

“Viewed with Caution”:

*Rhetoric's of Violence in
Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games.*

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the two rivaling perspectives of Katniss and the Capitol, in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, to extend our understanding of violence in literature. The violent depictions of the novel have received attention and criticism, and the thesis takes issue with how scholars' criticism of violence in children's literature overlooks the complexity and the significant role violence plays in our society and explores the implications of that. The introduction gives an account of the theoretical discussion concerning children's literature and violence. Chapter one begins by briefly illustrating a critic's accusation of Katniss as a murderer to argue its inappropriateness. Following this, the chapter applies a biopolitical lens to investigate Katniss' justification for killing through a close reading of the four instances where she takes a life. The textual analysis of Katniss' coping mechanisms reveals her justifications for killing as a more significant discussion of grievability. In the second chapter, the thesis finds that the Capitol justifies sanctioning violence as a rhetoric to oppress, punish, and maintain power and peace. The chapter applies a theoretical lens of sacrifice and draws on examples from ancient Roman history to study the Capitol's sacrificial discourse. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss and the Capitol justify their violence through different lenses and rhetorics. As this thesis will demonstrate, it drastically changes how violence is framed and who is portrayed as the victim and abuser. Violence is a powerful tool, and *The Hunger Games* demonstrates the importance of understanding that it can be framed, manipulated, and weaponized as a means of self-justification, political propaganda, and coping mechanisms.

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Introduction

In the aftermath of Meghan Cox Gurdon's article *Darkness Too Visible* (2011), in *The Wall Street Journal*, Twitter erupted with a discussion on whether young adult literature can function as a savior for its audience or whether the audience should be saved from the content of the novels. It is an argument concerning censorship as opposed to protecting young adults from violent and disturbing depictions. In addition to this article, multiple scholars and parents have looked at Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) and contested the idea of the trilogy's suitability or appropriateness for its intended audience. One of the major issues relates to the violence depicted in the trilogy, and it earned *The Hunger Games* a place in the American Library Association's "Top Ten Most Challenged Books List" in 2010, 2011, and 2013. The film adaptations of the novels have met similar reviews. *The Hunger Games* takes place in a futuristic North America, called Panem. The novel follows the sixteen-year-old protagonist Katniss who volunteers to take her sister's place as a tribute in the annual Hunger Games. One boy and one girl, from each of Panem's twelve districts, enter the Game to kill their 23 competitors and return home victorious. In this particular Game, two tributes from District 12 are crowned winners: Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. The killing and deaths of young children are a highlighted focus for the critics of the novel. This thesis takes issue with how scholars' criticism of violence in children's literature overlooks the complexity of the significant role violence plays in literature and our society and explores the implications of that. There is no denying the existence of violence in *The Hunger Games*, but a one-dimensional stance on violence ignores the complexity of the field. Collins illuminates and critiques different modes of framing and justifying violence. This thesis aims to showcase the broader discussion surrounding both fields and urge a close reading of two perspectives on killing in *The Hunger Games* that extend our understanding of violence in literature. There are two main issues this thesis will confront. The first explores how Katniss justifies killing, and the second deals with how the Capitol justifies sanctioning and encouraging killing. Katniss' and the Capitol's different perspectives deal with the same deaths; however, they utilize different rhetorics to justify the violence. As this thesis will demonstrate, the two different perspectives drastically change the viewpoint on violence. Neither Katniss nor the Capitol take accountability for the violence; however, while Katniss' justification for killing appears legitimate, *The Hunger Games* demonstrates that the Capitol's sacrificial justification for killing is based on oppression, punishment, and power. As a result of limited space, this

thesis will focus on the first novel (*The Hunger Games*) of the trilogy and urges further research on the remaining novels. Violence in *The Hunger Games*, combined with different theoretical outlooks, illuminates the complexity and importance of thoroughly analyzing perspectives on violence. Critics' lack of nuances concerning violence denies a broader conversation of how it operates in literature and modern society.

Chapter One of this thesis, *Coping with Killing: Katniss' 'Hierarchy of Grievability'*, begins the discussion by briefly illustrating a critic's accusation of Katniss as a murderer, and arguing that it is not applicable because of the context. Following this, the chapter investigates Katniss' justification for killing through a close reading of the four instances where she takes a life. The textual analysis of Katniss' coping mechanisms reveals her justifications for killing as a more significant discussion of how to value life. The chapter applies a biopolitical lens to argue how Katniss', Panem's, and modern society's differentiating perspectives on valuable lives are visible through the analysis of violence. The manner in which Katniss justifies killing redirects the responsibility on to the Capitol and the structure of Panem.

The second chapter, *Sacrifice as Propaganda: The Political Framing of Violence*, offers an in-depth analysis of the Capitol's justification for sanctioning violence. The chapter explores Katniss' accusation of the Capitol's violence as murder and shows that the Capitol applies a sacrificial discourse to justify the killing as a necessary instrument for peace. The chapter applies a theoretical lens of sacrifice and draws on examples from ancient Roman history to study the Capitol's sacrificial justification of killing. Taking into account that the novel is written from Katniss' point of view, the Capitol's rhetoric is exposed as highly flawed and the opposing views are highlighted. Throughout the chapter, the findings indicate that the sacrificial discourse functions as an instrument to maintain power over the districts. Both chapters demonstrate different modes of framing and justifying violence. The two entities, Katniss and the Capitol, do things that might be classified as murder, yet each uses certain types of rhetoric to justify their actions

In *Violence in Pop-Culture Media and The Hunger Games as a Prime Artefact* (2013), Jenna Benson claims that parents should be wary of what their children consume and question the suitability of the novels and films (64). She argues that companies are increasingly profiting from exposing children to unsuitable content and that films, news, books, and popular culture are desensitizing children to violence. Benson refers to 'Social

Learning Theory,' where the idea is that humans can affect each other and replicate unwanted behavior (56). The main argument is that exposure to violence desensitizes children to violent ideas and behaviors. On this basis, she questions the idea on which Collins wrote the books: "She [Collins] seems to imply that real-life violence such as that on the news, or in blogs and podcasts during situations of conflict is wrong, while blatantly communicating that a fantasy-based moment of violent conflict is fine" (Benson 60). As a concluding remark, Benson states that parents should be aware that the violence depicted borderlines obscenity (Benson 64).

The second article, by Sloan et al. (2014), concludes that *The Hunger Games* is highly unsuitable for teens based on their cognitive and physical stage of development. Like Benson, they argue that fictional characters, particularly if a young adult identifies with the protagonist and plot, can function as role models (Sloan et al. 428). Furthermore, characters can encourage and contribute to risk-taking behavior and readers can learn to "mimic aggressive behaviors modelled in these movies" (Sloan et al. 429). Therefore, Katniss' behavior, reactions, or even inner monologue can become a model for young adults to mimic, and through their argumentation they state that Katniss represents a path towards violence. Sloan et al. insinuate that *The Hunger Games* sets an example of violent solutions, whereas adolescents should be encouraged to solve their problems non-violently (431). The article argues that humanity is obsessed with the consumption of violence, and draws the conclusion that "In light of our country's current state of polarity between the unquenchable fascination of the general public for anything morbid and the unabated apathy toward the epidemic of violence and abuse in this country, any novel based this close on reality should be viewed with caution" (Sloan et al. 432). It is not clear what 'reality' they are referencing and how these are connected. Yet, this thesis assumes they are referring to the underlining trope of dystopian pessimism evident in *The Hunger Games*.

The introduction and this thesis take issue with several of these critical statements. Neither of the articles defines violence or aggression, and both articles describe violence as a socially constructed, learned, and mimicked behavior. This corresponds with how they classify children's literature, and view literature as a dangerous duplicate of the world to urge less violent plots for youngsters to replicate. Their critiques are based on the presence of violence within the novel and ignore broader depictions and criticisms revealed through a close reading. As this thesis will demonstrate, Collins does not "blatantly communicate that a

fantasy-based moment of violent conflict is fine” (Benson 60). Instead, Collins offers a sophisticated illustration of violence in a fictional universe, which extends our understanding of how violence operates in both literature and modern society. They ignore the long discussion regarding both the definition of children’s literature and the inclusion of dark content, which is similar to how both articles disregard the complexity of violence. Both articles offer a one-dimensional overview of literature, children's literature, and violence.

In *What is Literature?* (1988), Jean-Paul Sartre reflects on the ‘committed’ writer, the reader, and literature as a way to practice freedom. He states, and it is obvious, that language imprinted on a page is the author’s way of communicating (35-36). Sartre is not alone in this line of thinking of literature as serving a function. René Welleck and Austin Warren (1954) discuss different views on literature and conclude that the purpose is simply to function “to its own nature” (Welleck and Warren 28). Fictional literature is something imaginary, although the reader recognizes the symbols or objects referred to by the words. Welleck and Warren explain that “Emotions represented in literature are, neither for the writer nor for the reader, the same as emotions in ‘real life’; [...]: they are the *feeling* of emotions, the perceptions of emotions” (Welleck and Warren 28). The portrayal of emotions can never equal the emotion itself. Furthermore, even when examining a field that is supposedly less fictional, such as life-narratives, Philippe Lejeune classifies autobiographies as referential texts; “they claim to provide information about a ‘reality’ exterior to the text” (Lejeune 43), but the depiction is a resemblance of the truth. Regarding Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, it is a fictional novel, and she does not pretend to replicate modern society. There are many specialists, in various fields, with opinions on whether the novels are suitable for the intended audience; however, the characters, settings, and plot are fictional, the emotions and violence are communicated through words. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between imaginary works of fiction and real-life experiences.

Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* is a work of literature that needs to exist “to its own nature” and not be judged as a replica of real life. The criticisms of Benson and Sloan et al. seem to blur the lines between the real and the fictional. As a result, the criticism presented towards *The Hunger Games*, although important, does not seem to make sense because there should be an obvious distinction between imaginary fiction and reality. However, the blur in the lines appears to be a common trope concerning children’s and young adult literature. According to Jacqueline Rose (1993), children’s fiction keeps returning to

philosophical teachings that positions the child as inherently pure (8). As a result of this, critics argue against exposing youngsters to impure subjects, based on the idea of children as innocent in their view and understanding of society, thereby, their views can be corrupted, or the child can potentially mimic what they read. Concerning fictional literature, there is a fundamental problem with that, because literature does not equal reality.

Studying children's literature makes it evident that the genre, or the field, is quite complex and filled with unsatisfactory answers. The preceding paragraphs have used terms such as *children's literature*, *suitable*, and *intended reader*, while the terms and ideas they refer to are not precise or clear. This thesis will not offer a definition of children's literature because that is not the focus; however, the thesis will be using the idea of the child, in children's literature, to inform the discussion on violence. It is essential to explain the baseline of the broader discussion as it makes it evident that the depicted violence in *The Hunger Games* is not given its due diligence because of prejudice against violent descriptions in children's literature.

Children's literature is often described as literature produced for a young audience; however, it is more complicated. What distinguishes children's literature is that the classification is based on the intended reader. There is a misconception that the classification of children's literature is solely based on characteristics, such as plot, setting, themes, and easily comprehensible language. Anna Scoter and Sean P. Connors (2009) describe an informal experiment conducted on Scoter's literature students. Scoter gave the students ten excerpts from adult novels and ten excerpts from young adult novels, where the protagonist's age and situation were omitted (63-64). The students were to figure out which ten excerpts belonged to the adult literary canon. The informal experiment does not have trackable data; however, the students concluded that the task was challenging and struggled to identify the intended audience for the excerpts (64). This example illustrates some of the complexity of the categorization of children's literature. Rose presents in *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, that stories might not originally have had children as the intended audience, however, stories such as *Peter Pan* are beloved and consumed by many children.

A critical aspect considering children's literature is the role of the adult. Rose explains that "Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, on which it rarely ventures to

speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child” (Rose 2). In other words, a book for children also has the adult in mind, in the sense that it is written, classified, sold, purchased, and even potentially read aloud by an adult. This, in turn, creates a complicated relationship where the writer has to consider the adult along with the child. As the criticism of *The Hunger Games* illustrates, parents and scholars might try to censor or warn against consumption of the novel, which could potentially lead to bad publicity and sales. Rose traces the conversation back to the “mid- to late-eighteenth century” (Rose 8) when children’s literature became an “independent commercial venture in England” (Rose 8). Drawing on philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau, children are inherently pure and innocent, and they need to be protected. For that reason, adults perceive it as their role to control children’s exposure to negative subjects (Rose 10). The child, innocent and pure, represents an uncontaminated world, opposite to the adult.

Perry Nodelman (2008) offers similar research on children’s literature. Nodelman writes about the concepts of the *hidden adult* and *shadow text* within children’s literature, indicating the existence of the adult lurking in the texts. Children’s literature enforces the idea of the child while guiding it, in a manner suited to adults, towards the ‘real world.’ According to Nodelman, adults are concerned with the norms of how children’s literature ought to omit “violence and monstrosity” (Nodelman 121), as a manner in which to protect the child. This idea enforces that fictional literature should display the innocence of the child and the need for adult protection (Nodelman 121). This notion of the child as pure or in need of protection is visible in the Capitol’s choice of sacrificial victims, something this thesis will briefly reference. In Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, both violence and monstrosity are prominent, and adults serve no protection to the children or teenage characters; instead, adults are portrayed as both encouraging and powerless regarding the violence. The role of the adult protector and the projection of children as *pure* is evident in the criticism against *The Hunger Games*. The critics do not focus on whether the plot is well developed or if Collins’ writing style is suitable for the intended reader, rather the presence of violence in the novels. As a result, the critics ignore the significant function of violence or even the portrayal of children in the novel because the argument is centered around the depiction of and protection from violence.

As illustrated in the two critiques of *The Hunger Games* and the ongoing discussion on children’s literature, one of the warnings of depicting violence is the fear of normalizing

violence for young readers. Furthermore, Sloan et al.'s conclusion refers to the obsession with violence as a representation of "our country's current state" (432), alluding to the portrayal of violence as a twenty-first century phenomenon. Since the beginning of children's literature as a commercial venture, depictions of violence have been present. In *Bloody Murder: The Homicide Tradition in Children's Literature* (2013), Michelle Ann Abate quotes different researchers on America's "mania for murder" (6), making it apparent that readers historically have consumed violence in various manners from real to fantasy. She explains, "However unexpected and even seemingly unlikely, the American obsession with murder also permeates its literature for children. [...]. Even fairy tales that do not contain instances of actual homicide often depict attempted murders" (Abate 6-7). This obsession with murder and violence, even its inclusion in children's literature, has been a recurring theme throughout history. Based on these theories, this thesis takes issue with the argument that adults should censor references of violence in children's fiction to protect the child from any imaginary descriptions of evil. As the following paragraphs will illustrate, violence is complex and has to be analyzed. Omitting violence from literature without investigating its role and function builds on a traditional idea of protecting children and enforcing the perspective of the *hidden adult*.

Along with ideas of the child's innocence is the concept of *happy endings*. Even if a child protagonist has to suffer consequences as a result of bad decisions, the happy ending to a story enforces the adult's wish for the youngster's accomplishment (Nodelman 62-63). Although the young adult dystopia is somewhat different to its adult counterpart, the fictional dystopia goes against the adult's wish of projecting a positive example of the world. Bradford et al. (2008) argue that dystopia and utopia, in children's literature, function as "tropes, modes, themes, or settings" (12), and that their purpose is to imply an imaginary need for change or to propose new world arrangements (6). Both utopias and dystopias are characterized as transformative possibilities, and Bradford et al. distinguishes the two by stating that the utopia urges an optimistic and dystopia a pessimistic outlook of the world's social values, systems, and practices (5-6). *The Hunger Games* corresponds with the pessimistic outlook on the world orders and depicts a fictionalized extreme society that places young adults in horrific scenarios, as a conversation that urges change. The examination of the two perspectives will argue that Collins depicts a society where violence is intertwined with values, systems, and practices in need of transformation.

As stated, violence is not easily defined. There is a consensus in what the term involves or refers to, but different scholars explain and define the term differently. For example, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, ‘violence’ is defined as (1.a.) “The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.; physically violent behaviour or treatment” (“Violence”). The dictionary definition is limited, considering that there are multiple ways of causing harm that does not require physical force. The complication of defining violence as behavior or exercise have been illustrated in the preceding paragraphs, where scholars argue that violence in *The Hunger Games* can be harmful towards young adult readers. Robert P. Wolff (1969) defines the concept of violence as “*the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others*” (Wolff 606). The key terms are “illegitimate” and “unauthorized,” as they allow a distinction between murder as a violent act and a death sentence as non-violent capital punishment (Wolff 606). The legitimate and illegitimate concepts are relevant for the discussion of this thesis and will be discussed further in the following chapters.

However, Wolff’s definition of violence as a concept is not precise, yet it is also too specific to be applied. Robert L. Holmes (1973) problematizes the use of the terms ‘physical force’ because “sometimes it is enough merely to pull the trigger of a gun or depress the plunger of a detonator” (398). The two acts are violent but do not involve physical force; in fact, they require little effort. Equivalent to the OED, Wolff’s focus on a physical force as violence excludes other types of harm, such as verbal. Moreover, Wolff acknowledges philosophical implications, yet, states that “Now, of course, under any circumstances, we can distinguish between right and wrong, justified and unjustified, uses of force” (Wolff 607). The statement glosses over issues regarding morals by assuming that humans adhere to the same moral compasses and opinions. For example, how can ‘we distinguish between right and wrong’ concerning Philippa Foot’s trolley problem (Foot 23)? If a train is headed towards a track where five men are working, and the only option is to turn to another track occupied by another man, what is the right thing to do? Would changing the track and killing one person render the act less violent? According to Wolff’s definition the two choices are equally violent because neither action is authorized and both options are “against the will and desire of others.” In other words, Wolff’s definition does not account for context or morally and ethical differences.

As made evident in the introduction, this thesis is interested in how various factors shape the definition and perception of violence. The essential theory for this thesis is that violence is complex, prominent, and is relevant in various scholarly fields. Violence of any sort always has a context. According to Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim (2007), violence is always shaped by its context and the perspectives surrounding it (1). A violent act will be perceived differently from the point of view of the victim, abuser, witnesses, relatives, media, governments, and the list continues. Recollections of the past are not exact or neutral, which leads to different perceptions and perspectives on violence (Lawrence and Karim 1). Instead of classifying violence as a one-dimensional subject from which parents should protect their children, this thesis urges a close reading in order to understand two rivaling perspectives of violence.

Chapter 1:

Coping with Killing:

Katniss' 'Hierarchy of Grievability'

The introduction of this thesis presented Benson's criticism of how the violence in *The Hunger Games* borders on obscenity. Benson acknowledges some of the novel's themes and social criticism; however, she overlooks the complexity of violence by using ambiguous terminology without nuance. In the article, Benson employs strong vocabulary to argue her views, which highlights her lens of framing the deaths as murder. Benson begins her explanation by using the term 'killing,' only to subsequently use 'murder:'

There are several types of killing that are described by Katniss in her adventure. [...]. All of which are creatively written situations in which murder is excused and considered necessary for survival. Also, all of the murder done in the arena is justifiable, which is one of the main arguments within the current debate about violence portrayed by popular media. (Benson 61-62)

Benson describes the killings in the text as murders. Furthermore, her vocabulary is decisive and violent: the novel itself never refers to Katniss as a murderer, nor are her actions described as murders. Collins uses the term murder carefully, and it only appears four times throughout the novel (Collins 239, 362, 391). A close reading of Katniss' four kills and inner monologue highlights the context of the kills and the coping mechanisms she uses to come to terms with them, which illuminates and exemplifies Katniss' justifications for killing. The killings differ in execution and intent, where two of the deaths are accidental, one is intentional, and one is out of compassion. Benson's quotation illustrates a key point of departure for this chapter: Katniss' justification of violence. The beginning of this chapter will illustrate that labeling Katniss as a murderer is, firstly, not precise or accurate. Context of violence is essential, and excluding the context is what allows critics to actively frame the violence as murders. Secondly, it ignores Collins' broader criticism of contextualized, framed, and systematic violence, revealed through Katniss' justification. In order to narrow the scope of the investigation, this chapter will focus on the deaths caused by Katniss.

In *The Hunger Games*, Collins demonstrates the complexity of violence and alludes to political issues regarding the social constructions that dictate sanctioned and unsanctioned violence. Through the lens of Judith Butler's problematization of a 'livable life' and 'grievable death,' this chapter aims to argue against criticism of the novel, which overlooks the complexity of violence. Violence is driven by biopolitics, driven by social needs, and it is linked to political systems. Ultimately, Collins participates in a discussion on twenty-first century society's value of life. It is not as simple as stating that a novel is violent, or that the deaths are murders, without looking thoroughly at the manifestations of violence in *The Hunger Games*. This chapter will argue that Katniss' justifications for killing are clarified to the reader through how she copes with the aftermath of killing. It is made evident that the justifications of violence are linked to Panem's hierarchy of valuable life and illustrates that Katniss holds the political structure responsible for sanctioning killing.

As stated, this thesis does not agree with the categorization of Katniss as a murderer. To illustrate how this label is unsuitable for Katniss' actions and to lay the foundation of the chapter, this paragraph will exemplify the underlying complications of the term 'murder' through examining the governing law of the United States. This is in accordance with Collins' nationality and also because the fictional Panem is based on a country that once was North America. In doing this, the more suitable label of 'killer' will be suggested. In the *United States Code*, Title 18, §1111, murder (a) "is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought" (United States). The section specifies that there needs to be premeditation for a murder to be considered of first-degree (United States). Unlike the term violence, murder is simpler to define because it results in the death of a human being. However, there are different degrees of murder, and a case needs evidence and the persuasion of a jury to convict a suspect. Although there is a clear distinction in the law, any definition of murder will be vague and somewhat ambiguous. Narrowly defined, a murderer is convicted as a killer because they have executed a planned unlawful killing without justifiable intent. Katniss received training in killing competitors, and the rules of the Games state to kill everyone. This means that all the tributes have, in various degrees, premeditated the murders. Although they do not know how it will be accomplished, they are willfully and deliberately executing other children. Whether or not they are murders would depend on a jury. However, Panem is a totalitarian state. Firstly, there is no jury, and secondly, the killings are done according to the law and are therefore legally sanctioned killings, not murders.

Looking too closely at the deaths as murders ignores the fact that the Capitol trained the tributes. Or, in other words, that the killings are not unlawful, but legally sanctioned. Modern societies have scenarios where murders occur more in line with the novel: wars. The United States deployed countless people to fight in wars such as The Vietnam War, the First World War, and the Second World War, where soldiers ended human lives without being convicted as murderers. Soldiers can be convicted of war crimes; however, as stated, the killings in the novel are sanctioned and do not adhere to this category. *The Hunger Games* is a clear illustration of the simplicity of the definition and problematizes the idea of murder and murderer in situations such as war.

In the arena, Katniss focuses on weaknesses and how her competitors might kill her. After being hurt, Katniss reflects on her state: “What easy prey I am! Any tribute, even tiny Rue, could take me right now, merely shove me over and kill me with my own knife, and I’d have little strength to resist” (Collins 197-198). Her life in the arena consists of being paranoid and imagining attacks, more in line with the concept of war than urban homicide. The killings do not occur in the streets, but a constructed battlefield. If anything, some of the killings are more reminiscent of self-defense in a home invasion. In the quotation, Katniss is hurt and weak and does not imagine being able to defend herself. Katniss makes it clear that unless she kills her competitors, they will kill her (Collins 217). Furthermore, Katniss’ strategy is not to fight; instead, she attempts to avoid confrontations. It is impossible (or extremely unlikely) to escape the arena without killing. Therefore, the focus should not be on the deaths as murders; rather, the tributes’ justifications for killing. Collins has chosen to use the terms killer and killing, which is more suitable to the context and society of the novel. The story highlights how violence and even murder are not as black and white or straightforward as some critics, such as Benson, present. In order to examine, argue, and exemplify how Katniss’ justifications for killing are encapsulated in her coping mechanisms, this chapter will analyze the link between justifications, grievability, and the political structure of Panem. The chapter is therefore structured in the following manner: first, an introduction to some of Judith Butler’s ideas regarding biopolitics, followed by an analysis of how this is linked to Katniss’ hierarchy of grievability. Third, this chapter will examine the killings in chronological order. Lastly, the chapter will analyze Katniss’ justifications for her violent actions and discuss how they comment on societies in the twenty-first century.

Judith Butler's notion of *grievable lives* is highly relevant in analyzing and understanding Katniss' justification for killing. She asks, "The question that preoccupies me in light of the recent global violence is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What *makes for a grievable life*?" (Butler 20). In other words, in the politics of war and humanity, some lives are not perceived as lives; therefore, their deaths are not counted as a loss or even grieved. In *Precarious Lives: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), Butler argues that, through a prohibition of public grieving, violence appears minimal (37). Newspapers will not publicly announce the lives lost in wars against the United States and its allies, and a memorial will never be created. Butler continues, "The public will be created on the condition that, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is derealized and diffused" (Butler 37-38); thereby, the effect of violence is suppressed in the society. The lives lost on the offending side are not mourned or grieved, and as a result, the death and the violence is less predominant and derealized. In terms of *The Hunger Games*, there is not a public grieving of the lives lost in the arena. The public celebrates the events and cheers on the competitors. Explained through Butler's terminology, the public of Panem is created on the condition that the deaths of the arena are not avowed as losses, and as a result, they are not violent. Critics, such as Benson, focus on the presence of violence, which undermines the biopolitical aspect of the society and politics resulting in violence. *The Hunger Games* engages with violence and offers a relevant assessment of how it operates in modern society.

As Butler states, some violence is not seen as violence - for example, in war. Violence against terrorists is often deemed as justified; however, innocent lives are lost in the process and forgotten about. In the arena, violence is encouraged and sanctioned, and this chapter explores the process of ending lives and aims to examine Katniss' justifications for killing. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss takes the lives of four children; Glimmer; a girl from District 4; a boy from District 1; and Cato. The four deaths are violent in description; however, they serve different functions in the novel. Through a close reading in chronological order, this chapter will examine and analyze the four episodes where Katniss kills. Her coping mechanisms reveal her justifications for her violence and how she is affected by the conditions and realities that Panem is founded on. At the same time, the main focus is not psychoanalytical; rather, it is on analyzing Collins' language and that it reveals – through the lens of biopolitics – how society determines the value of life. This also shows how Katniss is affected by an individual hierarchy of life. Before an in-depth reading of Katniss' kills, this

chapter will lay a foundation for how Katniss morally distinguishes between the tributes and how this is influenced by Panem's structure of how to value life. Katniss' moral distinctions in combination with Panem's hierarchy of grievability shape how Katniss copes with killing and thereby justifies her actions.

In terms of Katniss' inner hierarchy of grievable lives, there is a moral distinction between the Careers and the rest of the tributes. The Careers are a group of tributes from District 1, 2, and 4 who form an alliance to kill the others. While the killing of the Careers does not affect Katniss, the killing of others, like Rue, Thresh, and Foxface, seems unjust. Through Katniss' coping mechanisms, Collins paints some of the tributes as underdogs who deserve to win and live, while the Careers who trained for the arena are painted as grotesque, and justified killings. Katniss' hierarchy of grievability distinguishes between the tributes' intentions when entering the arena. The Careers choose to compete, while the Capitol forces the rest. Additionally, some are more innocent or do good by Katniss, such as Rue and Thresh. Katniss divides the tributes into good and evil people. The deaths of the morally corrupted tributes are a relief because that means fewer competitors, whereas others are losses of life. Thus, Katniss has a hierarchy of grievable lives. The Career tributes, as the name suggests, are somewhat different from the rest. They come from wealthier districts and train in combat before entering the training center, which gives them an advantage. Training tributes before the Game is technically illegal but happens (Collins 109). As a result, the tributes from District 1, 2, and 4 volunteer to enter the Games and form an alliance, as a contrast to the other districts where the *odds are not in their favor*. The Careers desire to enter a Game where they kill other people; they want the glory of winning the Games. The remaining tributes wish to win, not for the glory, but for survival. In Katniss' hierarchy of grievability, the Careers are not valuable because they portray violent intentions in wishing to enter the arena, as opposed to the other tributes who are given value because of their more innocent intention of survival. In other words, Katniss morally distinguishes between the tributes in her hierarchy of grievability.

In addition to the value assigned through their intention, Collins has created a sort of reverse classism. The readers are to sympathize and assign good qualities to the lower classes. Districts 1, 2, and 4 are the wealthier districts. District 1 is the producer of the Capitol's luxury items, District 2 produces weaponry and trains Peacekeepers, and District 4 is responsible for the fishing industry. In terms of biopolitics, Michel Foucault's idea of the

abnormal gives insight to the Capitol's value system (Taylor 3-9). The abnormal constitutes the idea of an existing and normalized normal - The Capitol - which excludes the others or abnormal, the districts (Taylor 3). Giorgio Agamben's (1998) continuation of this idea is that the abnormal is turned into marked bodies, specifically *homo sacer*, and therefore can be killed (Agamben 86). The bodies in the districts constitute the abnormal, or the marked bodies, which reflect their social value as killable, a means to unite lives of more value. Fani Cettl (2015) states that "it is bodies marked in specific ways that enter the spectacular arena. [...] they are lower class docile bodies in relation to the Capitol, but also hierarchically class differentiated among themselves" (Cettl 144). As discussed, the tributes are divided in terms of intent, and furthermore, there is a division in terms of class. From the beginning of the novel, it is made clear that Katniss is not only from a poor district but also from a poor family. After her father died in a coal mining accident, Katniss became the primary provider of food through illegal hunting. Furthermore, the poorer characters are at a disadvantage, seeing as the 'odds are not in their favor'. In order to survive the hunger in the districts, some are forced to enter the reaping multiple times, as opposed to those with food (Collins 15). This creates a distinction in terms of good and bad odds. Although the richer youngsters have better odds, the Careers are not only sufficiently nourished, but also compete for the chance to participate in the Game. Being a tribute means the odds were in their favor, and their lives are less grievable to Katniss. The significance of this distinction will be further analyzed through the political aspect in the next chapter. However, in terms of this chapter, the essential aspect is that Katniss translates reverse classism into moral values used in her hierarchy of grievability. The moral distinction in her hierarchy is made visible in how Katniss copes with killing and death, and thereby justifies her actions.

In *The Hunger Games*, the first two deaths occur after the Careers chase Katniss up a tree. Katniss gains an advantage because the Careers are unable to follow and kill her. As a result, the Careers decide to wait her out, since Katniss will eventually be forced to climb down. Rue, who was hiding in a nearby tree, points out a 'tracker jacker' nest. Tracker jackers are the Capitol's genetically modified wasps, filled with deadly venom. Katniss explains that "That nest may be the sole option I have left. If I can drop it down on them, I may be able to escape. But I'll risk my life in the process" (Collins, 217-218). After a failed attempt during the anthem, Katniss manages to saw down the branch at sunrise, sending the tracker jackers after the sleeping Careers. In her escape, Katniss takes the life of Glimmer and the girl from District 4. She narrates, "The swelling. The pain. The ooze. Watching Glimmer

twitching to death on the ground. It's a lot to handle before the sun has even cleared the horizon" (Collins 224). In a few words, the quotation highlights how Katniss is uncomfortable with the deaths by stating that it is a great deal to handle. This reveals that the deaths do take a toll; however, it is not enough to make them grievable. Glimmer is in possession of the only bow in the arena, which forces Katniss to return to the body before the hovercraft returns it to the Capitol, illustrating that her survival through the weapon is of more worth than the lives lost. Interestingly, Katniss' reactions provide an example of how "a hierarchy of grief could no doubt be enumerated" (Butler 32), as neither girl seems to be grievable; however, she is affected more by Glimmer through her possession of the weapon. As Butler states "Some lives are grievable, and others are not" (Butler xv), and the next paragraph will carefully examine how Katniss demonstrates that neither lives are counted as grievable because they are already dead, and thereby, signs of this are seen in how Katniss copes with the aftermath of killing.

As Katniss retrieves the weapon, she gives a gory description of Glimmer's body:

This girl [Glimmer], so breathtakingly beautiful in her golden dress the night of the interviews, is unrecognizable. Her features eradicated, her limbs three times their normal size. The stinger lumps have begun to explode, spewing putrid green liquid around her. I have to break several of what used to be her fingers with a stone to free the bow. The sheath of arrows is pinned under her back. I try to roll over her body by pulling on one arm, but the flesh disintegrates in my hand and I fall back on the ground. [...]. Clenching my jaw, I dig my hands under Glimmer's body, get a hold on what must be her ribcage, and force her on to her stomach. (Collins 224-225)

The descriptions of Glimmer's dead body are grotesque, dark, and violent. The language is essential as it illuminates how Katniss deals with the confrontation. There is a distinct contrast between who Glimmer once was and what lies in front of Katniss. Descriptive words, such as "breathtakingly," "beautiful," and "golden," juxtaposed with "exploding lumps," "green liquid," and "disintegrating flesh," add to the violence of the situation while at the same time creating a division of the past and present. Although Collins does not linger on death, she dwells on the violent aftermath of the dead body. The details of Katniss breaking fingers, rolling the flesh that is falling apart, and digging through her ribcage, are nothing but violent. Through the description of the nightmarish state of Glimmer's body, Collins distorts the sympathy in a manner where Katniss is going through something horrible

and experiencing trauma. The reader is encouraged to empathize with Katniss' struggle, rather than focusing on the demise of a child. The language, furthermore, shows a distinction in focus. Glimmer was once a girl, a girl with fingers, but those "used to be her fingers," distancing from the fact of how she was alive minutes ago. This is a coping mechanism for dealing with trauma and guilt. By creating a mangled body, Katniss is not only distancing herself from killing Glimmer but also Glimmer from the dead body. Katniss' separation allows her to avoid taking accountability; although her hallucination of spewing green liquids are unpleasant, it creates a distance from the actions and results, allowing her to cope with the situation. Their deaths are unfortunate, though necessary for Katniss' survival. The killing is not the violent focus, rather the lingering description of the dead body. Additionally, the situation itself is violent. Katniss is somewhat forced to confront Glimmer's dead body. As she is trying to get the arrows, the readers are reminded of the perpetrators, the Capitol. As the cannon fires, Katniss knows the only bow and arrow will disappear from the arena. In terms of Butler's grievability, it is clear that Katniss is desensitizing herself to the violence of the situation. In order to survive and become a victor, Katniss has to kill the other tributes. The bow and arrows are central as they are her advantage for survival, and therefore, become the focus. Furthermore, the prohibition on grievability is furthered in Katniss' actions, she adheres to the society's values of the life not being livable or grievable, and Katniss turns Glimmer into a distorted creature and justifies her actions.

By thoroughly investigating Katniss' coping mechanisms in killing the two girls, it is evident that Collins portrays Katniss' justifications through these coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the coping mechanisms and justifications for violence are influenced by the hierarchy of grievability. Neither girls are of value to Panem and are therefore not viewed as grievable or even human after dying. Moreover, they are Careers, who in terms of Katniss' hierarchy are seen as less valuable. Lastly, the coping mechanism illustrates how Katniss does not portray herself as the killer, and the deaths are justified because it was an accident as a result of self-defense. The following paragraphs will examine the next kill and how Katniss' coping mechanism differs because of her individual hierarchy of grievability. Furthermore, this will show how Katniss' hierarchy of valuable lives differs from the Capitol's and how this alters her justification of killing.

Katniss' next kill is the boy from District 1. Unlike the deaths of Glimmer or the girl from District 4, the death is intentional. As a newly formed alliance, Katniss and Rue decided

to blow up the Career pack's supplies. Most of the Careers have never had to struggle or learn the skills necessary to feed themselves because of their district's wealth. By blowing up the supplies, the Careers lose the advantage of being fed properly in the arena. Katniss and Rue execute a plan of lighting smoky fires to draw the careers out, while Katniss destroys the supplies. The next day Katniss realizes that Rue has failed to return to the assembly point and goes searching for her. She finds Rue tangled in a net as a spear takes her life: "The boy from District 1 dies before he can pull out the spear. My arrow drives deeply into the centre of his neck. He falls to his knees and halves the brief remainder of his life by yanking out the arrow and drowning in his own blood" (Collins 272). This is Katniss' first intentional kill. In the analysis of this death, the main focus is not on Katniss' reaction to killing the boy, but rather how she copes with the killing of Rue. This is done in line with the focus of the novel, where the boy is not given much attention, reflecting Katniss' inner hierarchy of value and justification for killing.

In the aftermath of the kill, the focus is not on Katniss killing a young boy or her intention to kill anyone else that might show up; rather, it is on the death of Rue. As discussed, the description of Glimmer is grotesque and unsettling, whereas Rue's death highlights innocence and loss of life. She explains, "I can't stop looking at Rue, smaller than ever, a baby animal curled up in a nest of netting. I can't bring myself to leave her like this. Past harm, but seemingly utterly defenseless" (Collins 275). Katniss views Rue's dead body as something beautiful, natural, and innocent. Unlike Glimmer, there are no grotesque details of the body, but the description is still abstract. Katniss lingers on the dead body without mentioning the blood oozing from the wound: there is a spear, but the body is not decaying. Katniss turns Rue into a baby animal, something that did not survive the wild. The coping mechanism allows Katniss to rationalize the death, free herself from some of the guilt, and distance herself from the violence. While Katniss is not directly responsible for the death of Rue or Glimmer, the descriptions of their dead bodies reflect some of the guilt surrounding them. Glimmer is turned into a monster that she has to continue to attack, while Katniss attempts to undo the violence to Rue. Katniss literally covers the body and wound to protect the sleeping baby animal lying in the meadow. Instead of confronting the demise of a child, one that she could not protect, she imagines a defenseless baby animal. As a hunter, the death of an innocent animal might be easier to grasp; therefore, Katniss can manage to relieve some guilt and understand the violence. Collins foreshadows this method of coping with violence in a conversation about killing between Katniss and her hunting partner Gale, "Katniss, it's

just hunting. You're the best hunter I know' says Gale [...]. 'How different can it be, really?' says Gale grimly. The awful thing is that if I can forget they're people, it will be no different at all" (Collins 46). Collins consistently ties the children to the ecological world to sympathize with the deaths and allow Katniss to distance herself from the violence. In the death of both Rue and the boy from District 1, it is as though she indeed *forgets* that *they are people*. Her reaction in the situation was that of a hunter, relying on her instincts and skills. As with Glimmer, Rue's body is turned into something else as a coping mechanism. She distances herself from the death and the body to avoid and protect herself from the truth. Rue is turned into a baby animal, something that has a lower chance of surviving in the wild without protection. Thinking as a hunter, Katniss allows herself to view the deaths as a part of an ecological system, instead of the violence of the reality. Thereby, Katniss' coping mechanisms have effectively rendered their lives as not grievable, but part of a natural ecological cycle, and have justified the violence.

Rue's death is tragic and brutal, and Collins highlights the injustice of Rue dying an unnecessary death, filling Katniss with anger. The boy who trapped a young, innocent girl in a net and killed her, compared to a young girl who was too pure to be in the Games. Katniss' kills and coping mechanisms answer Butler's questions of "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What *makes for a grievable life*?" (Butler 20). Katniss' answer is that the tributes do not count and are excluded from the realm of human. Thus far, this chapter has illustrated that Katniss is influenced by the Capitol's dehumanization of the tributes in addition to her inner hierarchy of grievability. The death of Rue and the boy from District 1 contextualize the violence as an injustice. Rue's death fills Katniss with anger directed at the situation and the Capitol and exclaims in her inner monologue "It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us" (Collins 276). The Capitol does not treat the tributes as human; therefore, they do not occupy the space within lives to mourn. The Capitol's hierarchy of life extends into Katniss' view of her life value and others. They are no longer humans, but pawns in a game. This links with Butler's ideas of how some lives are highly protected or supported, while "Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as grievable" (Butler 32). By consistently being excluded from the realm of humans, Katniss and the tributes are not grievable. The Games are a symbol of the lives taken by the districts during the uprising – the grievable, and the society supports these lives and compensates them through the Games with the district's children – not grievable. Katniss' coping mechanism, furthermore, dehumanizes the others for her sanity and survival. Butler

states that “The matter is not a simple one, for, if a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already the unburied, if not the unburi-able” (Butler 34). Through looking at the tributes as non-human, the pain and violence does not count, and Katniss does not have to mourn the deaths. Correspondingly, Katniss copes and justifies the deaths by signaling that the dead bodies do not equal human and are ‘unburi-able.’

Contrastingly, the symbolic burial of Rue breaks with the Game’s dehumanization. Although she remains in the mindset of viewing Rue as an animal, her actions confront the Capitol’s dehumanization through the Games. Katniss gestures the life lost and highlights the violence by burying Rue in flowers. Furthermore, this is in recognition of a tribute from another district. Katniss is not supposed to show empathy to other tributes; she is supposed to continue the dehumanization and support the Capitol. Through the burial, she breaks the cycle, which in turn is broken by Rue’s district sending Katniss bread (Collins 278). Through her coping mechanisms, she shows that neither the boy nor Rue are of value in the hierarchy of society’s grievability, but also contradicts herself by publicly grieving the loss of Rue. Katniss justifies killing the boy; at the same time, she indirectly justifies the boy’s action by confronting the political structure responsible for the Game. In the subsequent analysis of Cato’s death, Katniss’ justification for killing is furthered by the shifting of blame and the highlighting of the Capitol’s violence.

Katniss’ final kill in the arena is Cato. With only three tributes left in the arena, the Gamemakers increase the temperature and dry out the rivers as a maneuver to get the tributes into battle. As the day begins, Peeta and Katniss set out to the Cornucopia to face Cato. At this point, Katniss is ready to fight and prepared to kill. Cato is the only obstacle between her and going home, and she concludes that it would always end this way (Collins 383). A pack of mutts chases Katniss, Peeta, and Cato to the top of the Cornucopia, where they battle each other for survival. Mutts are the Capitol’s genetically modified animals, and in this particular case Katniss suspects that they are hybrids of wolves and deceased tributes (Collins 390). As a last resort, Cato tries to take Peeta down with him, but Katniss and a fatally wounded Peeta force him into the pack of mutts (Collins 392-393). Contrary to their immediate expectations, the mutts do not kill Cato instantaneously. Instead, they are forced to listen to Cato being tortured. The mutts slowly dig away at Cato, making sure to give the audience a grand, long, and violent finale. Katniss explains that “Pity, not vengeance, sends my arrow flying into his

skull. Peeta pulls me back up, bow in hand, quiver empty. ‘Did you get him?’ he whispers. The cannon fires in answer” (Collins 398). Although Katniss went into the last fight ready to kill her enemy, the boy whom she could not feel anything good about, the act of killing him was, in the end, mercy. On the one hand, killing Cato does have selfish motives, as the torture is slowly harming her sanity, her need to return home, and Peeta’s guaranteed death if it takes longer. On the other hand, the Gamemakers murdered Cato in the most gruesome manner, and Katniss’ choice to end it was mercy and a blessing.

Contrary to the previous deaths, the dwelling on the dead body does not occur with Cato. After his death, Katniss refers to him as ‘Cato’s dead body,’ which they have to move away from for the Capitol’s hovercraft to appear. Collins does not make a spectacle or describe the deadly arrow’s injury, nor is there any beautification of the body. This may signal Katniss’ lack of guilt in the aftermath of the death, and thereby not something she had to face with shame or distance herself from mentally. Contrastingly, Katniss refers to Cato in abstract terms before the death: “the raw hunk of meat that used to be my enemy makes a sound” (Collins 398). This signals that, in her mind, Cato is already dead, the body chewed by mutts is no longer a young boy; it is a meal for the muttations. Katniss copes by distancing herself from the kill she is about to complete while also signaling how she already views him as dead. Earlier, Katniss reflects on the finality of the situation; “Twenty-one tributes are dead, but I still have yet to kill Cato. And really, wasn’t he always the one to kill?” (Collins 383). Katniss paints a picture stating that from the beginning it has been her or him, which she uses as a justification to kill. If she does not kill him, he will kill her. In terms of grievable lives, one of the three remaining tributes are of value to the Capitol. For the remaining life to be of value, the other two have to die. This shows that the tributes in the arena are not assigned any value until the rest are defeated and that the value is arbitrarily assigned. The structure of value is random in so far as they do not know who the winner is, but purposeful because they know they will have a winner. In Katniss’ hierarchy of grievable lives, hers and Peeta’s are the ones of value, and Cato has to die for that to be obtained. In the quotation, Katniss not only showcases the lack of grief for the other contestants, but the finality of the situation translates into one of them being a walking corpse. Katniss blames the Capitol for the violence of the scene. The novel clearly shows that the Gamemakers forced them into a final meeting (Collins 384), the Capitol created muttations and prolonged the torture, all to make a show. It is not about children dying but making a great ending to a show. In other words, the way Katniss copes with killing is a direct representation of how the

tributes are more valuable when dead; furthermore, her justification is linked to becoming the valuable life. This highlights how the Capitol functions as the main perpetrator because they force and instigate the violence, but also exclude the tributes from the hierarchy of valuable lives.

By carefully analyzing the deaths, Katniss' coping mechanisms have been illuminated, revealing that the question of grievability is vital in understanding reactions to violence. The four lives taken by Katniss have different meanings and functions. However, at first, Katniss does not directly take credit for the deaths. This signals how she successfully copes and justifies killing:

Then I realize... he was my first kill. Along with other statistics they report to help people place their bets, every tribute has a list of kills. I guess technically I'd get credited for Glimmer and the girl from District 4, too, for dumping that nest on them. But the boy from District 1 was the first person I knew would die because of my actions. (Collins 285-286)

Katniss shows awareness of her actions; at the same time, there is a sense of innocence in her own implication. There has been a day between the death of the boy from District 1 and Katniss' realization. This might be the result of Katniss' main focus on the last action of the boy; killing Rue. Similarly, she has somewhat disconnected from the deaths of Glimmer and the girl from District 4. Along with the understanding of grievable lives, this quotation demonstrates the value of life from the perspective of the Capitol and its citizens. The lives lost are not mourned, rather, assigned as a value to Katniss' skills. They are made out to be numbers on a screen, which, in turn, advances Katniss in the eyes of the Sponsors. Furthermore, thinking like the Capitol is what allows for Katniss to realize her implication in the deaths. She does not hold herself directly accountable for the deaths of the girl from District 4 or Glimmer but imagines it as a technical victory in terms of statistics. There is a blur between her actions and the results they yield because of her successful coping mechanisms. She describes the dead bodies but has managed to distance herself and avoid the confrontation with the consequences of her actions. On the other hand, the death of the tributes is a necessity to ensure Katniss' survival. There can only be one winner of the Games, and unless they die, she will. The Capitol has successfully constructed a society that does not view the deaths in the Games as grievable; instead the killing increases the value of the winner, who is then deemed valuable. Looking at Katniss' inner monologue, her view of

the tributes as nonhuman and unburiable exemplifies the hierarchal structure of how Panem values life. Awareness of biopolitics in *The Hunger Games* has significant implications for understanding modern society's justification of violence.

Collins uses the naming of characters to indicate their worth in Katniss' hierarchy of grievability. The use of names drawn from the ecological world indicates which tributes the reader should support and foreshadows how Katniss will cope with and justify their deaths. As stated earlier in the chapter, Katniss distinguishes morally between the tributes from the Career districts and the others, which juxtaposes the idea of purity and innocence against impurity and wealth. Additionally, there is a pattern in the names given to the characters. Tributes from the poorer districts have been given names with ties to nature or agriculture. Thresh is an agricultural process for sorting grain, Katniss is an edible plant, and Rue is both a reference to a medicinal plant and used in the phrase to *rue the day*. The naming of Rue foreshadows how Rue uses a medicinal plant to heal Katniss (Collins 234), and Katniss' regret in the aftermath of Rue's death. Foxface is somewhat interesting because her name is an apparent reference to a fox, and some of the symbolic characteristics are apparent in her tactics, she is smart and cunning. However, it can also be a reference to the fruit *Solanum Mammosum*, which is called fox face in Japan. The fruit is inedible, and, interestingly, Foxface dies from eating poisonous berries. Contrastingly, Collins gives the Careers names linked to the Roman Empire or even superficiality. Clove is Latin for a nail; Cato, a Roman statesman; and Glimmer references the wealth of the district. Furthermore, the Career names link to the adults of the Capitol. Whether it is Cinna, or Ceasar Flickerman, all the names of the characters from the Capitol have ties to the Roman Empire. Through names, Collins signalizes which character to support and why. Collins juxtaposes the ideas of nature and agriculture with Roman violence and superficiality.

The ecological distinctions also tie to their status in Panem. Weber's idea of the hierarchical power structure, class, status, and party are fundamental concepts explaining the reverse classism showcased in Katniss and its importance in terms of violence. According to Weber (1947), class refers to people with shared economic interests, with the privileged on the top and the working class at the bottom (Weber 427). The social class reflects characteristics, such as ownership or the lack of it, their place within the market, education, and jobs (Weber 427-428). Contrary to Marxism, Weber believes that hierarchy and social inequality are also affected by status and party. Status is more fluid as it reflects social

prestige and is more complex as it is not easily determinable, or solely based on class status (Weber 428). For example, a human rights activist might not have a lot of money, however, a high status in certain circles, or on the other hand, a successful bank robber might have a lot of money but that will not give him a higher status. Status is thereby more fluid and contradicts the belief of Marxism. Lastly, Weber defines party, or organized power, as groups that want power (Weber 409). The parties can represent groups of classes or even attempt to represent society as a whole. Examples of this are political parties such as the Democrats who want everyone's support or 'National Alliance to End Homelessness,' which seeks funding and volunteers to terminate homelessness. The main idea of parties is a struggle for control. Weber's ideas have been further adapted and developed, where distinctions such as gender, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are relevant features. In terms of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss presents a reverse order of classism, represented in grief or lack thereof. The characters' higher position in society inversely becomes morally negative for Katniss because it represents power and privilege. Although their entrance to the arena reflects their low value in society's hierarchy, the Careers are at better odds of winning. She identifies herself with those of less power or 'odds' and reverses and represents an inner value system different from that of the society. At the same time, she showcases the society's hierarchy in the form of none of the tributes having value to begin with.

Hierarchies such as Katniss' can be reflected in our own reality in the form of, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement. The racism towards African Americans has led to the deaths of young people such as Trayvon Martin, where the perpetrator was not convicted (Garza 23). The organization represents the ideas of how they are of lower value in society's hierarchy, and fight for awareness of their "deadly oppression" (Garza 23). Although Katniss does not form a movement, she demands attention and grieves publicly following Rue's death. The societal structure and classism of Panem is strongly linked to that of our reality. Analyzing Katniss' coping mechanisms and hierarchy of grievability reveals issues related to morality in modern society, where people are faced with legally justified and deadly violence. The justifications for violence are systematic and excused through public perception and continuation of existing hierarchies of grievability, which excludes certain people. Katniss bases her hierarchy of grievability on features of morality and power, where the ultimate power and perpetrator is the Capitol and those associated with them.

Although societies construct hierarchies of how to value lives, or particular lives more than others, Katniss illustrates that within this framework, she also has an individual hierarchy of how to value life. This chapter has focused on how she distinguishes between tributes based on their intention when entering the arena, reverse classism, and even their connection to nature. With these features in mind, Panem's hierarchy of grievability connects to our society. These features show how a hierarchy of grievability or value dictates how violence is understood and viewed. Within an existing hierarchy, some violence will not be understood as violence because the victim is not assigned value. In other words, from the perspective of the Capitol, the violence of the Games is not violence because the tributes are not of value, and therefore not victims. Collins does not portray Katniss as righteous; however, she demonstrates her ethical values in the unjust system. Therefore, there is a shift in the blame, with the Capitol as the main actor.

During her private session with the Gamemakers, Katniss shoots an arrow towards them and is terrified of the repercussions. She notes that, most likely, they will not have her hanged on the spot because "If the Gamemakers want to punish me, they can do it publicly. Wait until I'm in the arena and set starving wild animals on me" (Collins 120). It is evident that although the tributes kill each other, the Gamemakers have the power and control to obliterate them if they want. Max Weber's theory of state and violence defines that the state's "administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" (154). This means that the state has a monopoly on violence. However, this does not mean that the state is the only violent perpetrator, but that the state and its organizations have a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Hence, violence unsanctioned by the state is thereby illegal. In *The Hunger Games*, the violence is monopolized, in the form of production, law, Peacekeepers, and the Games. The tributes are not allowed to fight each other before entering the arena, where the violence is profitable in terms of economy, political support by the citizens of the Capitol, and repression of the districts. In Panem, the state has the only right to take lives, and they deem the violence in the Games as legitimate. Looking at *The Hunger Games* in light of Max Weber's theory of state and violence exemplifies an important aspect of Katniss' justification. The violence in the arena is in Panem legitimate, yet the tributes, their families, nor any other person in the districts are allowed to commit the violent acts in their regular life (without punishment). If the state with its monopoly on violence deems the acts legitimate, are the killings not justified and excused? Katniss' inner monologue shows that they are not

excused, they are entirely wrong; however, they are committed by the Capitol. She shows this explicitly when Rue dies, and through her coping mechanisms. The Capitol's political framing and justifications are central questions explored in the next chapter. However, it is important to acknowledge because it illustrates how Katniss justifies killing. Collins hints through Katniss' coping mechanisms that this is the ultimate justification because it shows that she does not have to justify herself. Instead, Collins portrays the Capitol as unjust and accountable, and critiques how similar issues might be hiding in modern society under the context of sanctioned violence.

Critiques of *The Hunger Games* describing Katniss as a murderer urge a closer look at how modern society operates. In the twenty-first century, there are still wars, and the threat of war looms over nations. Describing and sentencing Katniss as a murderer, therefore, means that the Capitol should get the same conviction. Similar contradictions were shown in terms of the Vietnam War, where the public condemned the returning soldiers. Soldiers were deployed and instructed by the United States; however, they were later blamed for their actions by the public (Grossman 250). Exactly as the jury would in a courtroom, the reader will have to decide whether or not the actions in the arena are murders and whether Katniss, in addition to the Capitol, should be sentenced for their actions. On the other hand, based on Collins' subtle clues, some readers will purely read the Capitol as the murderer and excuse Katniss' actions under the conditions. Reading and analyzing Katniss' justifications reveals that violence is not as clear-cut as Benson describes. As this chapter has argued, Katniss is affected by multiple features, and while not justifying violence she justifies her use of it. Katniss illustrates how she is affected by the social value of life and grievability; at the same time, she has an internal value system to differentiate within these social structures. In a time where a widespread pandemic challenges the world, similar hierarchies are shown. As Covid-19 spreads through America, the value of saving the weaker in society has been supported, questioned, and some even believe that the government's stay at home order is a threat to their freedom (Dyer 1). Are these protesters murderers? Is the individual spreading the virus a murderer? Because in this scenario, they go against the governors. Applying Benson's labeling to the situation would render the answer to the preceding questions as a *yes*. While, through Katniss, Collins shows how complicated the question and answer is because the context and justifications would have to be examined. Furthermore, the differentiating values related to Covid-19 function as an example of how society's and the individual's hierarchal value of life does not always perfectly correspond. In Katniss' hierarchy of life, moral,

intention, and privilege add to their value, whereas during the Covid-19 pandemic, people protest or give up their freedom for the safety of senior citizens and people with preexisting health conditions. Collins' discussion on how society values specific lives is highly relevant and a dystopian warning, exemplifying an extreme. Collins challenges the conservative thought system, where defining every act of killing as murder would force a closer look at governments and politics regarding every human life.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, violence is a complex concept, and this chapter has only examined the small sub-category of violence resulting in death. Collins brings to light that the question is not what Katniss does, but how society creates a system of violence and even supports it. Analyzing Katniss' four kills shows that she does participate in violence; however, she is not bloodthirsty. Katniss distances herself from the deaths and even the corpses from the person they were before as a coping mechanism. This corresponds with Butler's explanation of grievability and how some lives are not valued and mourned. Society's structure of grievability demonstrates injustice because the tributes are not grievable, instead they are valuable as dead. The hierarchy and the Games are unjust, and Katniss blames the Capitol for the violence, thereby justifying her actions. Critics labeling Katniss a murderer, or *The Hunger Games* violent, are actively framing a negative discussion of violence and ignoring central issues relating to legitimate use of violence, which results in power and oppression. Contrary to part of Cettl's conclusion stating that *The Hunger Games* is "a capitalist high-produced spectacular action format, aimed for easy consumption" (144), this chapter has argued that it is far from easily consumable, and has illustrated complex ideas surrounding violence and death and questions how society values life.

Chapter 2:

Sacrifice as Propaganda:

The Political Framing of Violence

Similarly to the beginning of the previous chapter, this chapter takes issue with the categorization of *The Hunger Games*' killings as murder; whilst using Katniss' accusation of Panem as a perpetrator for sanctioning violence and death as a basis for the discussion. With this as a foundation, this chapter questions Panem's justification for violence. The findings in the previous chapter illuminated the Capitol's involvement due to their monopoly on violence and their legally sanctioned killings. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the Capitol's justification for encouraging violence by looking at their political discourse of sacrifice. By analyzing the discourse, the chapter will illuminate how Collins participates in a broader discussion concerning the framing of violence and how it affects the reader's understanding of *The Hunger Games* as a violent text. The novel is a first-person narration, meaning that the reader experiences the Capitol's framing of violence from Katniss' perspective. This perspective illuminates the Capitol's justifications of killing as highly flawed and portrays the political discourse as a means to maintain power and oppress the districts. The introduction of this chapter will look at the perception of violence in *The Hunger Games*, the confrontation with death, classify deaths as natural and constructed, and lastly, describe central features of sacrifice. Following this, the chapter will perform a textual analysis of the Capitol's justification of killing as sacrifice and examine its implications through the lens of cultural hegemony.

Everyone in Panem is a witness to the killings in the Games. There are two types of witnesses in *The Hunger Games*: the ones who are forced to watch the Games, such as the districts, and the ones who willfully watch, such as the Capitol residents. The latter, additionally, enjoy and celebrate the events. There is a sense of violence in the enthusiastic spectator, who joyfully consumes the violence on the screen and bets money on who will die. This further complicates the categorization of the deaths in the arena as murders. The idea of committing the act on a broadcasted TV-show is preposterous because everyone watching becomes a witness. Having witnesses contradicts the idea of murder. Usually, a murderer will commit the act with the intention of remaining innocent. Murderers can even go to

extraordinary lengths to ensure a lack of evidence or witnesses. However, in *The Hunger Games*, everyone is a witness, and the evidence of the deaths is even commemorated in the form of tourist attractions (Collins 168-169). Every year they construct a new arena for the Games, and the old arenas become “historic sites, preserved after the Games” (Collins 168). Katniss explains that the arenas are popular travel destinations, where tourists can rewatch the Games, see where the tributes died, and even partake in reenactments (Collins 169). The events that transpired in the arena are glorified and create a parallel to Disney Land or Warner Brothers Studios, where tourists can go to see and experience characters or sets from their favorite shows. However, in *The Hunger Games*, it is not the set from *Friends* they visit; rather, a place where 23 children brutally died. The manner in which the citizens react when confronted with the death of children is at first glance macabre and strange, even when compared to today’s consumption of, for example, horror films or crime shows. However, as will be shown throughout the chapter, the jubilation of the Games is a result of the Capitol’s discourse of sacrifice.

Witnessing a dead body generally causes a reaction. Moreover, the response is usually negative in the form of sadness or horror, depending on the situation. Donald G. Kyle (1998) draws attention to how a confrontation with death should demand attention and a reaction:

The death of humans (and sometimes even of animals) usually constitutes a spectacle, a disturbing sight which is awful in both senses of the word, an eerie yet intriguing phenomenon demanding acknowledgement and attention. When confronted, as it must be, death makes us come to terms, individually and collectively, with our powers and our limitations – with our humanity and our mortality. (Kyle 1)

In *The Hunger Games*, death is a spectacle that is regularly confronted. Contrary to Kyle’s statement regarding the confrontation, it is not “awful” or “disturbing”; instead, death is confronted as an enjoyable and wonderful spectacle. This chapter agrees with Kyle that this confrontation demands attention as it demonstrates the power and limitations of individuals and collectives. Furthermore, through *The Hunger Games*, Collins starts an essential discussion concerning the framing of violence and death. Losing a loved one or witnessing an unexpected death would generally constitute the reaction Kyle describes. Yet, through the political discourse of sacrifice, the Capitol justifies encouraging and celebrating killing. The twenty-first century has celebrations where violence is joyfully encouraged, such as boxing. In a boxing match, the opponents deliberately try to hurt each other and cause damage,

however, there are clear boundaries. If a boxer caused damage resulting in death, it would lead to a negative reaction. In *The Hunger Games*, the Capitol has created a game where the main event is death and created a story that does not categorize it as killing or murder. Thereby, this chapter analyzes the framing that made it possible for Panem to view the deaths in the Game as acceptable and fantastic, and questions how the Capitol uses this to justify and even conceal the sanctioning of killing.

This thesis classifies the deaths of the novel into two categories: the *natural*, which occur in the districts due to, for example, old age, starvation, exposure, and injuries, and the *constructed*, which happen in the arena. The novel does not show the *natural* deaths, Katniss rather describes them as a common fate (Collins 32). In line with Kyle, the confrontation of these deaths reflects the powerlessness of the districts and showcases the individual limitations of humanity and mortality within the collective of Panem. Early on in the novel, Katniss explains that “Starvation’s not an uncommon fate in District 12” (Collins 32). The simplicity of the statement shows that Katniss has confronted and come to terms with humanity’s limits; if human beings do not eat, they will die. Failure to provide food, medical treatment, and shelter results in powerlessness and mortality. That is the limit within District 12. There is no aid for low-income families in the districts nor a collective working together. Furthermore, the commonality of death has normalized *natural deaths*. The Capitol’s views of being skinny and looking young contrasts with the districts, where reaching old age “is something of an achievement” (Collins 144). Nevertheless, this thesis, and chapter, focus on the *constructed deaths* that occur in *The Hunger Games*. The term *constructed* is used in the sense that the deaths in the arena are not completely natural. Like the *natural* deaths, tributes can die from injury, illnesses, dehydration, and starvation; however, these are forced deaths. The Capitol constructs a space for deaths to happen and can even construct the events leading to death. None of the deaths would have occurred without the Capitol’s interference. It is the *constructed* deaths that the Capitol citizens treat as a grand and joyous spectacle, and their celebration is a direct result of the Capitol’s sacrificial discourse.

As stated, this chapter investigates the Capitol’s framing of killing as sacrifice. This is accomplished through an in-depth reading of the Capitol’s political discourse with the objective of examining the violence and its effect on the collective of Panem. The Oxford English Dictionary defines sacrifice (1.a.) as “Primarily, the slaughter of an animal [...] as an offering to a God or a deity” (“sacrifice”). The purpose of sacrifice is to obtain “propitiation

or homage” (“sacrifice”) from said God or deity. This thesis finds the definition somewhat strange because it neglects the major presence of human sacrifice in history, for example, in Judaism, Greek mythology, or ancient Aztec society (Girard 4, 253). Nevertheless, unlike the Oxford English Dictionary definition, the Capitol does not primarily sacrifice animals, rather children. Moreover, it is an offering to the people of Panem and the Capitol. According to René Girard (1979), sacrificial acts are not limited to the godly, and “There is in fact no object or endeavor in whose name a sacrifice cannot be made, especially when the social basis of the act has begun to blur” (Girard 8); however, internal violence is a common feature. Sacrifices serve the purpose of vanquishing violence within society and thus reinforce a social fabric “to restore harmony to the community” (Girard 8). This is clearly illustrated in *The Hunger Games*, where the Games were created as a result of violence, but also use violence to fabricate an illusion of a peaceful society. The Games are held in remembrance of disharmony and propagated as a necessity to ensure peace in Panem. This notion of sacrifice will be used and explored throughout the chapter to investigate the framing of violence in *The Hunger Games*, starting with the Capitol’s claim of origin and purpose.

Early in the novel, the political discourse of sacrifice is revealed to the reader. The following quotation depicts the ecosystem of the Games, its traditional and ritualistic aspect: “Just as the town clock strikes two, the mayor steps up to the podium and begins to read. It’s the same story every year” (Collins 20). The Games are a part of the social structure, and they happen every year at the very same time and in the same manner. Although many aspects are highlighted as random, such as, the names drawn from the reaping ball, there is nothing arbitrary about the ceremony. The mayor recites the history, precisely as years before, of how peaceful Panem came to be as a result of ecological disasters and war:

Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. (Collins 21)

The quotation shows that as the winner of the war, the Capitol decides the viewpoint of the story, making the districts and their rebellion a negative part of their history. In other words,

history is one-sided and told from the perspective of the winner. The Capitol refers to the districts' uprising as "Dark Days," signaling how the districts' rebellion brought upon Panem a difficult time. "The treaty of treason" refers to the district's betrayal and gruesome crimes against the government and the people of Panem. Additionally, the Capitol urges that they view the treaty as the responsible factor in hindering future crimes and war. The story presents the political agenda of how peace resulted in, and equals, the Hunger Games. It is a punishment for the districts' acts, but also a preventative measure to ensure it will never happen again. Through the sacrificial discourse, the violence is framed as something different to murder, rather a reaction to the murders that the districts were, and might again be, responsible for. The Games become the provider of peace, the humane option and solution for upholding society; The Games and deaths are justified by holding the districts accountable for their actions. It is a necessary sacrifice for the citizens of Panem, correspondingly a means for the Capitol to obtain revenge. The political discourse of sacrifice ensures peace in Panem and unlimited power through different features that have been maintained since the creation of the Games.

Although Collins informs the reader early of the Games, little is told about the public reception of the initial Game. Presumably, it can be argued that the people of the Capitol were hungry for justice. In *The Hunger Games*, the Dark Days took innocent lives, and the cry for justice led to the Hunger Games' conception. Collins has stated that the novel has drawn inspiration from the Roman empire and myths (Blasingame 726-727). Even in Ancient Rome, the idea of punishment gathered crowds of common spectators. Kyle explains that people attended the arenas for the violence and the shows, but also "the anticipation of the harsh but necessary punishment of others" (Kyle 3). As seen in *The Hunger Games*, the Capitol citizens are evidently drawn to the arena with its violence, spectacle, and cruel punishments. The night before the Game begins, crowds in the streets create a spectacle of musical celebration (Collins 164). The celebration of the Games juxtaposed with sporting events, such as the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, paints a grotesque picture, as the Game involves the death of children. Although the celebration of sporting events is not violent, it raises the question of what we might unjustly be accepting as joyous occasions. In the preface of *Precarious Lives: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler questions the legitimacy of justifying the war following 9/11, and the violent treatment of criminals in Guantanamo Bay; "it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war" (Butler xii). The terror attacks on the Twin Towers

shattered the US, and the political administration wanted justice and accountability for the deaths. This resulted in a war, and through the name of justice, more lives were lost. The reaction to 9/11 has similar motifs as ‘The Treaty of Treason,’ where both experienced terrorism, and a need to punish the responsible. There are apparent differences in how this is accomplished, but the parallels highlight the need for justice. The rhetoric following both 9/11 and the Hunger Games frame the retribution as a necessary evil to ensure justice and peace.

There are further similarities between Panem and the US regarding the value of life and punishment. Death as a punishment is still lawfully sanctioned in some parts of the US (Kleinstuber and Fleury-Steiner 874). According to Ross Kleinstuber and Benjamin Fleury-Steiner (2015), “The idea of retribution is that the offender deserves to die because he or she has harmed society in some way and must sacrifice his or her life to compensate for this harm” (Kleinstuber and Fleury-Steiner 874). There are clear symbolic parallels in the sacrificial justification of the death penalty and the Capitol’s justification of the Games as sacrifices. Like the death penalty, the Games are used as a punishment and a deterrent to stop future crimes. Drawing on Foucault’s philosophy of discipline, societies experience a need to correct unwanted behavior, whether it is a modern form of power or sovereign power (Havis 111). In *The Hunger Games*, this punishment is the Games. The districts have to sacrifice their children as a punishment for their sins while giving thanks to the Capitol for their forgiveness and generosity. The deaths in the arena function as a death sentence and punishment for their crimes, which frames the violence done by the Capitol as a necessity and twists the perspective of violence. From the Capitol’s perspective, the Games and its deaths are not violent, but the districts supposedly are due to the past rebellion.

The sacrificial acts of *The Hunger Games* function correspondingly to the sacrifices in the Roman Empire, where “The gladiatorial games were thus dissociated from the death of the individual, held, rather, in celebration of the continued life of the Roman State” (Futrell 3). The confrontation between Katniss and some Capitol residents offers an insight into how the Capitol has successfully dissociated the deaths in the Games from the individual child. Moreover, through the rhetoric, it is not a celebration of death, but a celebration of maintained peace and life. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, biopolitically the individual in the district is not valuable or grievable. Furthermore, the chapter briefly applied Giorgio Agamben’s definition of the *homo sacer*, to illustrate how they function as marked

killable bodies. Their value is a direct result of the political rhetoric of the districts as criminal barbarians, illuminated when Katniss is confronted with people from the Capitol. During the prep team's beautification of Katniss, Flavius informs her that "You almost look like a human being now" (Collins 72), thereby confirming that her natural appearance is contradictory to how a human should look. On the train, Effie comments on Katniss' and Peeta's manners, in comparison to other tributes. She tells them, "The pair last year ate everything with their hands like a couple of savages" (Collins 51), showcasing the viewing of the districts as uncivilized. Lastly, Effie proudly informs that she has managed to sell the story of how "both [Peeta and Katniss] successfully struggled to overcome the barbarism of your district" (Collins 85). The confrontation between Katniss and Capitol residents confirms that the political discourse of the districts being a threat is still thriving. The districts are dirty, uncivilized barbarians that might start a war, unless kept under control. As a result, the Capitol's propaganda is successful because it is accepted by its citizens. The districts are framed as criminals to be held accountable for their past crimes and prevented from committing new ones. Thus, the violence of the Games is not perceived as violence, rather, protection.

The Capitol bases the sacrificial justification on punishment and discipline, and children become the most suitable target. Through the reoccurring Games, the Capitol satisfies the lust for revenge through the law of retribution. As Girard explains, "In a universe where the slightest dispute can lead to disaster [...] the rites of sacrifice serve to polarize the community's aggressive impulses and redirect them towards victims [...]. The sacrificial process prevents the spread of violence by keeping vengeance in check" (Girard 18). As discussed earlier, there was likely a need for retribution in the aftermath of the Dark Days. Instead of punishing everyone in the districts, the Capitol selected two children from each district to receive punishment on behalf of their district. Furthermore, Girard explains that fragile societies and situations call for more precious victims (Girard 18). The choice of children illustrates the scope of Panem's fragility because they select the most precious victim possible. Within the collective of the *barbarians*, children are the most precious individuals. Although they are of lower value, society as a whole has the preconceived idea of children as something pure. The introduction of this thesis illustrated that there is a broader discussion regarding children and that children represent the ideas of fragility and innocence in need of protection. In *The Hunger Games*, the Capitol builds and takes advantage of this notion to sacrifice the most valuable and precious victim. Furthermore, as mentioned in the

preceding paragraph, beautification processes are used to humanize the children and increase their value as victims. To summarize, the Capitol justifies their sacrificial purpose by camouflaging it as a gentle punishment in which children are sacrificed instead of obliterating the districts. The choice of children increases the value of the sacrifice. Lastly, because of the portrayal of the districts as uncivilized criminals, the violence is not perceived as violence, rather, necessary preventative measures and protection.

The concept of cultural hegemony is a key feature in understanding the success and continuation of the sacrificial justification of killing. This thesis will apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to analyze central aspects relating to the sacrificial discourse. The intention is to expose the political propaganda and the control of information to demonstrate how it translates into consent. This consent is used to create and maintain the sacrificial discourse and justifies the Capitol's killings as sacrifices. However, it will also prove the justifications of killing as false. Hegemony is etymologically derived from ancient Greek, meaning "authority, rule, political supremacy" ("hegemony, n"). In other words, leading through dominance of others. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2005) elaborate on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony as an explanation of how racial formation relates to politics (Omi and Winant 130). Omi and Winant explain that "in order to consolidate their hegemony, ruling groups must elaborate and maintain a popular system of ideas and practices - through education, the media, religion, folk wisdom, etc" (Omi and Winant 130). Through control of information, the ruling classes control knowledge and ideas. This control establishes a 'common sense', thereby, making it beneficial and normalized to consent to the hegemonic structure (Omi and Winant 130). Gramsci theorizes that if one class or even one person is to rule, it is done through both force and consent (Omi and Winant 130). The combination is essential in terms of how Panem frames violence. The paragraphs will analyze how the Capitol establishes a 'common sense' through distraction, limited information, and the positive perspective of honor. Following this, the chapter will illuminate how these key aspects of 'common sense' results in consent and an accepted sacrificial justification of killing, while highlighting instrumental flaws seen through Katniss' inner monologue.

This chapter uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain how the Capitol distracts and divides the districts. Maslow (1943) created a pyramid to explain human behavior and motivation where "the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative

prepotency” (Maslow 375). The pyramid has five levels, with the bottom being “physiological needs” such as breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep (Maslow 372). The next levels are, chronologically, “the safety needs” (Maslow 371), “the love needs” (380), “the esteem needs” (381), and the top level is “the need for self-actualization” (382). Those who are missing the physiological needs, such as Katniss, will have little to no need to worry about the higher steps of the pyramid. Maslow explains that “in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than any others” (Maslow 373). In other words, if you do not have food, it is pointless to worry about more complex issues such as self-worth or your place within society. This is evident in Katniss’ narration where she admits “Whatever the truth is, I don’t see how it will help me get food on the table” (Collins 48). Katniss illustrates that the truth is irrelevant because she is too preoccupied with survival to worry about power imbalances or a false justification of killing. Even the name Panem, which is a reference to the Latin phrase *panem et circenses*, which translates to bread and circuses, links the ideas (Makins 280-281). They are, in *The Hunger Games*, too preoccupied and distracted with the idea of bread and circuses, or in other words food and the danger of the Games, to be concerned with the politics.

There are different classes within the districts, where the higher classes reap benefits, and food is not the primary concern. Tesseræ are given to starving children in exchange for adding the child’s name an additional time in the lottery. Katniss explains that “Each tessera is worth a meagre year’s supply of grain and oil for one person” (Collins 15). The meagre supply motivates and encourages the children to add their names multiple times in exchange for more goods. Through this system, the children from the lower classes will have a higher chance of their names being drawn in the lottery, compared to the wealthier children who do not need the exchange (Collins 15). Marian Makins (2015) notes that the Latin meaning of *tessera* is a token or voucher, which can be translated to a “ticket into the arena” (Makins 286). The starving children are given tickets, while the wealthier can avoid this, rendering the lottery rigged and unfair. Katniss rationalizes that “even though the rules were set up by the Capitol, not the districts, [...], it’s hard not to resent those who don’t have to sign up for tesserae” (Collins 15). The quotation signals how creating a class system within the districts takes focus away from the real power. As food is the primary concern, it is easier to focus the hatred on the people who seemingly benefit from the system, instead of the Capitol (Collins 16). The Capitol ensures that the people in the districts do not trust each other and remain

divided amongst themselves. The ‘common sense’ of the district is to not seek information, oppose, or even support each other. By creating divisions in the districts, the Capitol ensures that the districts are too distracted with individual limitations and mortality to realize their power as a collective. The Capitol has thus created *panem et circenses*, to distract the districts from opposing to the conditions, but most importantly, distracts them from questioning or even opposing their sacrificial justification of killing.

By keeping the districts distracted and divided, the Capitol is able to limit and control the information and ideas that create the ‘common sense.’ In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss notes early on that they learn a one-sided history book in school. They are mainly taught about things related to coal, which is District 12’s production. She says: “Except for the weekly lecture on the history of Panem. It’s mostly a lot of blather about what we owe the Capitol. I know there must be more than they’re telling us” (Collins 48). The quotation illustrates how the Capitol limits ideas and practices in the districts. Through schooling, they are taught how to succeed in their future jobs as coalminers, and how to support the system. The information given to the districts is highly controlled, and they are not taught anything unnecessary, such as information about the other districts. The Capitol implements a ‘common sense’ through excluding and limiting information, which prevents any opposition to the idea of the Games as sacrificial. The limited information is what gives the Capitol the control to frame the violence as justified sacrifices. They create a one-sided continuous perspective of sacrifice as something which is owed and honorable, not oppressive and forced. The districts consent to the perspective due to their need for self-preservation.

The Capitol exploits the argument of deaths being owed, as a means to justify the killing in the Games. Katniss’ inner monologue reveals that they are consistently educated “blather about what we owe” (Collins 48), which upholds and maintains the idea of the Games and sacrifices as fair and acceptable. They are frequently informed of how they are criminals and that the Capitol graciously allows the districts to atone for their sins. The concept of owing is quite intriguing, since the Capitol has placed the districts in an unrequitable debt that cannot and will not ever be paid. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a tribute (1.a.) is “A tax or impost paid by one prince or state to another in acknowledgement of submission or as the price of peace, security, and protection” (“tribute, n”). Interestingly, the meaning transfers quite accurately to *The Hunger Games*. The Capitol frames the tributes’ lives as a currency, which is used to repay the deaths of the Dark Days.

Moreover, the choice of word illustrates that the tributes function as payment for peace and to avoid annihilation. The rhetoric of owing is framed as a positive, because they are repaying their debt and ensuring their future in Panem. The killings in the Games are, thereby, not murders; instead, they establish a ‘common sense’ where it is wiser to sacrifice two children than the whole district.

The Capitol’s discourse of sacrifice urges a righteous storyline where it is an honor to be the sacrificial victim. According to Kyle, the early Roman spectacles had more religious overtones as sacrifices to the “gods or to honor and appease the spirits of the dead” (Kyle 7), and eventually the political and religious overlapped (Kyle 7-8). Although the religious aspect is not traceable in *The Hunger Games*, the discourse of sacrifice can be linked to the idea of appeasing the ones who died during the Dark Days. Katniss, and the other tributes, are not holy or honored as individuals, rather they function as symbols; their deaths are in honor of the dead, and in honor of a peaceful Panem. The rhetoric of honor is echoed in many of the Capitol citizens’ manner and statements, for example, “Effie Trinket trots to the podium and gives her signature, ‘Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor!’” (Collins 22). This phrase is repeated throughout the novel and underlies the perspective of honor. According to the Capitol, they are lucky to win the lottery. However, there is a clear distinction, tributes themselves are not deemed honorable people when entering the arena, their names were simply drawn out of the reaping ball. Girard explains the reasoning for the mixed hatred and honor concerning sacrificial victims: “He was hated insofar as he polarized the as yet untransformed violence; he was revered insofar as he transformed the violence” (Girard 276). In line with this, the tributes are loved and celebrated as sacrificial victims but hated because they represent the criminal barbarian districts. The Capitol attempts to implement the ‘common sense’ of sacrifices as an honorable act, and through this perspective, the killings are justified and do not seem violent or murderous.

The ‘common sense’ of the sacrifice being an honor is both successfully and unsuccessfully accomplished in the districts. As discussed in the preceding chapter, there is a distinction between the wealthier districts, referred to as Careers, and the others. This, furthermore, ties to the political discourse of sacrifice and honor. It is clear that the Career districts believe in the perspective enforced by the Capitol. Being a part of the Games is a great honor and serves both the subject and greater good. After Katniss volunteers, she explains that “In some districts, in which winning the reaping is such a great honor, people

are eager to risk their lives, the volunteering is complicated. But in District 12, where the word tribute is pretty much synonymous with the word corpse, volunteers are all but extinct” (Collins 25-26). The Careers train their whole lives for the opportunity to participate in the Games (Collins 41-42). The reaping process has become complicated as a result of the demand and desire to participate. The sacrificial political agenda has been successfully assimilated in the Career districts, and in exchange, they are rewarded in the form of wealth and privileges. Similar tendencies can be seen in the Roman gladiators, where there was a difference in training and treatment of those who performed well (Kyle 79). It is also claimed that some gladiators, although forced to participate, wanted to do a great performance in honor of their masters (Kyle 79). However, the quotation illustrates the stark contrast between the successful and unsuccessful. The idea of tribute being synonymous with corpse illustrates how the selected are already dead and that the Games are a punishment not a reward. Katniss clearly illustrates that there is no honor in being a tribute, it is a painful death, which has resulted in lack of volunteers to take part in the Games. While the Careers accept and celebrate the sacrificial discourse, the first-person narration of Katniss reveals that District 12 rejects it.

In preparation for the televised interview, Haymitch concludes that the best tactic for Katniss is to “try not to let the audience see how much you despise them” (Collins 137). Through this marketing there is not any evidence of the district’s opposition to the Games as honorable. The tributes never openly discuss the terror, nor their unwillingness to participate, and through their cooperation they allow the idea of the ceremonies to be viewed as an honor. Attached to this is also the glory of winning, where they obtain wealth and status. The Capitol could have chosen to use a term such as survivor; however, victor implies a grandeur, something positive and celebrated. Although the sacrifices are not framed as religious, the Capitol consistently fronts the narrative of the tributes as willful participants. This creates a space where it is understood as an honor for the tributes to participate, as if they are doing it for the gods, or for the better people. This is supported by the tribute’s behavior, as they allow themselves to be paraded as prized objects, front their best sides, and never utter anything to contradict the plot. Through all of this, the framing of the sacrifice as legitimate and humane is furthered and accepted by the Capitol citizens. The Capitol viewer will also perceive it as an honor for the victim to be chosen due to additional prize given to the victor. The Games are, therefore, a celebrated festivity due to the framing of the Games and the districts behavior. This is where the aspect of consent is instrumental for the sacrificial

framing, which will be discussed in the following paragraph. The districts are silently consenting to the ‘common sense’ of the killing as sacrifices, and to the sacrifices as honorable.

As explained previously, a combination of consent and coercion is required for a successful cultural hegemony (Omi and Wainant 130). In Panem there are clear elements of coercion, as Katniss explains, “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you” (Collins 21). The quotation illustrates the threat of not adhering to the rules and makes it beneficial for the districts to oblige. However, a hegemony will not function solely through coercion because uprisings and revolutions might erupt from the mistreatment, and consent becomes a key feature to maintain the unopposed power. As discussed, the Capitol has created a ‘common sense’ and actively frames the perception of the Games as honorable and justified sacrifices. The Capitol’s control of information and perspective has, furthermore, lasted for 74 years. As a result, most of the people in the districts do not know of any other truths, are not taught to imagine a different possibility, and accept their conditions. Their willingness to accept the conditions and lack of public opposition is, thereby, considered as consent. The consent must not be confused with people in the districts thinking it is justified or even wanting to adhere, but as a fearful and hopeless acceptance of their reality. After Katniss volunteers, the crowd shows “the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong” (Collins 27). It is clear that the districts do not directly issue consent to the reaping; however, the actions are translated in to consent precisely because it is a kind of tacit consent. The Games cannot be maintained without the districts’ continued consent. The districts could refuse to give up their children, or the children could refuse to kill each other, which in turn would disrupt the hegemonic system and its sacrifices. The combination of coercion and consent is instrumental to the Capitol’s sacrificial discourse, and the removal of consent is how Katniss illustrates the failure in the Capitol’s justification of killing as sacrifices.

The sacrificial discourse of Panem has been discussed through the lens of cultural hegemony. By looking at how the Capitol implements a ‘common sense’ in the public, flaws and errors were found in their justifications for killing. The Capitol attempts to represent the killings as justified through a rhetoric of punishment and discipline, but also the storyline of how the districts owe the Capitol gratitude for their forgiveness, protection, and the honorable

opportunity of being a victim. However, through Katniss the reader is to experience the failure of justifying the killings as sacrifices and, thereby, deem it as violent. Reading *The Hunger Games* through the perspective of a Capitol citizen or Career would render the violence as justified and exciting. There would not be an indication of unnecessary violence, rather a fight for maintenance of peace. As the story follows Katniss, the reader is shown the opposite, which creates an emphasis on the flaws in the Capitol's justification of violence. The acts seem cruel: however, as shown, they are necessary for the Capitol's continuance of hegemonical structure. Through Katniss, the reader is shown that there is not any honor in participating in the Games, it is distressing to be forced to kill others, she is frightened of being killed, and it is traumatic to survive. The political rhetoric of sacrifice is a manner in which the Capitol force and distract the districts from rebelling against the power. The Games are a way of undermining, frightening, and forcing a hegemonic and totalitarian structure, which thereby results in peace. The failure to successfully justify the killings as sacrifices is what causes the discourse to fall apart.

The analysis of cultural hegemony and the political discourse reveals Collin's broader criticism of the framing of violence. As shown, the Capitol controls the information and manages to frame violence through a positive perspective. The districts suffering as a result of the political structure is never broadcasted or acknowledged, their voices are unheard in the discourse of the sacrifice. In terms of the framing of violence it shows how under an accepted cultural hegemony, violence does not appear violent in the media's representation, nor in the supporting groups. The silence and portrayal of the oppressed groups signal in the political discourse an agreement to the 'common sense' and allow the continuation. Interestingly, this can be combined with Butler's statement on the US framing of violence; "Since the events of September 11, we have seen both a rise of anti-intellectualism and a growing acceptance of censorship within the media. This could mean that we have support for these trends within the general population of the United States" (Butler 1). *The Hunger Games*, as a fictional story, is an example of Butler's warnings. The Capitol has successfully censored the media through its control and acquired both acceptance and support for its ideas. Any opposing ideas are not voiced or illustrated, and the public are somewhat ignorant to the true intentions of the violence. As both Collins illustrates and Butler insinuates, would it not be wise to question in what ways violent aspects are presented, and how it affects the oppressed groups? What ideas are projected as 'trends' or 'common sense'? This thesis does not have the answer but has illustrated the power of creating a 'common sense' in Panem.

Through the Capitol, Collins comments on the sociopolitical landscape of both the present and the past and illuminates how masses can adhere to ‘common sense’, in this case sacrifice, and shows how it affects the oppressed. It urges a closer look at the system of the ruling classes and shows that injustice can seemingly be suffered in silence, or even be silenced in the media. As this thesis is limited by space, it will not elaborate on oppressed groups in the United States. However, it illustrates how a ruling class or group can establish cultural hegemony and manipulate basic needs, such as food and shelter, to maintain power in society, and urges a closer look at political discourses and justifications of violence. Collins shows an extreme version where the oppressed, in *The Hunger Games*, are made to believe they only have two choices, to consent or to die.

This chapter has looked at the Capitol’s discourse of sacrifice and shown the importance of how the Capitol frames killing as sacrifice. However, the Capitol’s political discourse is abruptly and publicly challenged in the final spectacle of the arena. With Cato dead, Katniss and Peeta are waiting to be announced winners, only to be informed that “The earlier revision has been revoked. Closer examination of the rule book has disclosed that only one winner may be allowed” (Collins 400). Katniss comes to terms with the fact that there was never a change in the rules in the first place, and that it was ultimately a set-up to ensure the “most dramatic showdown in history” (Collins 400). By changing the rules, the Gamemakers assumed the lovers would end up killing each other, creating a storyline to be remembered. The great sacrifice, where they fought together only for one to die at the very end. However, it becomes clear that neither Katniss nor Peeta are willing to kill each other. Katniss’s first reaction is to draw her weapon, but she comes to the conclusion that “death right here, right now would be the easier of the two” (Collins 401). She realizes that there would be no life worth living, if she kills Peeta, and thereby it is not an option. The trauma of killing him in addition to being from the same district would ensure that she would never be able to forget. She would have to face his family, friends, and others repeatedly, knowing she was responsible for killing him. Faced with the dilemma, Katniss realizes that the Game needs a winner, “Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol” (Collins 402). As discussed in the previous chapter, the only life assigned value is the winner. As soon as Katniss realizes the advantage in the threat of them both dying, she challenges the discourse and the Capitol. If they both die, there would be no victor, and the one divine rule of the Game is broken. She holds the berries out for

everyone to see, they count to three, and as soon as the berries touch their mouth, they are both announced winners, and the discourse of sacrifice is altered.

Katniss and Peeta refusing to fight challenges the Capitol and has repercussions for the political discourse. Both tributes retracted their consent and rejected the honor of winning on national television. The repercussions are evident in a meeting between the President and Katniss, in the second novel *Catching fire*, “‘I have a problem, Miss Everdeen,’ says President Snow. ‘A problem that began the moment you pulled out those poisonous berries in the arena.’” (Collins *Catching Fire* 22). Katniss’ behavior in the arena is ultimately a threat to the structure and perception of the Capitol’s power. As the quotation from *Catching Fire* illustrates, her decision regarding the berries had created a problem, which impacted her and Panem’s future. Although the first novel is the focus of this thesis, it is important to mention that her actions lead to an uprising and war in the following books (Collins *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*). Through discussing the framing of the violence as sacrificial, this chapter has at the same time illustrated the fragility of the system, and as a result, the importance of this moment. The Capitol’s discourse of sacrifice frames it as something honorable where the tributes are to sacrifice themselves for their families, districts, Panem, and peace. Their framework urges a self-sacrifice. However, when Katniss and Peeta choose to sacrifice themselves willingly, they destroy the rhetoric and the discourse deteriorates.

The political discourse of sacrifice is justified because the Capitol is punishing the districts for the crimes committed in the past and crimes they might commit in the future. Through the Games, the Capitol spreads horror; however, they also control supplies and information to the districts, ensuring that they are frightened and more concerned with their survival than rebellion. As discussed, through this control, the Capitol gains a form of consent from the people in the districts and can continue their framing of the violence as an honor. The reaped children are deemed as lucky to win the lottery and will not oppose or reject this discourse publicly. The discourse depends on both types of witnesses, the ones who believe it, like the Capitol residents and the Careers, and the ones who are forced and, seemingly, willfully participate. Through the discourse as a whole, the Games are not perceived as unnecessary violence, rather, a righteous festival and entertainment. However, as soon as Katniss and Peeta decide to die for each other, the story changes.

What distinguishes political opposition today – racial or otherwise – is its insistence on identifying itself and speaking for itself, its determined demand for the

transformation of the social structure, its refusal of the “common sense” understandings which the hegemonic order imposes. (Omi and Wynant 132)

Meaning, in terms of *The Hunger Games*, that Katniss and Peeta in their refusal to win showcase opposition to the ‘common sense’ of the Games, its rules, and oppression. They illustrate a sacrifice that does not agree with the Capitol’s and become a voice for the oppressed. Although they are not a political party, they are broadcasted to all of Panem showing that they refuse the ‘common sense’ of sacrificing each other for honor or fame. They would rather sacrifice themselves to ensure the other’s survival, giving a different value and currency to the survivor than the one given by the Capitol. Killing each other would not fit the propaganda, and the winner would survive as a result of love, not skills, or murder. Katniss and Peeta change the sacrificial purpose, stating that the other’s life is of the highest value and worth sacrificing oneself for. They refuse the ‘common-sense’ of survival through murder because there is no honor or justice in it. Their self-sacrifice disrupts the Capitol’s discourse and takes away their power to control the constructed deaths. They unify and show the worth of their collective by not killing each other, making it a true selfless sacrifice, as opposed to the political and power-driven sacrifice urged by the Capitol. Additionally, their refusal to kill depicts, contrary to Sloan et al.’s statement, encouragement of a non-violent solution (431). Although the act does not demand the transformation that Omi and Wynant describe, they oppose the Capitol’s structure through their refusal of the ‘common sense’. The districts are not shown to be uncivilized barbarians who kill everyone in their path, but two people in love. The other districts are shown an underdog district identifying itself and openly opposing the Capitol. Through identifying and speaking up, Katniss transforms the structure and creates a visible opposition to the structure of Panem.

In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss reveals the framing of violence and how it affects the victim. Throughout history, people, sovereigns, and governments have committed violent acts with, seemingly, righteous or justifiable intent. A few of these have been mentioned in this thesis, such as 9/11. Through the Capitol, Collins discusses the framing and justifiable aspect of violence, yet through Katniss the violence is framed from the perspective of the victim. As critics illustrate, the novel contains huge amounts of “unnecessary” violence, exemplifying the understanding of violence through the perspective of Katniss. However, as discussed in this chapter, the violence is not unnecessary from the Capitol’s perspective. Collins has, through the *Hunger Games*, portrayed two discourses of violence, those of the victim and abuser, which illustrates the importance of understanding the framing of violence

and its history. In the back matter of *The Hunger Games* novel, Collins explains that her father was in the US Air Force and that it was of importance to him that she understood “certain aspects of life. [...] we needed to know why the battle occurred, how it played out, and the consequences” (Collins 440). Through the statement it becomes apparent that the discourses are not random, and she has purposefully projected both sides of the story. According to Butler, change and thought process are paralyzed without thinking differently about violence: about the abuser, the victim, and asking questions regarding morality. Butler explains that “We shall thereby deprive ourselves of the very critical and historical resources we need to imagine and practice another future, one that will move beyond the current cycle of revenge” (Butler 10). Viewing the violence in *The Hunger Games* from the perspective of the Capitol shows how the violence is necessary in their discourse. However, Collins focuses on Katniss and showcasing the injustice of the system. To end ‘cycles of revenge’ and violence, the history, people, structure and society must be studied and understood. War, violence, and oppression cannot end without understanding the cycle itself. Examining the framing and portrayal of violence are central topics in a biopolitical perspective, and it is a collective responsibility to ‘imagine and practice another future.’

Conclusion

This thesis has offered an intricate examination of violence and shown that violence not only affects our perspectives but also that our perspectives affect our understanding of violence. It is a sophisticated relationship where both individual and collective values influence the point of view. *The Hunger Games* illustrates how the Capitol residents agree with the popular perception of violence, the Careers do not fully recognize its meaning, and the districts do not oppose it. Regardless of the understanding and perspective of violence, violence occurs, nonetheless. Criticism of *The Hunger Games* that focuses on the existence of violence within the text reveals the perspectives of critics and actively frames the plot to suit their understanding of violence. Furthermore, the complexity of violence is completely flattened out by critics labeling Katniss a murderer. It would be reductive if, for example, a bookshop worker summarized the novel by stating: 'it is a book about a teenage girl murdering other children.' As the thesis has proven, it is not an accurate use of terminology. More importantly, the seller's statement frames the violence differently than Collins intended. The focus on the violent acts belittles Collins' story and perspective. Correspondingly, if the seller added information regarding its suitability for young adults, they would impose their view and understanding of children onto the buyer. This thesis has not been interested in concluding whether *The Hunger Games* is suitable for the intended audience, since such questions are fraught with assumptions that are beyond the scope of this thesis to examine. Instead, the thesis urges a shift in how children's and young adult literature is examined. The purpose should not be to obsessively identify any depiction of violence or evil tendencies; but instead to explore their function and perspectives in order to extend our understanding of violence.

This thesis has taken the rivaling perspectives of Katniss and the Capitol and analyzed how they justify killing. Katniss' justifications for killing reflect the summation of the guilt of not protecting others, and innocence due to social hierarchies and the Capitol's control. *The Hunger Games* does not follow a bloodthirsty murderer; instead it demonstrates the intricate relationship of following social and legally sanctioned guidelines to survive while ethically not agreeing with the premise. It exemplifies and questions the profound impact society has on a human's willingness to survive through killing. In *The Hunger Games*, Collins shows that Katniss is willing to kill for her survival, yet, there is also a limit; for example, she is not

prepared to win by killing Peeta. As a literary work, *The Hunger Games* urges a closer look at how literature and modern society create a hierarchy of grievability and demands an examination of the perspectives it is built on, the reasonings, and especially the cost. From the viewpoint of the valuable, such as the Capitol citizens, violence against the lower classes is not brutal. At the same time, Katniss' use of the hierarchy of grievability to cope with killing frames the violence to her advantage. By studying societal hierarchies of grievability, we can aim to understand which lives are perceived as less or more valuable, and to recognize the effect and hidden promotion of violence.

Examining violence in light of biopolitics explores the intersecting relationship between humanity, power, and politics. The 'common sense' of how to value human life might differ depending on the individual. Katniss implements a reverse classism and distinguishes between tributes based on their violent intentions. In accordance with Judith Butler, this thesis has argued the need to examine who counts as a human life, and more importantly, who is worth protecting and to what cost? While Katniss values the lower-ranked lives, the Capitol ranks their own citizens. Hierarchies create 'marked bodies' that deserve discipline and punishment, and in turn Panem does not experience the Capitol's violence as unjust. However, Katniss shows through her justification for killing that the premise for the social order and the Capitol's sanctioning of killing is wrongful and unjustifiable.

The Capitol's justification for violence as sacrifice gives insight into their hegemonic structure of violence and the importance of controlling information. Katniss experiences the tributes as valueless as a consequence of how the Capitol maintains and justifies their actions. Every piece of information given to the districts is controlled and filtered through a perspective that presents violence as an instrument of peace. The rhetoric of sacrifice frames violence as a tool for the *greater good* and makes it appear as a necessity. The result of this is not only a righteous story for the Capitol citizens and Careers to support; but Katniss also uses it to legitimize her actions and coping mechanisms. Collins, and this thesis, encourage a closer look at the power of framing violence, in both reality and fictional literature. Various forms of media tell stories from a particular perspective, whether it is siding with the victim, hero, or depicting a monstrous abuser. These perspectives and violent implications should be examined; in what light are class, power, race, and violence framed and who benefits from the viewpoint. From Katniss' point of view, it is clear that the media benefits the Capitol as

the higher class and implements a perspective of how the Capitol's lives are worth more than the lives in the districts. It is essential to recognize that even young adults are taught facts in school relating to violence from a certain perspective. *The Hunger Games* shows that history, economy, politics, and class shape people's understanding of concepts such as worth and violence. Schools teach about history, and as the Capitol shows, it often sides with the winning perspective. *The Hunger Games* functions as a warning example of a society where the winning attitude is the abuser that uses the information to continue the abuse of people. Violence is complex, and it is a concept that can be utilized as a weapon to suppress and abuse. It can also be framed to suit political propaganda, to frighten into submission, and to both divide and unite people. The portrayal and use of violence as an agency of 'the greater good' or punishment are concepts witnessed in the twenty-first century. In Panem, violence becomes weaponized as political propaganda, a coping mechanism, a self-justification. For Katniss it is a tool for survival, while for the Capitol it becomes a weapon of power. Collins' *The Hunger Games* shows us the importance of understanding violence as a means to prevent it. We have to understand that ignorance of the concept does not prohibit violence, rather it might lead to a tacit consent. My hopes are that there continues to be rigorous examination of justifications and perspectives of violence in literature and the wider world, because, as *The Hunger Games* shows, it can hide under the disguise of peace.

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