizes that every relationship has its problems and difficulties, but she must decide whether it is worth it or not. "When love is right, it makes you more than you were, more than you thought you could be." (*Allegiant* 415-416) Tris is looking forward to starting a peaceful, normal life with Tobias, which refers to adultlike commitment: she has solved Freud's psychosocial conflict despite all her traumas.

Gaining independence from parents or substitute parents is one part of the identity development process. Both novels begin from a setting where the protagonist is just about to leave their home and family behind, in *Divergent* voluntarily and in *The Hunger Games* because she is forced to do so. The

opportunity to survive on their own increases their independence and enables them to build their identities, while they still have a chance to ask guidance from a parent figure when necessary. As the relationship to the family becomes less meaningful, the importance of other relationships increases. Both protagonists are having difficulties in trusting others, especially amidst wars and rebellions, but they must manage to create and maintain meaningful relationships. This is in accordance with Erikson's psychological crisis of intimacy – failure in maintaining relationships with others leads to isolation and thus hinders development. Besides the close relationships in an individual's life, also the society around him or her affects the development. Social growth and the society's effect will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. Social Growth

Identity is always developed within a society and the society affects the development. During adolescence, young adults need to find their place in the society. In a dystopian world, this is often impossible, and the protagonists in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* need to rebel against the society and help create a better one in order to fit in.

The first subchapter focuses on the issues of socialization and the society's effect on the individual. It also discusses the protagonists' rejection of their society's ideals and norms in the novels. The second subchapter focuses on the task of finding one's place in the society and what problems might occur during this quest. The last subchapter discusses the ideals and morals described in the novels and how these make comments about the contemporary society. The educational aspect of young adult dystopias is also briefly discussed.

5.1. Socialization and social rejection

According to Erikson, social environment is one of the three factors that affect an individual's development. (134) The culture and the social system in which the individual grows up are part of the social environment. The society sets responsibilities and gives privileges for its members, and there are beliefs about appropriate or normal behavior and acceptable roles for different age groups, such as adolescents. (Nurmi 259-260) The responsibilities and expectations are constructions of the society and therefore may vary from one society to another. In a dystopian society, people's privileges are rather limited and penalties follow neglected responsibilities. Furthermore, the ideas of appropriate behavior and acceptable roles are narrow, so an individual has little choice over his or her own life.

In *Divergent*, the society is divided into five factions, which each represent a different virtue: modesty, bravery, cleverness, honesty and peacefulness. The factions dictate one's place in the society and exchanging faction after the choosing ceremony at the age of sixteen is impossible. The factions are important communities to their members, as everyone is expected to live, have an occupation and start a family among their own faction. The factions also have rules, and those who fail to obey the rules are evicted and must live for the rest of their lives as a factionless at the edges of the city, begging for food and other supplies from others.

The restrictions in the society have affected Tris' development as well: as was discussed in the second chapter, her personality has been suppressed under modesty and she has not had the chance to

discover her own interests. As a member of the Abnegation faction, it has been her role to help those in need, admire equality and forget her own desires. However, she feels like she does not belong in Abnegation, and thus at the choosing ceremony, decides to leave her faction and her family to join Dauntless, the faction that admires bravery. In her new faction, she gets the feeling of belonging and embraces her new role as one of the security guards of the city. Tris is so content and accustomed to the faction system that she never questions it, even though she is secluded from the other factions and has a limited number of choices in her life. She believes in the faction system, which defines people's personalities for them and offers a safe community. Even after spending time with the factionless and learning about their life, customs and how happy they are without factions, she does not want to be a part of it herself and believes that others will want to hold on to their factions as well.

The society in *The Hunger Games* is limited, too. The country is divided into districts and the Capitol, where the president and the privileged elite live. The citizens of the districts, on the other hand, have no privileges, but are forced to produce goods for the Capitol and participate in the annual Hunger Games contest. Everyone stays in their own district for their entire lives, working on the field destined for their district. The only improvement offered to the citizens is participating in and winning the Hunger Games, which is a ticket to wealth and fame. However, the game has only one winner and everyone else will be killed.

Katniss, along with every child between the ages twelve and seventeen, is required to take part in the lottery that determines who will be tributes in the Games each year. When Katniss is chosen as a tribute, she has no choice but to leave her family and home immediately and head off to the Capitol with the other tributes and their mentors. As a tribute, she has certain privileges, like a chance to live in a fine apartment and eat rich foods during her training, but she is also trapped and guarded the entire time, and is expected to fight for her life on camera. Unlike Tris in *Divergent*, Katniss is not content with the social system. She despises the Capitol and its people and often plays with the idea of running away into the forest and leaving her home and its miseries behind. She feels like the Capitol has too much power over her and she cannot decide on her own future.

Besides developing one's identity and forming meaningful relationships, Erikson argues that adolescents must adapt to their society to reach maturity. (155) Everyone needs to find their own place, and where this is not possible, discontent increases, which might lead to rebellions. The new generation has the power to change the ruling social system, if it does not approve of or agree with the old one. Erikson calls this social evolution. (134) Especially in dystopian fiction, the social system is unfair and

restricted, which is why the protagonist does not agree with it. Furthermore, adolescents have a natural mistrust against society and tend to rebel against it in many ways, because the society tries to limit their choices and free will. (Erikson 129) When adolescents feel that the society is limiting them, they begin to resist it. (130) In young adult fiction, power struggles are a common theme: the protagonist needs to learn how power works in institutions and in the society to become a full member of it. (Trites 3) Learning about how power is distributed in the society enables growth and the adolescent must balance his or her power with the society, its institutions and adults. (Trites 10) Resisting the society and its power structures are at the core of both dystopian and young adult fiction.

In *Divergent*, Tris is at first content with the society she lives in, but soon realizes how corrupted some of the factions are. In *Dauntless*, one of the leaders catches her attention in a negative way: he is ruthless and seems to enjoy seeing others hurt. Tris does not trust his judgement or morals, and is not happy to hear his praises: “If Eric [a Dauntless leader] thinks I did something right, I must have done it wrong”. (*Divergent* 176) However, she still believes in the ideals of her faction, being brave and standing up for those who have lost their own bravery, even though some of the leaders ignore those ideals. Later, when the city is in the middle of a rebellion, Tris notices flaws in the other factions as well, and begins to question the whole social system. She does not follow the faction leaders’ orders in war anymore, but makes her own decisions to save the things that are important to her and considers what would be the right thing to do. She even goes against one of her leaders, because their ideas about what is right differ from hers.

During the trilogy, Tris notices other flawed systems, learns about their unfair power structures and goes against them as well. When the faction system is overthrown by the rebels, the former factionless take control of the city, but their aims are not as honorable as Tris had hoped. The citizens have just found out that there are survivors outside their city fences as well, but the focus of the factionless rebels is to keep the city in control, not discovering the world outside. Thus, Tris and a group of allegiants steal guns and a car and escape the guarded city fence. However, outside the city people are living unequal lives as well. Due to genetic experimentation, some people are considered to have “damaged genes”, which affect their personality, while others are considered “genetically pure”. The genetically damaged live a poor life with no chance of improvement, like the factionless in Tris’ old society. Once again, Tris has to find others who disagree with the current system and start a rebellion, which finally leads to a society where everyone has equal choices in life.

As was already mentioned, Katniss, too, is discontent with her society. Living in the poorest district of the country, she keeps wondering what it must be like in the Capitol, where people never lack food or other supplies. She despises them for their vanity and because they celebrate the annual Hunger Games, which for the rest of the country means the death of a neighbor, friend or relative. However, when Katniss is sent to the Games herself, she needs to please the audience in the Capitol to get a sponsor for herself, take part in ceremonies and wear extravagant clothing. She gets to know people from the Capitol, like her stylist and prep team, and understands that there is no point being angry at them, as it is the government and the game makers that create misery.

During her time in the arena, Katniss' hatred for the gamemakers increases: she wants to get any revenge she can have, shame them and make them accountable for the deaths they have caused. She also wants to show the Capitol that she is not a trained dog that they own, but has her own values. She believes the worst of the gamemakers and is convinced they would hurt her family and friends to get to her, which makes her afraid of them. The one that she especially despises is the leader of the country, president Snow, who has threatened Katniss personally. She fantasizes about killing him whenever she needs a distraction and the idea of seeing him die motivates her to survive in the arena and during the rebellion. Her contempt towards the Capitol and the president drives her to join the rebels and become the face of the rebellion. In the rebel's base camp, she learns how power works and how she can use her own power to help the things that are important to her. She uses her status as the one who started the rebellion to ensure her family and friends safety.

Adapting to the surrounding society is an important part of one's development. Because neither Katniss nor Tris wants to adapt to the dystopian society around them, they begin to rebel against it. Both protagonists learn more about the social constructions and institutions and reject these. They become leading characters in the rebellions against the ruling governments, helping to demolish the dystopian society and build a democratic one. After this is done, they can find a place for themselves in the society.

5.2. Finding one's place in society

As was already mentioned, adapting to a society and finding one's place in it are important tasks in adolescence. This includes role changes as well: the adolescent transforms from a child, who has practically no responsibilities or power, to an adult with the freedom of choices and decisions and different responsibilities. Adolescents' own perceptions and definitions of themselves affect the roles

they choose. It is also the basis of identity politics, which deals with an adolescent's self-identifications in terms of gender, class and other concepts, which have an effect on their access to power. (Trites 51) In *Divergent*, for example, Tris identifies herself as a divergent, different from the faction system, which allows her to go against her government and cross the boundaries of the factions. Similarly, in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss can join in on the rebellion only after she identifies herself as the mockingjay, the face of the rebellion.

After losing the faction system in *Divergent*, Tris finds it hard to adapt to the new society and find her place in it. She feels like a stranger everywhere after her old home has been demolished, and is faced with the task of finding peace and stability within herself and making a home in a foreign place. The feeling of not belonging increases when she leaves the city, because she does not know anything about the outside world and thus has a lot to learn before she can settle in it. "When we left the city, we lost our factions, our sense of purpose." (*Allegiant* 202) Tris feels detached from the city, because all that is left of her friends and family escaped from it and found their way to the outside compound with her, and therefore does not want to go back. She can only wait for instructions and guidance from the people who already know the outside world and who are eager to show Tris and her friends what they have been missing in their former home town. However, before Tris can settle in her new surroundings, she discovers it is just as corrupted as the city she left behind:

I was beginning to feel that I had finally found a place to stay, a place that was not so unstable or corrupt or controlling that I could actually belong there. You would think that I would have learned by now - such a place does not exist. (*Allegiant* 276)

Tris cannot find a place for herself in the new world, which is why she begins to think of a way to improve it in a way that would allow her to settle in it.

Tris has strong ideals about what is right or wrong and how a society should work for everybody's benefit. Even when her ideas are in conflict with the majority's opinion, she believes in them and finds ways to convince others to agree, and where this is not possible, works behind their backs to achieve her goals. She tends to take the leader position without realizing it, rather than follow someone else's plans. For example, in a training practice she comes up with a plan and gives orders to others accordingly, and can figure out the enemies plans and a way to stop them. She speaks up her mind and others listen to her opinions and ideas and consider her smart despite her young age. Therefore, during the rebellion, she is nominated as a Dauntless leader but refuses the honor, because

she has already embraced her divergence and lost her faith in the faction system. In the outside world, she is also offered a chance to train as a counselor, which she takes to gain more power.

Tris is having a hard time adapting to any of the societies she encounters during the trilogy. She wants everyone to have equal rights despite their heritage and makes it her mission to develop such a society. She and her friends develop a plan to hijack power from the bureau they are staying in, which includes someone risking their life for the cause. This someone ends up being Tris, because of her determination to create a society where everyone could choose their own place, her selflessness and her need to protect her loved ones. She has had an active role throughout the rebellion, making deals with different factions and plotting against injustice. Thus, she is the crucial part in improving the society, but never gets to enjoy the life in it.

When Katniss is sent to the Hunger Games arena and comes out as the victor, her role in the society changes at once. She is no longer a nobody in the poorest district, who is to work as a miner when she is old enough. Instead, she is now a celebrity, known by everyone in the Capitol and expected to make appearances every year as a part of the Hunger Games show. Her new role gives her power, because while idolizing her, people also listen to her. Furthermore, because her actions in the arena were considered rebellious, she is viewed as a symbol for the rebellion by the citizens, and as a dangerous enemy by the Capitol officials. Even though others consider Katniss a rebel, she is not sure of her motives herself. As was already discussed in Chapter 2, she has conflicting thoughts about the rebellion and her own part in it. It was not her intention to start a rebellion, but as she has always despised the Capitol and the whole idea of the Hunger Games, she was more than willing to perform small acts of defiance against it. “Could it be the people in the districts are right? That it was an act of rebellion, even if it was an unconscious one?” (*Catching Fire* 144) Eventually, Katniss decides that her motives in the past do not matter, if she is now willing to take the role of a rebel.

As Katniss identifies herself as the face of the rebellion, she gets new kinds of responsibilities and privileges and access to more power than before: “I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. The person who the districts – most of which are now openly at war with the capitol – can count on to blaze the path to victory.” (*Mockingjay* 12) She has a chance to defend others and give them hope, but she is also the enemy’s target. She has the courage to resist authorities because of her new celebrity status and because she is not afraid of a punishment anymore: “I’ve been a tribute in the Games. Been threatened by the president. Taken a lash across my face. I’m already a target.” (*Catching Fire* 148) Katniss embraces her new role so deeply that it

outweighs her own desire to live, as she is ready to die for the revolution to continue. She also has a team to help her become more influential among the citizens and a camera team ready to broadcast her speeches and actions to the whole country.

Katniss' role as the face of the rebellion was meant to be just for show, in which she has no real power to decide on political or other matters. However, the further the rebellion goes, the more people begin to see her as a real leader and she demands more authority for herself because she is tired of being a piece in other people's games. She gains confidence to make her own plans and demands to the rebel council and appeals to her role in the rebellion to get her way of things. Later, amidst the rebellion, Katniss takes the role of the leader of her squad as their former commander dies, and executes her own plans with the help of others. She turns out to be a convincing leader, making strategies and taking advice from the rest of the squad, when she is out of ideas herself. Her squad also respects her, believes in her when she doubts herself and is willing to follow her even when they know Katniss does not have the rebel council's approval.

Katniss has identified so strongly with her role as the face of the rebellion that she cannot see a future for herself after the revolution is over. Her plan is to attack the Capitol, kill the president and then get killed herself. She is tired of being in the spotlight and followed by cameras, traumatized by the Hunger Games and the war, and wants to be left alone, so that she does not have to follow anyone's orders anymore. After the war, nobody seems to know Katniss' place in the new society, and thus her old mentor Haymitch takes her to their old district to recover. Most of her old friends start a new life in other parts of the country, but Katniss is too depressed to leave her old home. With the help of Peeta, who has also returned to their district, she begins to hunt again and write memoirs. She settles for the role of a nobody again, away from the Capitol and the now renewed government.

Finding one's own place in the society is not an easy task, and the protagonists in both novels try on different roles to find a suitable one. As the societies are in the middle of rebellions, the roles Tris and Katniss adopt are also strongly connected to the uprisings. At first, the roles are offered to the protagonists from the outside – Katniss is considered as a victor and as a face of the rebellion, and Tris is given the roles of a dauntless soldier and a divergent rebel. However, as the trilogies go on, the protagonists take over roles that suit their identities, such as the role of a leader. With a suitable role, they can finally adapt to the society.

5.3. Fictional societies and the contemporary world

Young adult literature focuses on the relationship between the individual and the society and its ideologies. While telling the story of the young protagonist, it also comments on the surrounding society by reinforcing some ideas and condemning others. (Trites 27) In dystopian fiction, the fictional government and its ideals are criticized, while the protagonist who tries to bring justice to the society is considered to be on the right path. This is also the case in both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. They both have a strictly organized society, which oppresses their citizens and keeps their choices over their own lives at the minimum for the society to function. The society in *The Hunger Games* is classic dystopian: there is the ruling elite, whose privileges are made possible by oppressing the rest of the country. In *Divergent*, the society is not so obviously corrupted, because there is no elite. Everyone is seemingly equal, but the society has strict rules that everyone must obey if they want to remain a part of that society. Furthermore, the society beyond the city where the protagonist has grown up in is divided unequally based on genetics and is in fact monitoring the city and considers its inhabitants as merely a part of a scientific experiment.

Wolk points out that even though dystopias are set in the future, they comment on present-day society. (668) For example, while the fictional governments are criticized, the reader may be guided towards accepting the contemporary, democratic society. (Trites 27) In *The Hunger Games*, the characters often think about how the society will be organized after the rebellion and consider democracy a suitable option. They have been taught about the past and the democratic times at school and after the rebellion and wars, an election is set up for choosing a new president. In *Divergent*, the order of the society is more complicated and the protagonist tries to hold on to the faction system, because it represents community for her. However, Tris is against injustice, wants to fix the corrupted factions and increase the freedom of choice among the citizens. At the end of the trilogy, the city has a new democratic government with elected politicians and the citizens can move freely in the city and choose the professions they prefer.

Young adult literature presents and criticizes other ideologies and values as well, not just the way society is governed. Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* lack freedom of choice in an individual's life. They depict societies where personal choices do not exist, independent thinking is discouraged and the citizens cannot leave their country or city, as the borders are fenced and guarded. Furthermore, the elite in *The Hunger Games* has forbidden any negative speech or critique towards the government, thus limiting the citizens' freedom of speech. All these details are presented in a negative

way as something one should disapprove and try to get rid of, and the novels encourage the reader to appreciate his or her contemporary society.

The novels condemn the social class system, too. In *The Hunger Games*, there is the elite that has access to luxurious things and is privileged in many ways. The different districts are also unequal with each other: the Capitol favors those who produce luxurious materials, such as jewelry or clothing, while Katniss' coal mining district is one of the poorest ones. The rebels, on the other hand, want everyone to be equal and have the same chances of success. The Capitol citizens in the trilogy are considered vain and despised because of their vanity, while Katniss does not want to spend the money she has earned by winning the Hunger Games. Thus, the novel is also critical about materialism. *Divergent*, on the other hand, is not condemning the class system and materialism as openly as *The Hunger Games*, but the aim to achieve equality among the citizens, where nobody is better than others, is present in it.

Education is often considered important for gaining knowledge, but neither of the trilogies discuss education as such. Both protagonists have spent their childhood in school, but the education has been rather basic and focused on producing more obedient citizens. However, both protagonists go through combat training, which allows them to become leading characters in the upcoming revolutions. The combat training is not merely physical, but also contains psychological and theoretical knowledge and thus it can be said that knowledge is valued in both trilogies.

Dystopias for young adults and children are often pedagogical and try to educate the readers in some way. (Hintz and Ostry 7) Because of their strong connection to society, governance and other social issues are often among the things taught in the novels. They can teach for example how a society works, about governance and politics and about social responsibility. (Wolk 667) Furthermore, the novels have lots of moral and ethical dilemmas that force the reader to consider these problems as well. As was already mentioned in chapter two, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* both deal with death and killing other people. Both protagonists are put in a situation where they must kill to save their own lives or the lives of someone they love. They also encourage readers to think about death sentences: do the people who have hurt and killed others deserve to die?

Young adult dystopias often criticize the adult world, as it is the adults who have created problems, and the young protagonist is the only one who has the power and ability to solve them and help create a better society. (Hintz and Ostry 8) This creates a generation gap and seems to fit well with adolescents, who try to differentiate themselves from adults and create a society that is more suitable

for their own generation. The suffering and traumas in dystopian fiction also fit to the world of adolescents as they struggle to find themselves and their places in the society. Furthermore, adolescents are the underdogs in contemporary societies, much like the oppressed citizens in dystopian fiction, who want more power and freedom but are not quite sure how to achieve those. As Hintz and Ostry argue, dystopian fiction has a lot in common with adolescence and can be considered a metaphor for youth. (9) The protagonists in the both novels discussed in this thesis deal with traumas, wonder about the limits of their freedom and power in the society, rebel against the adults in the society and consider their identities in contrast to the surrounding society. These problems are common in adolescence, and are also present in most dystopian fiction.

Society is always present in young adult literature, as the events take place in a society and the protagonists either reject or approve of it as they try to find their place in it. Furthermore, young adult literature often comments on the surrounding society and its values, criticizing some ideals and supporting others. *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* both seem to condemn the social class system, and support equality, democracy and knowledge. They also teach young readers about social issues and institutions and encourage to think about moral dilemmas and their own development.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to focus on three themes of young adult fiction – identity, relationships and social growth – and to study how these work in a dystopian setting in two trilogies, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. The theoretical background gave an overview of adolescence, what kind of changes adolescents go through and what kind of behavior is typical for them. The typical themes of young adult literature and of dystopian literature were also discussed. In the analysis section, each theme of the thesis was introduced in its own chapter with an analysis of how these themes work in the two dystopian young adult novels chosen for this thesis.

The protagonists of the novels have fragmented identities, low self-esteem, feel like outsiders and are traumatized in several ways. In order to become grown-ups, they must build their identity and self-esteem to a more stable level and find a role in which they feel like they belong in the society. Furthermore, they must face their traumas and accept the deaths of their friends or family, and their own lethality. The relationships of the protagonists also change, as they gain independence over their parents, form new relationships with their friends and experience romantic feelings. This development happens in the middle of a dystopian setting, with wars and rebellions – therefore, the protagonists have difficulties moving forward in their psychosocial development, but at the same time the chaotic surroundings work as a metaphor for the troubles and instability of adolescence. Maintaining relationships is difficult, too, because one cannot be sure who is an enemy and who is not. The last task of adolescence, social growth, is also problematic in a dystopian society – there seems to be no pleasant roles for the protagonists, so their only option is to rebel against the government and create a different social system. While doing so, they must get to know the institutions in the society and are forced to consider their own morals and ideals.

It seems that a dystopian setting fits well with young adult fiction. The problems that adolescents face during their development are emphasized in dystopian fiction, which makes it seem like a metaphor for youth. Furthermore, the dark themes that are present in most young adult literature, such as violence, social problems and death, are common in dystopian fiction, too. However, the research is based on merely two trilogies, so no wide generalizations can be made. Other novels may handle the topics of identity, relationships and social growth differently. In addition, the research focused on only three different aspects of development which seem to fit into dystopian fiction, but

other aspects may give different results. Dystopian young adult novels and their depictions of other aspects of development could be topics for further research on the subject.

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